Researching difference to inform local policy: Outcomes from a partnership project

Ruth Boyask, Faculty of Education, University of Plymouth
Arnet Donkin, City of Plymouth, Plymouth
Sue Waite, Faculty of Education, University of Plymouth
Hazel Lawson, Graduate School of Education, University of Exeter

Practical background. Over the past few decades, diversity within schools has usually been discussed in terms of categories of pupils, such as ethnicity, gender, and [dis]ability. While these discussions have focused attention upon and changed the provision for some kinds of differences between pupils (Ainscow et al, 2007), social inequalities continue to be reproduced within schools (Ball, 2003).

Public policy has responded by recognising a wider range of differences within holistic frameworks designed to acknowledge and account for a wider range of differences (e.g. Boyask *et al.*, 2009; Every Child Matters, DfES, 2003); in practice, however, holistic responses may obscure the privilege of some kinds of difference and exclude others, subtly reproducing the inequalities associated with the divisions they intend to overcome (e.g. Reay *et al.*, 2008).

Research background. This project was developed within this broader context as part of the research team's interests and investigations in diversity. With a team of education researchers working in partnership with Plymouth City Council, we shared interests in how policy might better provide for the subtle differences between young people through taking account of their lived experiences of difference. We have recently been using person-centred methodologies for eliciting rich and personally relevant information about young people's conceptualisations of difference (see Boyask et al., 2009; Waite, Boyask & Lawson, 2010). We maintain that insights into diversity are best acquired through methods sensitive to diversity in the expression as well as the substance of the participants (e.g. allowing participants to choose personally and culturally appropriate modes of response).

Aims. A 'focus group evening' was planned as a pilot investigation to trial our person-centred methods. We wanted to find out about the most appropriate language to discuss diversity (including use of drama, visual methods, interview and conceptual mapping), to identify relevant issues and to rehearse, develop and corroborate the design of the method for a future larger project. We chose to set our study in Plymouth in the south west of England, firstly because we wanted to ground our work and develop collaborative relationships with our local educational community and secondly, because the relative homogeneity of the south west in terms of visible differences may support the development of more complex understandings about the educational effects of diversity.

Main contribution. In this paper we look at the relationship between our overall research questions (when they recollect their years in school, how do young people describe themselves and others as 'different'?; how, if at all, do they consider such differences affected their own and others' experiences in school education?) and Plymouth City Council's practical needs of attending to issues of ethnicity and racism.

Through a dialogue between the research and policy partners we develop a plan for action from the findings of our recent pilot of this study with 15 18-20 year olds that suggested that whilst some young people experienced institutionalised categories of difference in their situation, and these were enmeshed in their presented identities; for others, difference at school was a much more subjective and personal phenomenon, closely associated with life experience outside of school.

Implications. We are now using the information from this 'pilot' project to develop further research and work with wider groups from local and national government to explore the interface between social group identity, such as ethnicity, and subjective experience. We intend developing resources that demonstrate how the effects of social categories are influenced by context, using a loose framing device of time, place and relationships to explain contextual variations and how they impact upon individual experience. Through this method we aim to help policy-makers interrogate the generalisations implicit in the social statistics that they rely upon, and develop the sophistication of their understanding on the relationships between categorisation and outcomes for individuals, and how contexts might be manipulated to be more equitable.

Introduction

There are inequities within society that manifest as trends in the social outcomes for some groups of people, groups defined through ethnicity, gender, class, disability for example. Yet individuals are unique, experience group membership differently and consequently have different outcomes. For me [Ruth], this highlights a dilemma for social policy, to be confronted in the pursuit of social justice: if policy-makers respond only to group needs and redistribute social goods accordingly then individual

