

The Open University, Milton Keynes, U.K.

E805: Critical issues in equity, diversity and educational practice

EMA End of Module Assessment: Project Report

*An andragogical, critical theory case study to develop critical pedagogy, in understanding and transforming social justice within a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) in the Quang Nam province, Viet Nam*



A day on the water in the Quang Nam province, Viet Nam (Cresswell, 2016)

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## **Task A: Writing up your research project on transforming your own practice**

*4400 words*

When considering critical issues related to equity, diversity and inclusion, it is fundamental to take into account the factors that contribute towards the perceived issue with social justice. Examining these issues through an emphasis on critical theory, critical pedagogy and an analysis as an insider-researcher allows the individual to engage, investigate and understand the social world they are immersed in (Soler et al., 2013). In this research project, I am the insider-researcher and participant as the Research and Project Coordinator of a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), named in this study as AIHC, in the Quang Nam province of central Viet Nam. In my role as a volunteer over a nine-month period, I investigated the social justice issues that had arisen in my initial assessment regarding equity, diversity and inclusion through a qualitative, critical theory case study. Early observations through my own perspective had me identify the struggle to find transformative change in my context in the words of critical theorist Paulo Freire (1996, p.29): ‘to surmount the situation of oppression, people must first critically recognise its causes, so that through transforming action they can create a new situation, one which makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity’.

- A clear identification of the area you have problematised, with a rationale as to why this issue is important

The issues I identified during my early engagement with the NGO stemmed from my experiences and observations on the promotion of social justice, according to the Organisation’s vision and mission statements. My perspective seemed to suggest that most methods of engagement with the Quang Nam province constituents the NGO serves were affected by the consistent interference of the Vietnamese government. For instance, the ‘poor economic status’ – which is what determines whether the NGO can or cannot intervene to help a family or a person – can only be accredited by the government. In my very first experience participating in an event aimed at distributing resources to the ‘poor economic status’ children identified by the Vietnamese government, a close observation of the ceremony and the families attending illustrated a different picture of ‘poor recipients’, compared to those I had previously visited in the rural areas of the province (see appendix 2a and 2b). In my initial views, these observations suggested an issue of power and control and brought me to question the extent to which the concepts of equity, diversity and inclusion were incorporated in the operations of the NGO. These impressions also brought me to question the fairness and validity of the ‘poor economic status’ certification.

This NGO is an Australian-based, Vietnamese-registered charity that ‘seeks to offer culturally, socially and financially appropriate support services to disadvantaged children, to provide them

with the resources and opportunities they need to achieve success. The services are developed with no political or religious agenda and will be primarily focused on health and disability, education and housing' (AIHC, 2013). Articles 25 and 26 of the United Nations (2017) Universal Declaration of Human Rights (see appendix 1) constitute the basis of the NGO's vision and mission statement. My early observations through direct experience led me to question the delivery of this statement due to the hegemony and power the Vietnamese government seemed to have on the NGO's operations.

An article by Adam Fforde (2011, p. 165) examining contemporary Vietnamese politics argues that many opportunities remain for political rethinking in the country. His inquiry addresses policies related to rural development, poverty and participation – the political context I found myself immersed in as an insider-researcher. My initial approach for transformative change was therefore aimed at gaining a critical understanding of how social justice could or needed to be improved within the NGO for the benefit of its constituents.

- A justification and rationale for the changes and evolution of your study since the plan you developed for TMA 02

A second analysis, supported by the review of relevant literature coupled with several direct observations and the collection of data through different channels, allowed me to deepen my understanding of the context and restructure the framework and aims of my study.

Barbara Rogoff (2003, in The Open University, 2017a) argues that when we focus on practice, our analysis needs to be 'informed by background information'. It is evident that the areas problematised in this context are inextricably connected to history, political and cultural discourses, the concepts of hegemony and class, and the resulting relationship between various individuals. In order for me to understand my own perceptions and where policy and people meet in this situation, I had to consider, as emphasised by Gray (2009 in The Open University, 2017b), the 'contradictions inherent between approaches to social justice and the underlying problems from which they emerge'.

Though I was initially planning on researching from a distinct interpretivist paradigm with an action research methodological framework, I soon realised that the immovable forces exterior to the NGO would not provide an adequate platform for an action research to take place. On the other hand, a case study would enable me to investigate and suggest actions that could lead to transformative change within the NGO 'for wider application or to illustrate problems in policy or practice' (Costley et al., 2010, p. 89).

In my case study, I have chosen to focus on qualitative data rather than quantitative, and it appeared that a critical ethnographic reflection that incorporated critical theory and critical pedagogy would be the most authentic approach. Costley et al. (2010, p. 84) emphasise that ‘critical theory regards reality as being shaped over time by a wide range of social and cultural values, with knowledge subject to individual and cultural construction’. This approach therefore sought historical and structural insights that would allow for a critique of the status quo and enable emancipatory action. In this light, when taking into account the educational paradigms of teaching and learning with adults in the NGO, it appeared that the educational theory of andragogy would be the most suitable method to develop my critical pedagogy in this context.

This research design would allow for an unbiased reflection and critical analysis, providing opportunities for critical pedagogy to emerge, while focusing on myself as a critical being. Further reflections triggered by the tutorials, the readings and the considerations made in my TMAs allowed me to reorganise my initially too broad focus and shift the emphasis from the exterior forces surrounding the NGO to the operations within the NGO. I realised that I was not an insider of the external socio-political forces in Viet Nam, and that I could not influence those forces for transformative change. My primary role as an insider-researcher was to be critical in order to find out whether transformative change was needed and how it could be implemented or facilitated within the NGO.

Taking into account my ‘social situatedness’ (Vygotsky, 1962 in Costley et al., 2010, p. 1) in this context, this critical theory case study therefore inquired into how I could develop my own critical pedagogy and facilitate or identify opportunities for transformative change within the NGO to promote equity, diversity and inclusion, according to the following question and sub-questions:

### **Research question**

How can social justice be improved within the NGO for the equity, diversity and inclusion of its constituents according to its vision and mission?

