

BAICE Sponsored Dissertation Writing Workshop

Thursday May 28th 2009

**The University of Birmingham
Centre for International Education and Research
School of Education**

Convenors

Centre for International Education and Research,
School of Education, University of Birmingham



Research Centre for International and Comparative Studies,
Graduate School of Education, University of Bristol



Planning Committee

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Workshop Report

Rationale

The universities of Bristol and Birmingham both have thriving Masters programmes that draw upon international and comparative education. In both settings, students also focus on studies relating to educational leadership, management, policy and practice in an international context.

Students following these courses at both universities come to the UK from a wide range of countries, but rarely have opportunities to interact academically with others studying in the same field and at other universities. This BAICE one day workshop was designed to bridge this gap and facilitate supportive and helpful contacts between students and staff.

Focus, Timing and Organisation

The focus for the day workshop was on the planning and development of Masters dissertations. The event took place on Thursday May 28th 2009, during a period in which students were working on their research. University staff, from both Birmingham and Bristol, provided guidance about the processes involved in writing a dissertation, and students had the opportunity to present and discuss their emergent dissertation plans. Small and whole group discussions featured throughout the day.

Objectives

The day aimed to help participants to:

- learn more about BACIE and its role in promoting comparative and international education;
- interact with others from their own country or region, and elsewhere, who have common academic and professional interests;
- establish networks for developing their interests when they return home;
- develop their Masters dissertation plans in the light of workshop experience;
- extend the possibilities for their dissertation, e.g. conducting fieldwork, using libraries and data sources;
- broaden their sphere of critical discussion;
- learn more about related organisations e.g. DfID, UNESCO, the British Council;
- be better informed about the range of universities interested in international and comparative education, which may be relevant for their own further work or for advising friends about UK possibilities.

For the academic staff, the workshop was seen as an opportunity to:

- share good practice;
- plan for possible additional links and activities;
- consider future potential for including other universities;
- introduce postgraduate students to BAICE, its activities and the journal Compare.

The Venue

The event was hosted by the Centre for International education and Research at the School of Education (CIER), University of Birmingham. CIER work builds upon a long tradition of international and comparative research carried out in the School of Education. The event took place in the conference room where approximately 50 delegates met throughout the day. A poster display profiling a sample of dissertations was also presented in the room, where a BAICE display and BAICE membership table were also located.

The Participants

The majority of participants were post-graduate students on Masters programmes at the Universities of Birmingham and Bristol. Most were studying on pathways with an international and comparative focus, but some also came from psychology of education and counselling pathways. A number of PhD and doctoral students attended the event to share their experience and support the Masters students. Approximately 20 countries were represented in total, with delegates attending from Asia, Africa, Europe, North and South America and the Caribbean.

Staff from both research centres were on hand throughout the day, to answer questions and offer advice and points for consideration. The staff delegates included: Professor Michael Crossley from the University of Bristol; and Dr Chris Williams, Dr Michele Schweisfurth and Professor Clive Harber from the University of Birmingham

The Order of the Day

Please refer to the attached programme for more details.

The day was split into half hour sessions (with two coffee breaks and an hour for lunch) to allow time for a wide variety of presentations and discussions, as well as for networking during the breaks. Delegates were welcomed by Professor Clive Harber from the University of Birmingham.

The Dissertation Process – Staff Input

During the first session, Professor Michael Crossley presented a framework for writing dissertations, which took participants through a helpful process for planning a research

proposal, step-by-step. This also demonstrated how a plan could be turned into chapters for a full dissertation. Dr Chris Williams followed with some 'handy hints' for approaching dissertations, focusing on ways to think critically and creatively about the planning and presentation of research.

i) Student Presentations

The majority of the day was then dedicated to student presentations of their work in progress. These sessions were comprised of 15 minute speaker presentations, followed by 15 minutes of question and discussion time. These sessions provided a forum for speakers to gain advice, receive guidance and gather ideas for addressing research issues. Presentations generated questions and discussion from the audience that related to many key issues that are faced by comparative and international researchers in the field of education. Sessions were chaired by students from Bristol and Birmingham.

Student presenters represented the two universities and came from five different nations. The five presentations covered a wide range of topics: ICT in the management of higher education; mentoring teachers; picture books and student interaction; teacher professionalism; English as a second language and teachers' perceptions of school effectiveness. Planned research projects covered qualitative approaches, using a range of data collection methods, as well as the use of quantitative questionnaires and statistical analysis. The cultural and professional diversity of the presenters exemplified the strengths of international and comparative education in sharing diverse forms of knowledge, skills and experiences.