needs will be oftentimes overlooked; however, emphasising the uniqueness of each and every individual and attending to needs on that basis homogenises difference and is likely to reproduce existing social inequalities within society. While social policy has traditionally been concerned with redistribution of social goods along group lines, there is a tendency in recent policy initiatives to focus upon providing for the needs of individuals, articulated through national policies such as 'Every Child Matters' (DfES, 2003) and 'Personalised Learning' (DfES, 2006). The social sciences have long sought to resolve the relationship and tensions between the individual and society theoretically (for example, Tajfel's (1974) theory of social identity in social psychology or Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration in sociology); however, while such arguments are theoretically robust and even translate quite readily to policy texts, conceiving of how their subtleties might work to influence practice is much more difficult (see Boyask et al, 2009a). Whilst the dominant assumption about the relationship between policy and practice is one of transmission, the actualisation of policy is inevitably much more complex (Ball & Bowe, 1992; Kaur et al, 2008). So for example, the individual has been inserted at the level of policy rhetoric in policies such as those above, yet implementation efforts continue to be centred upon social categorisation (Boyask et al, 2009a).

It was a recent conversation with our local authority partner [Arnet] that particularly highlighted this problem for us. In a discussion on what our partnership and the results of our small scale study might contribute to his work and that of his colleagues in the Local Authority, he said that "we can only work within those established categories that are handed down to us" (Arnet, conversation 25 January 2010). Arnet experiences the weight of authority conveyed through national policy, and finds his capacity to define and act upon difference limited by handed-down categories. When enacting policy from the top down he says that…

> … it's easy to forget that what we are working with are human beings who have a complex multiplicity of identities and that the way any individual will experience life will not be as a black person or as a looked after child but actually they will experience life through the interactions that they have with a whole range of different people and each of those people that they interact with will actually create their identity in a slightly different way.

In essence, Arnet lives the central dilemma between social and individual difference that we are intending to address through our work together. It has been the intention of our work to date to refine our knowledge of non-categorical experiences of difference through researching the subjective experiences of young people in relation to difference and diversity and to use this knowledge for developing nuanced practices in school and other social institutions that neither homogenise nor over-generalise difference. To extend his capacity to equitably respond to difference, Arnet must mediate between his utilisation of social group categories and his recognition of unique difference, and negotiate the potentially over-generalising effects of the former and homogenising effects of the latter. Whilst his reflection upon the complex multiple identities of our young people participants reminds me that we share theoretical conceptualisations of difference, his accountability to national policy frameworks highlights the complexity of using these conceptualisations within practice. I am mindful of the difficulties and perhaps even impossibility of our task. In this paper my co-authors and I [Ruth] draw upon our project that is working towards more equitable and nuanced responses to difference, through a partnership between university researchers and a local authority. We proffer our hopes for working towards solutions, and also lay bare some of the difficulties we have experienced in taking forward our project. We recount the exchange between the partners of this project through a dialogue between Ruth (researcher) and Arnet (policy adviser). Ruth writes the main text and frames transcribed elements of a conversation between Ruth and Arnet, drawing upon the report of the collaborative small scale study co-authored with Hazel and Sue. The conversation was centred on the findings of the study, Arnet's response to the report of those findings and a discussion on how we might use those findings with others at Plymouth City Council.

Study Findings

The project team consists of three university researchers (from two universities in the South West of England) and a senior advisor to a local authority within the South West region, in the urban centre of Plymouth. The South West of England is a particularly important place to examine difference. It is accountable to national strategies regarding diversity, yet demographically there are fewer apparent differences than in other regions in England. While Plymouth is distinctively more diverse in its ethnic and religious communities than other smaller areas and centres in the South West, compared with other English cities it is relatively culturally homogenous. Plymouth differs quite

markedly from multi-cultural, multi-faith London, whose problems are normalised within most national policy (Ball, 2008). We are interested in how difference is experienced within our particular social context, and in what respects these experiences of difference might be better served by policies which resonate with the nature and characteristics of the population within this particular locality. We are attempting to find ways to negotiate between social and individual differences, researching specific experiences of difference and identifying within our data, discourses of social and individual difference.