### **Sub-questions**

What forms of knowledge can be identified within the NGO?

Why is an improvement of social justice needed?

How can I transform the current situation?

- A brief outline and rationale for your research methodology, clearly stating why it is relevant for your critical research project

Throughout this experience as an insider-researcher, ethics was a crucial element in developing trust among all the participants. As the focus of the NGO's operations is all about disability, health and education, care and confidentiality were imperative. Pseudonyms were used and permission from the NGO was sought prior to using any doctored images or data gathered, with particular caution when dealing with confidential or sensitive material, as recommended by Costley et al. (2010). Haraway's (1991, in Costley et al., 2010, p. 30) comment on how 'knowledge claims can be treated differently according to the socio-economic positioning and location of the subjects or research and the researchers' has helped me reflect on the potential biases of my critical theory case study. I realised that in my context, I was a white, Western-European person with a democratic background. None of these characteristics were shared by the other participants (NGO staff and constituents), and I therefore needed to ensure that I was not influencing with my own positioning the data I was collecting. This consideration guided the careful formulation of my questions and follow-up questions, and it helped me reflect on my ethical responsibility in conforming to the local laws and norms of Viet Nam.

The data collection was informed by Costley et al.'s (2010, p. 89) description of the ethnographic approach as 'going into (or being in) "the field" and collecting primarily unstructured data through methods such as observation, discussions and interviews to explore and illustrate a social situation'. The data available for collection in my context included photography, observations, field and anecdotal notes, historical and administrative evidence, and, as a primary source of information, interviews and group discussions (semi-structured and unstructured). The framework of this research was designed through overlapping phases implemented over a nine-month period (a brief outline of the trimesters is detailed in appendix 3).

The primary stage of my research involved identifying information according to Bronfenbrenner's (1977, in Hedegaard, 2009) meso, micro and macro objectives. These three models of child development were used according to a cultural-political approach as exemplified in Hedegaard's (2009) research. Bronfenbrenner's macrosystem identifies 'overarching institutional patterns of culture or subculture, such as economic, social, educational, legal, and political systems' (Hedegaard, 2009, p. 65). The mesosystem allows the identification of the relationships and interrelations between major settings, while the microsystem can illustrate the complexities of the person and their environment.

After this initial stage of coding, the data was formulated against the forms of knowledge and discourses stipulated by McLaren (2007). These forms of knowledge were subsequently synthesised

into various discourses that resonated from the information I attained. This process increased my level of criticality, helping me recognise various forms of knowledge that I had missed, identify discourses that strongly resonated within the data and broaden my ability to critically understand all parties within the experience.

The next phase involved the application of a taxonomy of criticality, which allowed me to consider myself as a primary focus, as well as those intertwined within the data. The synthesis of data informed the critical taxonomies I incorporated, which, in turn, promoted the action or evidence of andragogy and the development of critical pedagogy of others as well as myself. The first model of criticality I applied is Brookfield's (2005, in McArdle and Mansfield, 2007) four traditions of criticality:

- 1) ideology critique – ways people learn to recognise the uncritical, unjust acceptance of ideologies embedded in everyday situations;
- 2) psychoanalysis and psychotherapy – adult criticality and reappraisal as a result of trauma;
- 3) analytic philosophy and logic – focussing on logical fallacies, distinguishing bias and fact, opinion and evidence with different forms of reasoning;
- 4) pragmatic constructivism – rejecting universality and generalisations of truth and looking to build on reform and continuous experimentation.

The use of these four traditions created overlapping connections with the first two phases of the analysis and opened the door to the use of the educational theory of andragogy. Andragogy is an educational theory focused on adult learning, and its application helped me understand how adults learned in my context through the use of six key assumptions mentioned in Pugsley (2011) (see appendix 1). This taxonomy of adult learning was also applied to my own position in critical pedagogy, and was supported in this respect by a critical theory analysis that provided an authentic insight into myself as the insider-researcher.

The concept of 'reflexivity' or 'self-awareness', as described in Costley et al. (2010, p. 116), 'is at the heart of good qualitative research'. The last phase therefore involved the application of the critical theory taxonomy by Barnett (1997, in Ford et al., 2004) through four levels of criticality (critical skills, reflexivity, refashioning of traditions and transformatory critique) that consider the domains of knowledge, self and world as a conceptualisation of criticality that promotes self-reflection and action (see appendix 1). In this phase, I acknowledged the influences of the self as well as the exterior influences, and used this reflective practice to guide the final steps of evaluating, assessing and making recommendations for transformative change.

- A brief critical discussion of the research methods you used, with reflection on their strengths and weaknesses

In coding and categorising the data collected, I found both strengths and weaknesses in the various research methods I used.

In focusing on a qualitative approach, I found that the ethnographic method was a very powerful tool because, as outlined by Woods (1986, in Costley et al., 2010, p. 119), it is ‘concerned with what people are, how they behave, how they interact together. It aims to uncover their beliefs, values, perspectives, motivations, and how all these things develop or change over time or from situation to situation’. Ethnography allows the insider-researcher to collect a broad range of material from several sources and uncover different perspectives through triangulation, leaving less room for bias. For example, if we look at appendix 2a and 2b, we see an ordered provision of resources, in a back drop of communist Viet Nam, amongst well-clothed children with shoes on their feet, sitting at large polished wooden tables in a U-shape with government officials at the front of the town hall. This is one point of view that we get from just looking at the pictures and experiencing the ceremony without understanding it. After digging deeper into data through visiting families, speaking with the NGO General Manager and learning more about the context, I was able to identify my initial bias. I realised that these families had been assessed by the NGO, and the Mid-Autumn festival was the most important event of the year for them, and therefore they were most probably wearing their best clothes and their only pair of shoes that day.

One of the most fruitful research methods was observation and direct experience. This enabled me to use all my senses in gaining an awareness of my immediate environment and provided me with more powerful experiences and sources of data. As described by Costley et al. (2010, p. 121), observations allow to fully ‘absorb the cultures, sub-cultures, mores, customs and power relationships of the workplace’.