Other students were encouraged to create poster presentations about their dissertations. These were displayed throughout the day and, as well as contributing to the general discussion, enabled presenters to gain feedback on their ideas.

ii) Small Group Discussions

The final part of the day was given to reflective discussions in small groups. Delegates were allocated to one of five small groups to discuss their 'key reflections on the day'. Participants were asked to highlight key points and issues that had attracted their attention throughout the workshop. A spokesperson from each group fed back the key points to the whole group in a concluding session chaired by Professor Clive Harber (see "Outcomes" below).

iii) Networking Opportunities

There were several breaks during the day to give participants the opportunity to talk to each other, share ideas and continue discussions from the sessions. A networking activity resulting in a prize draw, encouraged students to find other participants from both universities with a similar research focus, methodology, and area of interest to themselves. An evening social event and planned tour of Birmingham University campus and Birmingham city allowed for further social interaction between the two groups of students.

Much information about BAICE and other universities and organisations involved in international and comparative education was available on the day. Students also had an opportunity to become members of BAICE.

Outcomes

In the review of the day, participants remarked on the importance of and their appreciation for:

- The importance of not being afraid of creativity
- Time as a pressure in doing a dissertation
- The importance of being flexible in research design and implementation
- The importance of having a realistic research design and time frame
- The interesting possibility of doing action research but the difficulty of actually doing it
- The importance of learning from each other
- The importance of justification and the need to provide a rationale for carrying out a piece of research
- The usefulness of collaborating with other students
- The importance of sheer perseverance
- The significance of ethical issues

Ways Forward

Participants thoroughly enjoyed this BAICE event and believe that this is a good way to support the growth of interest in both BAICE and the field of comparative and international education. The students and staff at both universities would like to extend their thanks to BAICE for their timely and helpful support for this event. This BAICE workshop provided an excellent information sharing and networking opportunity for all involved. It was a most innovative way to support students engaged in international and comparative studies during the dissertation writing experience. We hope to continue to build on the academic and professional links established through this event and hope that BAICE will continue to support this type of venture in the future in 2010 and beyond.

**BAICE Sponsored Dissertation Writing Workshop
Tuesday, 10th June 2008**

Programme

10.00	Morning coffee and registration		
10.30	Welcome and explanation of the day <i>Professor Clive Harber, CIER, University of Birmingham</i>		
		Topic	Presenter
		Chair	
10.40 – 11.10	1.	Planning a Dissertation Some Handy Hints	<i>Prof Michael Crossley</i> <i>Dr Chris Williams</i>
			<i>Nastaran Karimi</i>
11.10 – 11.40	2.	ICT as a Tool to Enhance Educational Administration and Management in Nigeria	<i>John Isioma Osode</i>
11.40	Coffee break and networking activities		
12.00 – 12.30	3.	The Odyssey from Hindsight to Foresight: Mentoring Teachers in the Small State of Anguilla	<i>Avenella Griffith</i>
			<i>Xu Hong Bai</i>
12.30 – 13.00	4.	An Investigation of the Influence of English Picture Books on Taiwanese Student Interaction	<i>Shu-Han Chang</i>
13.00	Lunch: Poster and BAICE display		
14.00 – 14.30	5.	The Role of the General Teaching Council for England in Promoting Teacher Professionalism	<i>Gary Glasspool</i>
			<i>Yi Gan</i>
14.30 – 15.00	6.	English as a Second Language in Urban and Rural Schools in Nigeria	<i>Oluchi Iroka</i>
15.00	Afternoon Tea		
15.30 – 16.00	7.	A Survey of Teachers' Perceptions of School Effectiveness in Selected Secondary Schools in China	<i>Yuan Gao</i>
			<i>Dho Young</i>
16.00 – 16.30	8.	Key reflections on the day: Small group discussion (5 groups)	Each group to elect chair/speaker
16.30 – 17.00	9.	Concluding Panel: feedback from group discussions. Prize Draw	<i>Elected speaker from each group</i> <i>Professor Clive Harber</i>
			<i>Prof Michael Crossley</i> <i>Dr. Michele Schweisfurth</i>
17.00 – 20.00	Social Activity: Walking tour of Birmingham University Campus and City		