There pre-exist substantial datasets and recurrent data gathering within both research and policy spheres that distinguish on the basis of social group difference (for example, the National Pupil Database). While such approaches are concerned with the application of predetermined categories of difference to the experiences of the researched, the categories themselves are not fixed. Changing concepts of equity result in changes to the categories. For example, as the human rights discourse embodied in the United Nations declaration of 1945 fragmented and came to include race and gender rights, it became more important for social provision that government agencies tracked ethnicity and sex (Boyask et al, 2009a). As individual differences assume greater importance within the current diversity discourse, categorisation also changes. Arnet identifies a new category he has been given to work with:

> It is interesting that we now have got a new category around socio-economic deprivation, so that has suddenly been identified and recognised who you are, if you are a white working class boy. It has been there for a while, but now it is officially there. So now we can actually target resources into that area.

Recognition may occur unofficially or emerge through the normal course of his work, but Arnet attributes significance to official recognition, in that it enables him to put in place processes for redistributing social goods that are intended to change the material conditions of recognised identities. Yet his comment also implies that difficulties may arise when local authorities work from policies that recognise diversity or individual differences and not discrete social group categories. How do you make decisions about targeting resources without official categories? The categories that influence policy concerned with social provision have proliferated, and the increase in numbers is also accompanied by substantive Data gathering has extended beyond categorisation to collect information about personal differences. For example the variables included in the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)'s *Longitudinal Study of Young People in England*

(LSYPE) are intended to measure both social group differences (e.g. parental socio-economic status as a measure of class) and individual differences (e.g. personal characteristics). While we are yet to determine how best policy makers may make use of knowledge about individual differences to enhance social provision, we feel that improved understanding of the ways that young people differ from one another is important. However, we think the methods of data collection used by studies such as LSYPE do not go far enough. The LSYPE data collection, consisting of a questionnaire completed through face-to-face interview and some self-completion, makes assumptions about and constrains possible responses. The survey defines which individual differences between the young people are significant to their outcomes.

Our empirical work to date has started from a premise that young people themselves are a valuable source for insights on difference, to the extent that they can inform us about the kinds of difference significant for policy and practice. We maintain that these insights are best acquired through methods sensitive to diversity and reflect *how* participants choose to express their experience of difference as their substantive understandings of differences. (e.g. allowing participants to choose personally and culturally appropriate modes of response) (Waite, Boyask & Lawson, 2010). In February 2009 Plymouth City Council funded a pilot study that explored methods for prompting and capturing young peoples' recollections of difference throughout their life course, and generated some preliminary findings about the nature of those differences (Boyask *et al.*, 2009b). We recruited 40 18-20 year olds whose 'home town' was Plymouth and invited them to attend a research evening. 17 young people attended the evening and two chose to withdraw by leaving the session early. The evening started with a 45 minute performance by four actors from the Mirror Mirror theatre company, who used Playback theatre (see Rowe, 2007) to stimulate the participants' recollections of difference at school. For the first four minutes each of the actors briefly told a story of difference from their own experience, and their narrative was followed by them and their fellow actors "playing back" or acting out the story. These were followed by narratives from the participant audience, similarly played back by three of the actors and facilitated by the fourth in the role of conductor. During the following 55 minutes the participants were broken up into three groups facilitated by the Playback actors and observed by researchers undertaking three different activities. The first activity was a small group discussion on words and ideas about difference, intended to explore appropriate language to use with young people with different educational histories. After this discussion participants were asked to make an

individual choice of expression to represent their recollections of difference at school (e.g. video diary, conceptual mapping, and timelines). Finally the small groups came back together to discuss the kinds of times, places and people who had been significant in their recollection. The whole group reconvened for a final 15 minute plenary session facilitated by the theatre company.