The most important method of collection of data for the critical reflection in this case study was the inclusion of structured and unstructured interviews. Early conversations with locals and NGO staff immediately confuted my initial assumptions and helped me realise I needed to redirect my whole research. Interviews were the quickest and most reliable tool available to regularly assess whether I was moving towards the right direction. This method of collection of data was incredibly useful in the initial phase (verifying my understanding and confirming or discrediting my assumptions), but also throughout the research (adding more details and perspectives to other data and verifying

whether the NGO was receptive and open to my suggestions and ideas) and at the very end (evaluating the actual impact of my research on the NGO).

Despite the strengths I identified, there are concerns of possible downsides to any reflective research case study. Costley et al. (2010) raise awareness regarding the risk of a generalisation of findings. My selection of an ethnographical methodology would allow for multiple sources of data that could be scrutinised in a triangulation using critical taxonomies. Some of the weaknesses related to ethnography are to do with ethics and truth. As suggested by Costley et al. (2010), I have to acknowledge that my approach and methods underpin my point of view, and therefore certain constraints of time, context and position in this environment have to be recognised. The rationalisation of my ethnography has to take into account the ethical codes within the context, and from this, any approach forward for transformative action must feel right for all those involved. This inclusion in ethnography is transparent in my research so that there is a 'shared perspective of inclusion, and a vision that does not adhere to the "expert lens"' on my behalf, as mentioned by Paige-Smith and Rix (2011, p. 34).

- A succinct presentation and analysis of the findings from your data

In appendix 3, I have outlined my research methods and provided examples of the type of experiences my data originated from. The findings from my data are provided below in the form of answers to my research question and sub-questions.

### What forms of knowledge can be identified within the NGO?

Contrary to my initial assumptions, my analysis revealed a lack (but also a lack of need) of emancipatory knowledge within the NGO. My first perceptions of hegemony and ideology were caused by my bias towards the exterior forces. The data demonstrated that the operations of the organisation were not affected by relations of power and domination. On the contrary, compliance with external rules not only was a demonstration of practical knowledge, but it was also instrumental to the achievement of the organisational goals. This aspect will be further discussed in part B.

In terms of practical knowledge, the data analysis shows a strong presence in some areas and deep gaps in other areas. The organisation was highly engaged with its constituents and showed resolve in doing as much as possible with the resources they had available. In my direct observations and



experiences, I gathered plenty of evidence demonstrating their knowledge in how to take action in the field. Such capability comes partly from experience (the manager of the NGO has been running it since 2006) and partly from a deep understanding of the context. On the other end of the spectrum, I registered a lack of knowledge in fundamental areas such as information and communication technology (ICT), marketing, communications techniques and outreach. There was also a need for improvement in the vocational skills of the staff working with special needs children at the NGO's Programme of Development (POD) facility.

Technical knowledge was not relevant to this context. None of the knowledge needed in the daily operations was scientifically measurable because the main focus of such actions is on human relationships.

### Why is an improvement of social justice needed?

Contrary to my initial assumptions, I realised that an improvement of social justice within the NGO was not possible and not needed. My initial ideas of devising some form of transformative action that would have a direct impact on social justice inside the organisation was discredited because based on the false premise that external forces were hindering the NGO's potential and therefore needed to be fought. Nevertheless, an improvement in social justice is certainly needed in the province. The transformative action that I have identified as necessary for the benefit of the organisation aims at filling the gaps in their practical knowledge and has the potential to trigger a process that will eventually bring an improvement in social justice for the constituents in the long term.

### How can I transform the current situation?

My contribution consisted in giving guidance for transformative action and focused on improving practical knowledge that would provide support, skills and growth for the NGO. The changes I instigated and/or suggested to improve the staff's practical knowledge included:

1. inviting professional physiotherapists from outside Viet Nam to provide professional training for the carers in the POD facility to improve their services in situ;
2. suggesting that their newly acquired knowledge be shared with the parents of the children attending the POD facility;
3. suggesting the organisation of courses in the province to share the knowledge with parents of disabled children who could not attend the centre; this would enable them to overcome the social stigma attached to disabled children and carry out physiotherapy at home;

4. suggesting that the NGO provide the families with sustainable resources and knowledge on how to use them, besides the consumables that are usually distributed (for instance, provide families with seeds and instructions on how to plant and grow trees etc.);
5. training the staff in ICT and communication techniques, including the improvement of their newsletter, website, communications with international sponsors and donors, creative ways to attain sustainable international government grants, and easier methods for sponsorship payments directly to the NGO (see appendix 2c);
6. creating new channels for the recruitment of international volunteers with skills that matched the NGO's needs;
7. suggesting that part of the volunteers' tasks involve training the NGO staff and local long-term volunteers, rather than just implementing beneficial but short-term action that the local staff would not be able to replicate or sustain;
8. suggesting that the volunteers complete a mandatory induction before starting the placement.

How can social justice be improved within the NGO for the equity, diversity and inclusion of its constituents according to its vision and mission?

Based on the answers to the three sub-questions above, it is clear that my initial question needs to be slightly reformulated to shift the focus on how social justice can be improved in the province through the NGO, rather than within the NGO. The results of this case study show that an improvement in practical knowledge within the NGO will bring about benefits for the constituents and a long-term improvement in social justice for the whole province. With the newly-acquired skills, and with a system in place that ensures the continuous acquisition of new skills, the NGO will be able to help more people in the province. This will be possible not only through an increase in funding and resources thanks to a better outreach programme, but also in the dissemination of knowledge that will be passed on to the families in need. Sharing sustainable resources and knowledge with the constituents will empower them to be active participants in the improvement of their conditions, rather than passive recipients.