Whilst the findings from the evening were largely methodological (Waite et al, 2010), we also generated some preliminary findings that represented the young people's conceptualisations of difference. Through this project, the project team have come to characterise the tension between social categories and individual experiences as one between the general and the specific. That is, social groups or categories are formulated from generalisations about the experiences of individuals, yet our investigations of specific cases reveal that subjective experiences do not readily map onto such generalisations. Some young people within our study recalled difference as a much more personal and nuanced phenomenon, often closely associated with temporal, spatial and relational aspects of their life experience. For example, one young woman suggested there are differences between primary and secondary school. "In primary school they keep you repressed, they don't tell you about the world" (audio-recording, 19th February 2009). She suggested that growing up happens in secondary school when you are forced to confront real-life challenges like taking national qualifications. Even when experience of difference did accord with official categories, our data suggested that young people's identification with social group categories had been structured by the categorization and labelling that occurred through their engagement with social policies and institutional practices. For example, one young man who had a clear class consciousness had attended a fee-paying special school where other students were privately funded, yet his fees were paid by the local authority. Moreover, identification with a social category (either one's own or how one is identified by others) may act as a limit upon individual potential and agency rather than open opportunities and new possibilities as intended by reformist policies. This same young man complained about the class disjuncture he experienced at school and its impact on his relationships with his peers.

In follow up research team discussions, we have wrestled with the dynamic between subjective experience and the categorisation that is the main driver of funding and provision. We are interested especially in how subtler awareness of the experience of difference, which can be developed through co-constructing understanding through research, might prove useful when shaping provision

at a local level. In the next section, we consider the local authority partner's response to the research.

Responding to the Findings

The project team has engaged in conversation around issues of difference and diversity for over a year. In that time we have shared our thinking and developed some congruence in some fundamental assumptions about difference. We recognise the problematic nature of labelling, and suggest that these problems are highlighted when predetermined categories are transposed to a culture unfamiliar with such generalisations.

> Arnet: Ethnicity, how do we define that? It's not so straight forward really. The danger is if we just talk about people by those constructs we then start to define who those people are. This morning I was in a school talking about how that school could develop more positive attitudes towards pupils from different ethnicities and backgrounds and we specifically started talking about gypsy travellers and Romany groups because the area that the school is in currently has, well they haven't had anybody from that group for the last four years. So it has sort of become an unknown, however, the area is also an area that has been, one of two areas in the city that has been designated as a potential area for a new site, travellers' site, and so their attentions, if that planning permission goes through, then the likelihood is that that school will start to receive more travellers, so my question to the school was "What could you be doing to help people better and understand something of that culture", and then we started talking about who we are talking about when we are talking about gypsy and travellers….

> Ruth: because they are all different.

> Arnet: They are all different. There are those that are really travelling and who will be here for a week or two weeks and then will move on, but then there are those that actually just buy a house and live in a house but are still gypsy, Romany people and are of that tradition and ethnic background. So it is very complex…the danger is, if we just go by that label then actually we perpetuate the stereotype. So somebody comes in, you are a gypsy traveller. Tick. That's what you are, so that's how we will respond to you, but actually that person may not fit that mould.

If gypsies and travellers had been commonplace within the school, then experience alone could have helped them to recognise the variations that underpin this general category. However, developing nuanced understanding becomes more difficult in an unfamiliar culture and is more likely to result in instrumental implementation of policy. That is, the

experiences of individuals become associated with general categories, whether they hold true or not, and provision is measured through ticking boxes. This offers a powerful argument for ensuring that research on difference occurs in areas which have fewer apparent social group differences. Whilst national policy may provide for categorical difference that is determined as important at a national level, how can we support local policy-makers and practitioners (who are also working on the ground) to enact such provision when they lack insight derived from personal experience? How do you sensitise professionals to the need to respond and reflect upon individuals' differences?