- A commentary on the way in which your study reflects key themes and theoretical paradigms explored in the module

The ability of the government to issue a certificate to a family that declares their status as 'poor' exemplifies a physical segregation of class. However, reflecting on Fforde's (2011) research about

the changing political structures, it was clear in my experience that this discourse of class could be seen as ‘dialectical contradictions, or the “unity of opposites”’ (McLaren 2007, p. 9) between labour and capital. This unity could imply that my proposed actions/suggestions can be a blending of differences, which reflects to some degree the political evolution mentioned in Fforde (2011).

Much of my information illustrated macro objectives that formulated the patterns and cultures of operating discourses. When I spoke to the NGO staff before my first family visit, they said, ‘We have been given notification from the government on possible new children that need our help, so we are going to do an assessment’ (JG, 2016). This overlaps with the primary stages of andragogy in showing how they have the knowledge to draw upon (Pugsley, 2011). The majority of the information I found related to McLaren’s (2007) practical forms of knowledge. This knowledge created pathways for the conceptual understanding of my situation within this experience, as well as for problematising and becoming a critical being. I seemed to discover many discourses related to my questions such as, ‘Why is the local government involved in our resource distribution to the community?’ and, ‘How do you feel about this?’ These questions overlapped with the first step of Brookfield’s (2005, in McArdle & Mansfield, 2007) ideology critique. By being critical, I began to rethink what social justice is and what it means in the historical and cultural context of Viet Nam, rather than relying my own perspectives that related to the United Nations Human Rights articles 26 and 27. This demonstrates the beginning stages of my personal growth and critical skills according to Barnett’s (1997, in Ford et al., 2004) domains of knowledge and of the world.

The element of ‘voice’ through the multitude of interview opportunities in staff meetings, individual and group discussions and in-the-moment sharing of information during experiences in the field allowed me to stipulate a critical theoretical standpoint, while the use of the critical taxonomies opened pathways for a deeper understanding of how andragogy was connected to the context. The focus on voice and how andragogy could transform the current situation highlighted what stages of andragogy (according to Pugsley, 2011) were evident within the NGO, and even how their needs related to the needs of the outside world. The effects of Viet Nam being competitive in a global economy is complimented in Fforde (2011), who details how policy and politics of development had evolved in Vietnamese history. Fforde realises that the effect of aid practices in Viet Nam ‘generally worked within the norms of the formal overt political system as donors interfaced with it’ (2011, p.173). My realisation of this along with the history of the NGO generated my fourth level of criticality (as seen in Ford et al., 2004), which interconnected the emphasis of voice to construct adult lifelong learning, as utilised in the article by McArdle and Mansfield (2007).

- A brief reflection on how your understandings of being an insider-researcher have developed through this module.

My democratic perceptions of the NGO, myself and articles 25 and 26 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights have shifted to understanding the ‘unity of opposites’ (McLaren, 2007, p. 9) between the NGO and the exterior discourses of culture and power in Viet Nam. I realised that I began as an insider-researcher with preconceived perceptions that powered my research question, but my development of critical theory enabled me to avoid personal judgements that could have affected the way my research was undertaken. Towards the end of my placement, I felt that I was able to draw upon the shared understandings and trust of my colleagues. This is a key concept for the insider-researcher as described by Costley et al. (2010).

When I started this research, I had no idea that through the inclusion of critical taxonomies I would expose andragogy, which could then uncover ways for transformative action to come to surface within the NGO. Critical pedagogy has enlightened my own understanding of what lifelong learning is in contexts outside of an educational institution. I found that the awareness of perspective and relationships can either be problematic or give prominence to authentic critical theorising. Working in a critical framework demanded ethical considerations for trust and integrity when dealing with sensitive issues, situations and people, including those closest to you. As an insider-researcher, I was eventually able to understand the workplace, the practitioners, professionals and politics authentically and without biases. This would not have been possible without the emphasis of a critical theory framework that ‘places requirements on the researcher to pursue ethical research principles and to assess research activity in relation to what might be broadly termed social justice concerns’, as mentioned by Ozga (2000, p. 176).

### **Task B: What difference did it make?**

*2834 words*

The interview I am using here was conducted face to face with the General Manager of the NGO in the concluding stages of my nine-month volunteer experience. This woman is originally from North Viet Nam, and came to the Quang Nam province for the full-time job at the NGO. Prior to her long-term employment at the NGO, she was a teacher. She is a married mother, between the ages of 30-40 years old. She is paid wages by the NGO. This person was my supervisor throughout this process. Pseudonyms are used for the NGO and the staff, as well as a proximal location of the context within Viet Nam for privacy, safety and security. The transcription reflects the authentic voice and language of the interviewee – mistakes included. However, some areas of the interview

had to be edited for fluency, and a full transcript is available in appendix 4. This narrative provides an insight into the summation of my critical analysis in a case study that uncovers what transformative action is possible within the NGO for an improvement of equity, diversity and inclusion.

This interview resonates with the words of Soler (2013, p. 57), who sees narratives as a relevant cog in critical research and states that, ‘in order to transform learning, teaching and society for all, critical pedagogy requires reflection on lived experience and culture.’ To do this, my interview has been evaluated according to the critical theories of Barnett (1997, in Ford et al., 2004) and Brookfield (2005, in McArdle and Mansfield, 2007) throughout this case study.

- Critically evaluate the potential impact of your research project from the perspective of your interviewee. Your interview can be carried out face to face, or by telephone or Skype.

This first excerpt of the interview validates the change I deemed necessary in my research question and shows how this shift of focus has allowed for the result of this research to be more likely to be not only beneficial but also accepted and implemented by the Manager of the NGO. The conversation reported in this excerpt stems from my reflection on one specific experience in the province, where we had been giving out gift bags to ‘poor economic status’ children. The ceremony was very formal; the government officials were there and there were a certain number of people attending.

DN: Oh yes, I remember that. It is our yearly event and we cooperate with the government so that when we have volunteers from the outside come with us to the village or to an event we have to notice the government and they respond that’s ok first, because they want to protect our volunteer from something outside, like some people do harm to them, so the government make sure they have the police around to protect us.

MC: Could the organisation survive without the government’s help?

DN: No. We need to cooperate with the government, if there is no support from them, we cannot do anything. [...] We receive a list [...] and then we go directly to the family, see what they have and what their situation is. After the visit if we establish that the family needs help we tell the

government, and maybe we build a toilet block and the government builds a house.

It is clear that government inclusion is necessary and beneficial in providing direction and support to the NGO. The interviewee does mention how the NGO could not survive without government inclusion, and considering the development of politics as mentioned in the supporting article by Fforde (2011), inclusion is the key to not only the development of the NGO, but the development of national policies for the benefit of the province. If I had attempted to work around the government as I initially contemplated, the NGO would not have considered my suggested actions. Prompted by this discussion about the government, the interviewee spontaneously tells me a story about how a volunteer that did not follow their rules caused problems to the organisation. Her anecdote ends with a confirmation of how my attitude brought about beneficial results, compared to the noncompliant volunteer's attitude.

DN: That lady [...] argued with our staff, because she don't follow our policy. The policy is [...] we have to notice [notify] the government in advance for home visits to children. At that time, she was not on the list for the home visits [...] so she just follow us and the staff, even after the staff said no. She caused trouble, it was no help. It's different when a volunteer like you understands our rules and gives us the help we need. We can learn a lot more because your ideas are all accepted and good, they're relevant to us.

This part of the interview provides an insight on the discursive practice of the bad volunteer and how this demonstrates a lack of perspective that is necessary and useful for the NGO. As Costley et al. (2010, p. 191) point out, 'your work is always culturally and discursively formed and structured, being realised in languages and discourses'. My suggestion to provide a mandatory induction for new volunteers (suggestion 8 under the answer to my sub-question: How can I transform the current situation?) could reduce the chances of this happening again by helping newcomers understand their place in this context before taking any kind of action. The manager's willingness to implement this change is also evident in the last excerpt that is presented in this section.

In the next excerpt, the interviewee explains to me what, in her opinion, the NGO is lacking and needs the most in order to provide a better service to a wider community of constituents.

DN: We need someone to teach us how to do proposal writing, [...] our physiotherapists always need the skills and knowledge for good therapy. We need more knowledge on IT and how to increase the outreach because that is how we get more funds, like you suggested in your research.

The interviewee confirms that what the organisation really needs is more knowledge in various forms. As I identified in my research results, which I had shared with her during my placement and prior to this interview, the NGO has a solid foundation of practical knowledge in some areas. I was able to observe this during an evaluation of a possible poor economic status widow, where the NGO staff assessed their situation through observations and targeted questions based on a checklist that had been developed over time. What the staff are lacking is practical knowledge in the form of ICT skills and communication technology. This knowledge would be then used to get more funds, which are vital to the objectives of the organisation. Given the needs she identified, the transformation proposal detailed above under my sub-question ‘How can I transform the current situation?’ (suggestions 6 and 7 specifically, but also 5) impacted the interviewee in understanding the value of andragogy and how the adults involved would benefit from using some of the current resources they have at their disposal (such as the volunteers) to acquire more knowledge that they can implement in the future, rather than only focussing on the immediate implementation of projects that they won’t be able to sustain in the long run without external support.

In the next excerpt, the interviewee answers my question on whether they got anything out of my time with them and confirms that my presence and contribution was helpful for the organisation.

DN: Yes, we appreciate very much the time you spent with us. We got new knowledge from you. The time spent helping us with the newsletter will make it easier in the future [...]. Also, making the POD facility better than ever before, means that visitors will understand what we do and maybe donate more money. Oh and also proposal writing for a few international grants and working with our communication officer for other tasks, now she knows better how to do it.

During my nine-month placement, I gave them some of the knowledge I identified as crucial in my research study. For instance, the need for an improvement in communication with donors and

sponsors was an area where I was able to provide direct support, instigating their desire to learn more and be more skilled and independent in the future. Another example of andragogy in my critical pedagogy that impacted the interviewee was in laying foundations of improved knowledge and skills in communications and ICT (seen in suggestion 5 and 7) to sustain, build and reinforce the vision and mission to the donors and sponsors. I was able to create communication improvement to describe one example in developing the POD facility that receive weekly and daily visitors and potential donors and/or sponsors, so that it could ‘talk through the walls’ in a way that a Western visitor would better understand the NGO, their mission and decide to support it (see appendix 2c). However, the feasibility of some of the proposed actions, such as suggestions 2, 3 and 4, depends on the sustainability of adult learning. All of my suggestions require the support and action of the six key assumptions of andragogy mentioned by Pugsley (2011). Also in appendix 2c, I am seen to be engaging in the development of andragogy with the NGO. These are supportive mechanisms of Pugsley’s andragogy key steps 3, 4 and 5 (mentioned in appendix 1).

The final excerpt is part of a discussion brought on by my question on whether the NGO manager thought her and the rest of the staff were going to do anything differently in the near future.

DN: I think we can learn more from people that come, and we can look for volunteers that know the things we need, the knowledge we need, so we can do things better also when we have no volunteers, but we will train them first from now on.

MC: Are you planning on passing on more knowledge to the constituents too?

DN: I think we’re not ready. We need to know more first because the operations here need to be stable and long-term, we are only not many employees here and we can’t do everything together, learn and do and teach is too much. Maybe when we are ready we can teach and give knowledge to the families on the therapies, but we need to learn better first. So when the next physiotherapist volunteers come from the University you contacted, we ask them to teach us first instead of only do activities with the children.

The final excerpt above illustrates how the interviewee is going to apply some of the insights I provided to the future operations of the organisation. She reflected on andragogy and on the inclusion of volunteers with specific skills, and came to the conclusion that including more training for the local staff and initial training for volunteers, is crucial to support and grow the NGO for the benefit of the constituents. However, some of the proposals I put forward in my analysis seem to be



too 'advanced' or challenging to be acted upon immediately. This would call for a slow inclusion approach, where these interrelations among the major settings that contain the person at this time describe a developing mesosystem in a cultural-historical perspective of Bronfenbrenner's (1977, in Hedegaard, 2009) personal development. From this uncertainty in reflection, the need for slow inclusion, due to the transient nature of the volunteers and the time needed for the local staff to absorb new knowledge, may be the way to contribute towards these proposed actions.