> Arnet: I guess one of the things that we are trying to promote in the city is for schools to develop links with schools in other areas, whether it is abroad or whether it is in the UK. And because it is about actually meeting people and actually having relationships, dialogues with individual people. In a sense when you meet somebody you don't put them into a box do you? You don't sort of suddenly in your head go 'tick'. You might categorise in a very broad sense. You might look at somebody and think that person is black or that person is Asian, but you wouldn't go into that sort of fine detail that we go into, in that way of categorising ethnicity, through policy. What you are more interested in, what we notice with children is that they very quickly look for areas of similarity. So they very quickly start talking about music interests or sport interests and discover actually, you know, we both like the same rap music or actually they like Goth music and we like whatever. And that is the difference. It suddenly starts to emerge, we don't like them not because they are Asian, but we don't like them because they don't like rap music and we like this music. And it is sometimes as simple as that. Or they like Arsenal and we like Tottenham. And that is what is on top for them as opposed to the ethnicity, sometimes we as policy makers jump to the wrong conclusions about why people don't get on because actually there is, if you like, street culture, which is transient and it's those things that sometimes make more difference to young people than what we perceive to be categories of difference. We are talking about how we actually build relationships with and understanding of people from different cultures. It is not just as simple as saying we will try and expose you to Asian people socially - such a broad category.

Through Arnet's responsibility for addressing disparities in the social outcomes of different ethnic groups, he is able to create opportunities for schools to expand their knowledge of difference through extending their experiences. However, in the preceding paragraph Arnet is teasing out the subtleties of difference, revealing that the activity he promotes under the auspices of provision for ethnic minorities may have little direct connection with ethnic categories. When the subtleties that Arnet describes are compared with our study's findings on the nature of young people's concepts of difference we find there are two main implications. First, Arnet's view corresponds to our finding that young people's conceptualisations of difference are phenomenological rather than categorical, and a result of their particular set of experiences. Arnet suggests provision should similarly be experiential, and that widening experience will improve relationships between people of different ethnic backgrounds. This suggests that successful policy interventions can be developed at the level of experience and that enacting such policy in practice requires awareness of how understanding is formed by experience and relating experience to pre-existing schema. However, a second implication corresponds to the potentially miseducative nature of experience (Dewey, 1938). The second finding from the pilot study was that some young people's conceptualisations of difference were categorical to a greater degree than others, and this appeared to be directly related to their experiences. Through their encounters with social policy and provision they became more sensitised to the categories used to differentiate one group from another within social institutions. In the case of the young man in the example above, this had negative implications for how he viewed differences in terms of both his own identification as someone who was different and how he viewed others as different from himself.

These implications warrant further consideration within an environment where difference is exceptional, such as the case of ethnic diversity in the South West, not least because of the difficulties people working at the local authority level have in defining difference for themselves or responding to the differences they encounter in their particular contexts. If policy-workers lack the awareness or autonomy to define and intervene in the conditions of their own specific and local circumstances, their professional practices can have profoundly miseducative effects.

> Arnet: Our capacity [to define difference] is to work within those established categories [such as ethnicity] and to signpost to schools and other agencies the need to prioritise, or not, activity for those groups and according to some fairly tight empirical data which will be about achievement or about exclusion or health data and so on, and the moving around of resources, financial resources and other resources to meet perceived needs within those categories and then to support that by a layer of training so that the resources get used in a way that we believe is going to be most effective to tackle what ever the issue is. So yes, within the local authority it's quite limited in terms of, you know, our manoeuvrability on this.

The level of manoeuvrability at the local authority level should be viewed within a wider national policy context. National drivers such as the government's National Strategies for schooling (DCSF, N.D.)

reduce the autonomy of local authorities and affect their capacity to make regional education decisions.

> Arnet: The way we have to work is defined, via national strategies, they set the agenda basically and we have to respond to that agenda. Whilst national strategies are not compulsory, it's very hard to do something outside of that agenda. You have to be very clear and committed to wanting to go in a different direction from national strategies. It will be interesting to see what happens after 2011 when, you know, the Government decides to lose national strategies, so we will wait and see how that will be. But the rhetoric at the moment is that the autonomy goes back to schools, so I'm not quite sure where that will leave the local authority either. So there is a shift from centralised control right down to very local level at school level and I am very curious as to where local authorities will sit within that new frame.