- Critically reflect on how the responses of your interviewee relate to at least one key module theme and future changes you could make to your practice in relation to this module theme. In your discussion of this refer to your learning journal and your contributions to the tutor-group forum.

Without the inclusion of the critical taxonomy of Barnett (1997, in Ford et al., 2004) in my case study, I would not have been able to uncover any understanding of how the interviewee's responses relate to specific module themes in E805. This understanding of my own critical self, along with the domains of others in this research, also relied on the recognition of McLaren's (2007) forms of knowledge and discourses. These tools allowed me to deepen my perspective and the answers to my research questions.

When considering equity and inclusion in this context, it is undeniable that the variations of the perspective lens can be skewed according to an uncritical understanding of the discourses, as exemplified by this interviewee. On the other hand, a critical theoretical application on the data gained from this interviewee reinstates the existing and working structural relationships which McLaren (2007) would describe as the cultural forms, through symbols and social practices. These cultural forms are exemplified by the interviewee in the forms of the Mid-Autumn Festival, the collaboration when dealing with the 'poor economic status' constituents, the NGO's ability to not always have the government present if their operations don't include outsiders or foreign people, and how the government would allow for the NGO to grow their operations. This understanding reaffirms McLaren's (2007, p. 11) description of these cultural forms to be the 'means of economic production, the mobilisation of desire, the construction of social values, asymmetries of power/knowledge, configurations of ideologies, and relations of class, race and gender'.

As seen in the 'bad volunteer' story (in the full transcription of appendix 4), it is clear that without the use of a critical perspective lens into the NGO's operation and context, a detrimental reaction to outsider support can impact the NGO immensely. This example reinstates how Foucault's (1972, in McLaren, 2007) discursive practices may form neo-conservative discourses on part of the bad volunteer in a way that creates a dominant culture or generalisations as 'regimes of truth'

(McLaren, 2007, p. 16). This produces a discourse which ends up defining the entire context for the NGO and their conditions of any enunciative function.

The responses of the interviewee appear to be a reflection on problematising intelligence, recognising perspectives and how perspective develops, and slow inclusion, as seen in theme 1 of E805. Taking into account my engagement in the Tutor Group Forums, it is clear that my initial perspective about the context of the NGO was limited and discursively formed. I truly reflected the words of Ingeborg Kroese (2017) on the issue of ‘the me vs the we’ and the ‘unstoppable wave of individualism and result oriented approaches with a focus on effectiveness and efficiencies’. In my early engagement in the Tutor Group Forum, my attitude was almost aligned with the discursive nature of the bad volunteer the interviewee describes, blaming everything on the exterior context in the form of government and communist oppression. The changes in my own perspective reflected the necessary understanding of the perspective lens process of Rix and Paige-Smith (2011, in The Open University, 2017a), as I developed and engaged in this research. It took time for my own adjustment of common sense assumptions and perspective to develop the way I thought in my acknowledgement of ‘inclusive to who? Appropriate to who?’ (Cresswell, 2017) in the Tutor Group Forum. This is how I was able to start the process of uncovering possible transformative change that was relevant to the NGO. For the interviewee, slow inclusion, as described by Bates (2005), is about choosing the right priorities for the NGO in the form of simple actions that can be easily and effectively implemented locally and step by step, with an outlook that can create a foundation for longevity. Some of the steps that I have suggested for transformative action can be attained and are exemplified in the interviewee’s new outlook.

For my future practice, I now have the ability to consider perspectives and be critical to gain deeper knowledge and understanding of discourses and forms of knowledge before formulating my initial hypotheses. I am now a more aware critical thinker when it comes to equity, diversity and inclusion. The knowledge and understanding I have gained as an insider-researcher have developed my cognitive and practical skills to synthesise future experiences that can empower social justice (Costley et al., 2010).

By developing my ability to be a participating, insider-researcher who has engaged in a regiment of critical theory in this study, I was able to come up with an insight into how to understand equity, diversity and inclusion in critical research. The importance of social justice is not solely with the researcher and their desire to be a change-maker for an organisation. In my future practice as an insider-researcher I will be able to understand what kind of recommendations or influence I have had that can critically answer my research questions, with an awareness of bias, truth, inclusion and perspective. This awareness of my own criticality is a reflection of the narrative of my own life and

the lived experience as a critical being. The disruption of discourse and forms of knowledge has refined my relationship with the context and has constructed an understanding of what implications can occur in andragogy for myself, the interviewee and the NGO. I realise that even as an insider-researcher, I am still an outsider to some degree, especially in my context. This unchangeable factor must be acknowledged through the importance given to slow inclusion, so that any kind of transformative action is a unique and individualised reformation of social justice for their real world.

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## Appendix 1

### United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (2017)

#### Article 25.

(1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

(2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

#### Article 26.

(1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

(2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

(3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

Levels of criticality	Domain of Knowledge	Domain of the Self	Domain of the World
4. Transformatory critique	Knowledge critique	Reconstruction of self	Critique-in-action (collective reconstruction of world)
3. Refashioning of traditions	Critical thought (malleable traditions of thought)	Development of self within traditions	Mutual understanding and development of traditions
2. Reflexivity	Critical reflection (reflection on one's understanding)	Self-reflection (reflection on one's one projects)	Reflective practice ('metacompetence', 'adaptability', 'flexibility')
1. Critical skills	Discipline-specific critical thinking skills	Self-monitoring to given standards and norms	Problems-solving (means-end instrumentalism)
Forms of criticality	Critical Reason	Critical self-reflection	Critical action

Figure 1 Levels, Domains and Forms of Critical Being ('A curriculum for critical being', Barnett, 1997, p. 103).

Barnett (1997, in Ford et al., 2004)

## ANDRAGOGY

The term **andragogy** refers to the ways in which adults learn and this is distinct from pedagogy (the ways in which children learn). **Malcolm Knowles** identified key assumptions about adult learners which can be of help to medical educators.

- 1 Adults need to know the relevance of something before they begin to learn.
- 2 Adults are capable of self-direction.
- 3 Adults have a wealth of experience to draw on.
- 4 Adults have a readiness to learn what they need to perform effectively.
- 5 Adults need to be orientated to learning that has real-life application.
- 6 Adults respond best to internal motivation.

Pugsley (2011)

## Appendix 2

### a) Rural house visits of NGO constituents with poor economic status



**b) Distributing resources during a ceremony with government officials**



**c) AIHC office and POD facility with NGO staff and myself engaged in andragogy and facility transformation**





### Appendix 3

#### Brief outline of experiences and research methods

Quarterly periods (months)	Research methods	Experiences	Frequency of experiences
Quarter 1 October, November, December	Initial semi-structured interviews with NGO staff, observations, field and anecdotal notes, photos, staff unstructured (discussions) interviews.	Staff meetings, constituent visits in the province, organised events with the government (TET Festival), delivery of donor sponsored resources to NGO constituents, newsletter and website development, planning for POD facility at the NGO.	1 Staff meeting / Quarter 1 visit with a donor 2 visits to two families/children supported by the NGO and who are labelled 'poor economic status' 1 visit to a family/child for 'poor economic status' assessment to attain NGO assistance 1 government-led event (TET Festival) to distribute NGO resources
Quarter 2 January, February, March	Observations, field and anecdotal notes, photos, staff unstructured (discussions, staff/group meetings) interviews, historical and organisational documentation (emails, grant funding, timeline, facility upgrade to the POD facility).	Newsletter and website development, grant writing for international funding requests, constructing a historical timeline about the NGO, international fundraising for sponsorship, constituent visits and appraisal visits within the province, donor visits and inspections with donors to constituents, completion of POD facility upgrade at the NGO.	1 Staff meeting / Quarter 2 visits to two families/children supported by the NGO and who are labelled 'poor economic status' 1 government-led event (Milk distribution) to provide NGO resources
Quarter 3 April, May, June	Concluding semi-structured interviews with NGO staff, observations, field and anecdotal notes, photos.	Newsletter and website development, NGO promotional work through social media, delivery of donor sponsored resources to sponsored NGO constituents.	1 Staff meeting / Quarter 2 visits to two families/children supported by the NGO and who are labelled 'poor economic status' 1 government-approved event (Sex Education programme and Vitamins) to educate and distribute NGO knowledge and resources



## **Appendix 4**

### **Text of the interview with the NGO General Manager**

MC: One experience that I reflected on is one where we had been giving out gift bags to 'poor economic status' children, and the government officials were there. It was very formal, and there were a certain number of people attending...

DN: Oh yes, I remember that. It is our yearly event and we cooperate with the government so that when we have volunteers from the outside come with us to the village or to an event we have to notice the government and they respond that's ok first, because they want to protect our volunteer from something outside, like some people do harm to them, so the government make sure they have the police around to protect us.

MC: Could the organisation survive without the government's help?

DN: No. We need to cooperate with the government, if there is no support from them, we cannot do anything.

MC: How would you explain what this 'poor economic status' is?

DN: First we receive a list from the government, but also a list from the hospital and word of mouth, maybe others living near come to talk to us if they know other people very poor, after talking with us we get some information and then we go directly to the family, see what they have and what their situation is. After the visit if we establish that the family needs help we tell the government, and maybe we build a toilet block and the government builds a house.

MC: You have had many volunteers coming to AIHC over a long time; many different ones come and go. Are most of the volunteers from a Western-European background?

DN: Most of our volunteers are from Australia.

MC: Ah ok. As we know, you're a Vietnamese local person, from the North originally but living here now. For me, I understand the differences of history and politics, and my question for you is really about that, because if most of your volunteers are Australian, their background is a democratic background where it is not necessarily the same as what this country is about or what the history of Viet Nam is about. So those things are quite in contrast. What are some of the problems or differences you see with having that as the background of your people who come, compared to what reality is and what history is here?

DN: Ok, I understand your question. So most of our volunteers are from Australia, USA, New Zealand, some from Canada, and England and other countries, so even for the culture and people are different, but when they come here they are flexible in accepting the new concepts, they understand the work we are doing. For example, some of the volunteers first they come here and they see that what we do is different in the caring for the children. But then they understand that we explain to them it is different, for example before we had a nurse volunteer come and work for us and work for us for two years, and we had Vietnamese staff working in the health programme. In our health organisation policy, and the volunteers before they come they see and understand the policy before they come.

MC: And so they get a better understanding of what they are coming into? Have you had any bad experiences with volunteers?

DN: Yes, we have.

MC: Why were they bad?

DN: So, firstly in 2013 we had a social worker volunteer, she came from an Australian aid group. Firstly, she wanted to volunteer with us for two years, but then after one year she quit the job and report to the organisation that we don't have any projects, but they only received one side, they don't ask us for our explanation or ideas about what she says is wrong or right, and then they decide that what the volunteer report to them organisation was true. I only know about this from other volunteer that come from that organisation because in the beginning, the volunteer has orientation, and the volunteer come to [the town] and when they came they told me about that problem. And that's how I know about that problem. That lady, before she left, I was on maternity leave at that time, she had argued with our staff, because she don't follow our policy. The policy is, as I told you from the beginning, that we work

with the government, we have to notice [notify] the government in advance for home visits to children. At that time, she was not on the list for the home visits, this day she was not on the list, so she just follow us and the staff, even after the staff said no. She caused trouble, it was no help. It's different when a volunteer like you understands our rules and gives us the help we need. We can learn a lot more because your ideas are all accepted and good, they're relevant to us.

MC: That is sad. I loved my time with you at AIHC, I'm glad that wasn't me.

[both in laughter]

MC: What is something you think the organisation is lacking and needs the most?