It may also be that the recent formation of a coalition Conservative/Liberal government committed to increasing self-government of schools and reducing local authority influence reinforces the tendency for less mediation of general policies for local circumstances. Greater freedom might enable schools to be more responsive to their particular communities, but might also increase the danger of a fragmented and inadequate understanding of difference outside their experience. In spite of these challenges, Arnet feels that he is trying to take greater account of young people's own experiences of difference in his work. He has recently been drafting Plymouth City Council's inclusion policy for children and young people. He has previously mentioned this policy at project team meetings, suggesting that our pilot study findings would be useful to his draft.

> Arnet: What I am currently doing is going around visiting about 15 different schools talking to groups of young people about what was written in here and what their experiences of some of those principles that are in here and I am asking them to say right you need to write down some anecdotes of their personal experiences of those principles, I will take some of those and they will get written into the final draft, so within a document that is full of policy speak there will be some voices of young people that will be coming through but hopefully it will help to ground the policy speak in real experience and I think that creates a bridge for people reading them, so that it can be translated from a systems approach to a human level approach.

In other words, Arnet is using cases or vignettes from young people's experience to illustrate his policy constructs. They function to exemplify the fundamental existence of social group categories and associated outcomes. In our conversation, I challenge Arnet to consider whether there is further application for our findings. Can the local authority do something more than reuse authorised categories of difference as the prompts for young people's recollections of their own experiences of difference? Our findings indicate that implications arise for young people just through receiving the categories that are ascribed to them. How might this discovery alter the future ways that we perceive and respond to their differences?

How might the debate be taken forward?

There are two important considerations in determining a future course of action from our experiences in our research/policy/practice partnership. Firstly, we need to acknowledge the difficulties of changing social practice. The work of the local authority is affected by tacitly held beliefs and knowledge about professional roles at the level of individuals, and it is this that we believe can be altered through partnership and ongoing dialogue (Boyask and Quinlivan, 2008). Understandably the work of the local authority is also affected by accountability to national policy priorities, and change at this level is much more difficult to effect. While Arnet recognises that national policy frameworks are insufficiently subtle to intervene in the full range of differences that affect children and young people's social outcomes, at a material level his work is structured and shaped by those external forces. Pure research can circumnavigate the complexities of power and knowledge through describing their production (through Foucault's discourse analysis for example); applied research must grapple with the effects of power and knowledge on social practice. Changes in understanding are required by university researchers attempting policy-practice-research partnerships. In attempting to work together for change, we must be prepared for compromise.

Second, we need to consider for policy and practice the implications of tensions between social group and individual approaches to difference. Whilst there is within a categorical approach to difference the risk of personal constraint, we must retain perspective on what is lost when we ignore social trends in inequalities. Debate continues on how we might close the gaps between the most socially advantaged and disadvantaged groups within the United Kingdom, yet it is generally appreciated that overall changes to social provision in the modern period have improved outcomes and quality of life for a larger proportion of the population (e.g. on education see Paterson, 2001). Debates also rage on the extent and nature of individualism within society (see

Peters & Marshall, 1996 on the individual in post-modern society). In acknowledging individual differences are we empowering previously disaffected individuals or are we advocating for a radical individualism that counteracts communitarian values? Whilst policy in recent years has sought to represent increasing regard for individual differences, we suggest that such representations are difficult to enact in ways that do not harm the social good.

These considerations suggest to us a dialogic course of action. When working with categories, such as ethnicity and race, how the meaning of these categories change for individuals through their experiences can be considered. The aim would be to show how context, in particular temporal, spatial and inter-relational contexts, affect the lived experience of categories of difference and consequently affect outcomes. For example, one might examine how individuals' location in the South West of England may affect their perception of their own and others' ethnicity.