DN: We need someone to teach us how to do proposal writing, fund-seeking. Our carers, our physiotherapists always need the skills and knowledge for good therapy. We need more knowledge on IT and how to increase the outreach because that is how we get more funds like you suggested in your research for us.

MC: Did you get anything out of my time with you?

DN: Yes, we appreciate very much the time you spent with us. We got new knowledge from you. The time spent helping us with the newsletter will make it easier in the future when we have to send out our quarterly newsletter. Also, making the POD facility better than ever before, means that visitors will understand what we do and maybe donate more money. Oh and also proposal writing for a few international grants and working with our communication officer for other tasks, now she knows better how to do it.

MC: Are you going to do anything differently in the near future?

DN: I think we can learn more from people that come, and we can look for volunteers that know the things we need, the knowledge we need, so we can do things better also when we have no volunteers, but we will train them first from now on.

MC: Are you planning on passing on more knowledge to the constituents too?

DN: I think we're not ready. We need to know more first because the operations here need to be stable and long-term, we are only not many employees here and we can't do everything together, learn and do and teach is too much. Maybe when we are ready we can teach and give knowledge to the families on the therapies, but we need to learn better first. So when the next physiotherapist volunteers come from the University you contacted, we ask them to teach us first instead of only do activities with the children.



# Ethics Assessment

## Masters in Education

Fill in section 1 of this document with your personal details and brief information about your research. For section 2, please assess your research using the following questions and click yes or no as appropriate. If there is any possibility of significant risk please tick yes. Even if your list contains all “no” you should still return your completed checklist so your tutor/supervisor can assess the proposed research.

Section 1: Project details		
a.	Student name	Michael Charles Fransen Cresswell
b.	PI	C5561184
c.	Project title	<i>An andragogical, critical theory case study to develop critical pedagogy, in understanding and transforming social justice for a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) in the Quang Nam province, Viet Nam</i>
d.	Supervisor/tutor	Dr Diana Harris
e.	Qualification	Masters in Education <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
		<del>Masters in Childhood and Youth</del> <input type="checkbox"/>
f.	MA pathway (where applicable)	
g.	Intended start date for fieldwork	01 October 2016
h.	Intended end date for fieldwork	7 September 2017
i.	Country fieldwork will be conducted in  <i>If you are resident in the UK and will be conducting your research abroad please check <a href="http://www.fco.gov.uk">www.fco.gov.uk</a> for advice on travel.</i>	Viet Nam

Section 2: Ethics Assessment		Yes	No
1	Does your proposed research need initial clearance from a 'gatekeeper' (e.g. Local Authority, head teacher, college head, nursery/playgroup manager)?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Have you checked whether the organisation requires you to undertake a 'police check' or appropriate level of 'disclosure' before carrying out your research? <sup>1</sup>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Have you indicated how informed consent will be obtained from your participants (including children less than 16 years old, school pupils and immediate family members)? Your consent letters/forms must inform participants that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. <sup>2</sup>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Will your proposed research design mean that it will be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge/consent at the time (e.g. covert observation of people in non-public places)? If so have you specified appropriate debriefing procedures? <sup>3</sup>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Does your proposed design involve repetitive observation of participants, (i.e. more than twice over a period of more than 2-3 weeks)? Is this necessary? If it is, have you made appropriate provision for participants to renew consent or withdraw from the study half-way through? <sup>4</sup>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Are you proposing to collect video and/or audio data? If so have you indicated how you will protect participants' anonymity and confidentiality and how you will store the data?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7	Does your proposal indicate how you will give your participants the opportunity to access the outcomes of your research (including audio/visual materials) after they have provided data?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Have you built in time for a pilot study to make sure that any task materials you propose to use are age appropriate and that they are unlikely to cause offence to any of your participants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
9	Is your research likely to involve discussion of sensitive topics (e.g. adult/child relationships, peer relationships, discussions about personal teaching styles, ability levels of individual children and/or adults)? What safeguards have you put in place to protect participants' confidentiality?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	Does your proposed research raise any issues of personal safety for yourself or other persons involved in the project? Do you need to carry out a 'risk analysis' and/or discuss this with teachers, parents and other adults involved in the research?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
11	Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
12	Will the study involve recruitment of patients or staff through the NHS or the use of NHS data?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

If you answered 'yes' to questions **12**, you will also have to submit an application to an appropriate National Research Ethics Service ethics committee (<http://www.nres.npsa.nhs.uk/>).

<sup>1</sup> You must agree to comply with any ethical codes of practice in place within the organisation (e.g. educational institution, social care setting or other workplace) in which your research will take place. If required an appropriate level of disclosure ('police check') can be obtained from the Disclosure and Barring Service (England and Wales), Disclosure Scotland, AccessNI (Northern Ireland), Criminal Records Office (Republic of Ireland), etc.

<sup>2</sup> This should normally involve the use of an information sheet about the research and what participation will involve, and a signed consent form. You must allow sufficient time for potential participants to consider their decision between the giving of the information sheet and the gaining of consent. No research should be conducted without the opt-in informed consent of participants or their caregivers. In the case of children (individuals under 16 years of age) no research should be conducted without a specified means of gaining their informed consent (or, in the case of young children, their assent) and the consent of their parents, caregivers, or guardians. This is particularly important if your project involves participants who are particularly vulnerable or unable to give informed consent (e.g. children under 16 years, people with learning disabilities, or emotional problems, people with difficulty in understanding or communication, people with identified health problems). There is additional guidance on informed consent on the Masters in Education website under Project Resources.

<sup>3</sup> Where an essential element of the research design would be compromised by full disclosure to participants, the withholding of information should be specified in the project proposal and explicit procedures stated to obviate any potential harm arising from such withholding. Deception or covert collection of data should only take place where it is essential to achieve the research results required, where the research objective has strong scientific merit and where there is an appropriate risk management and harm alleviation strategy.

<sup>4</sup> Where participants are involved in longer-term data collection, the use of procedures for the renewal of consent at appropriate times should be considered.