> Arnet: My immediate thought when you talk about that is, I immediately went to thinking about the social construct and disability and a conversation I had with a friend of mine in London who was a thalidomide victim, who is very, very strong. Who is very clear in saying how it was the context of the environment that disabled him, it wasn't his disability it was actually…

> Ruth: …the way it was responded to.

> Arnet: the way people responded to him. How they build houses. Where people put the light switch, things like that, that actually disenabled him and made him feel disabled in different places. And you know, that is quite strongly embedded in disability theory but actually talking to him it was very powerful that message. And so when is a black person a black person, when they are in Plymouth surrounded by white people, how black can you be?

While this work has the potential to expand social categories so that policy-workers at Plymouth City Council can develop more nuanced responses to the specific cases that they encounter, we also feel that more work needs to be done to dislodge the power of categories of difference defined at a national level. In keeping with our dialogic approach to partnership, we hope that the discussion will contribute to policy-workers' professional practice, but we also intend that it will serve a purpose for the project team in working towards the goal of improving our

understanding of how research into subjective experience may better inform policy and practice.

There is an emergent interest in dialogue between social researchers and national policy-workers, exemplified in the field of education in the United Kingdom with the development of a special interest group for educational research and policy-making in the British Educational Research Association. Under the previous government, the DCSF had organised workshops that intended to help focus on improving responses to difference through existing social policy and generating recommendations for future development. However, we suggest that these may not acknowledge sufficiently the complexity and challenges of translation from awareness to practice. They would be strengthened by local articulation of research and policy that supports mediation of the general to the specific. Through using forums such as our partnership for the dual purpose of deepening understandings of both policy and research, the impact of research such as that described here could be substantially enhanced through the development of policies (at institutional, local authority and national levels) for children and young people that have greater sensitivity to and recognition of personal experiences of difference. To develop policy responses which do not over-generalize nor homogenize difference we highlight the importance of supporting in-depth locally responsive social research in addition to large scale, generalizing studies.

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Biographies

Ruth Boyask lectures and conducts research in education at the University of Plymouth, England. Her work is situated at the intersection between research, policy and professional practice, and she is particularly interested in using participatory research methods to deepen the knowledge of both researchers and practitioners. This paper is from a strand of work on difference and diversity that is related to her commitment to furthering social justice. Since the beginning of 2010 she has been convening the British Educational Research Association's Social Justice Special Interest Group. Prior to working in England, Ruth had appointments at Cardiff University, Wales and University of Canterbury, New Zealand. Her interest in education originated as a secondary school art teacher in North Canterbury, New Zealand.

Arnet Donkin is the Senior Adviser Equalities and Inclusion in the Department for Children's Services, City of Plymouth. This is the local authority for Plymouth, a medium sized urban centre in the South West of England.

Sue Waite has been Faculty Research Fellow in Education at the University of Plymouth since 1998. She convenes a research network on outdoor and experiential learning and currently leads several funded projects on teaching and learning in the outdoors. This interest derives from her broader concerns about affective issues in education, the subject of several previous projects for public bodies, including research on continuing professional development materials for the previous UK government's *Excellence and Enjoyment* initiative and out of county residential provision for students with social emotional and behavioural difficulties. She continues to try to develop innovative mixed methods for the exploration of 'hard-to-measure' qualitative data in her research.

Hazel Lawson is senior lecturer in special and inclusive education at University of Exeter, England, having previously been a lecturer at University of Plymouth and Middlesex University. Prior to this she was a teacher for many years in primary and special schools in England. Her research interests are in the general field of special and inclusive education with specific interest in: the education of children and young people with severe and profound learning difficulties (intellectual disabilities), especially in the areas of curriculum and citizenship education; conceptualisations of diversity and pedagogical implications; pupil participation and voice. She has a particular enthusiasm for sociological perspectives and qualitative research approaches.