

How Can I bring Ubuntu As A Living Standard Of Judgment Into The Academy? Moving Beyond Decolonisation Through Societal Reidentification And Guiltless Recognition

Submitted by Eden Charles,
for the degree of Ph.D.
of the University of Bath
2007

Note – the formatting of this web-based version is still being checked to ensure that it is consistent with the original submission in the Library of the University of Bath

28 June 2007

Attention is drawn to the fact that copyright of this thesis rests with its author. This copy of the thesis has been supplied on condition that anyone who consults it is understood to recognise that its copyright rests with its author and that no quotation from the thesis and no information derived from it may be published without the prior written consent of the author.

This thesis may be made available for consultation within the University Library and may be photocopied or lent to other libraries for the purposes of consultation.

Signature:

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| TABLE OF CONTENTS | 2 |
| ABSTRACT | 9 |
| PRELUDE | 10 |
| WHAT I AM SEEKING TO DO IN THIS THESIS | 10 |
| My embodied practice of Ubuntu..... | 10 |
| Writing for the Academy | 14 |
| How does this thesis address a clearly defined subject or field and form a distinct contribution to the knowledge of that subject or field? | 15 |
| How is this thesis an account of my own research and how does it show clearly the respects in which this work advances study of the subject? | 15 |
| How does this thesis show evidence of originality and independent critical power, through the discovery of new facts or methods, or through the development and application of new critical insights? | 16 |
| How does this thesis in all or in part contain material that, in the opinion of the examiners, is worthy of publication? | 16 |
| Validity | 17 |
| Rigour | 20 |
| Where I am now?..... | 25 |
| What do I mean by ‘decolonising’?..... | 27 |
| What do I mean by ‘societal reidentification’?..... | 28 |
| What do I mean by ‘guiltless recognition’? | 29 |
| INTRODUCTION | 30 |
| Structure..... | 30 |
| My concerns and why..... | 31 |
| Why am I concerned? | 32 |
| What experiences can I describe to show why I am concerned? | 33 |
| What kind of data have I gathered to show the situation as it unfolds? | 35 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| How do I explain my educational influences in learning? | 36 |
| How do I show that any conclusions I come to are reasonably fair and accurate?.... | 37 |
| SECTION ONE..... | 38 |
| COSMOLOGICAL, ONTOLOGICAL, EPISTEMOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS AND METHODOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES. | 38 |
| The interrelationship of African cosmology to my ontological assumptions..... | 39 |
| I now move on to explain the ways in which my cosmological and ontological constitutivity is reflected in the ways in which I engage with epistemology..... | 45 |
| Epistemology..... | 46 |
| How do I come to know? How does the inquirer come to know? | 50 |
| Embodied knowing | 53 |
| Knowing through deep reflection..... | 57 |
| Sources of support for a decolonising, transformational, inclusive approach to epistemology | 59 |
| The African American ‘womanist’ epistemological contribution | 59 |
| Epistemological challenges from other cultural and national influences..... | 62 |
| Other contributions to the decolonising of knowledge | 64 |
| Knowledge creation that builds unity: reconstructing the divisions of colonialism.. | 64 |
| Colonialism, neo-colonialism, post-colonialism..... | 65 |
| Action Research and Epistemology..... | 67 |
| The Influence of Jack Whitehead and the Centre for Action Research in Professional practice | 71 |
| SECTION TWO | 74 |
| METHODOLOGY: HOW I HAVE INQUIRED – MY INQUIRY METHODOLOGIES.. | 74 |
| My decolonising methodology | 83 |
| Making Knowledge Claims | 84 |
| The representational form of my inquiry | 86 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| SECTION THREE | 89 |
| INFLUENCE OF AN AFRICAN COSMOLOGY WITH UBUNTU..... | 89 |
| PROLOGUE TO SECTION THREE | 89 |
| The presentational structure of the thesis. | 90 |
| The process of my inquiry | 94 |
| Influence Of An African Cosmology With Ubuntu | 95 |
| The first phase..... | 96 |
| On African cosmology: the ‘living strategy’ purpose | 102 |
| The second phase | 102 |
| Living and Learning my values in Africa | 104 |
| The third phase..... | 104 |
| The fourth phase..... | 110 |
| SECTION FOUR | 114 |
| INQUIRING INTO MY PRACTICE AS A FATHER | 114 |
| Being present | 118 |
| Ambiguous messages | 119 |
| Being a different type of Black man..... | 120 |
| Conclusions..... | 123 |
| Accepting and moving on | 124 |
| SECTION FIVE | 125 |
| MY EDUCATIONAL INQUIRY INTO THE SANKOFA LEARNING CENTRE | 125 |
| What was my concern? | 126 |
| What did I do about it? | 129 |
| Trying to create an alternative | 130 |
| Making the Sankofa Learning Centre a reality..... | 133 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| Educational Inquiry: Living, leading, teaching, learning: the Sankofa Learning Centre..... | 135 |
| Working with emerging realities – discovering success..... | 137 |
| On being a leader..... | 138 |
| Reflections on my pedagogical practice | 141 |
| A critical incident | 142 |
| Discovering my own colonising gaze and its influence on my practice..... | 143 |
| Changing my practice..... | 144 |
| The Boy’s Camp..... | 147 |
| Educational Inquiry: Influencing the education of social formations | 150 |
| Education of The Black Child Conference..... | 151 |
| Making sense of it all:..... | 154 |
| Other research activity | 156 |
| Video saves the day | 157 |
| Conclusion..... | 160 |
| SECTION SIX..... | 162 |
| ME AS A CONSULTANT..... | 162 |
| Introduction: Me as a consultant..... | 163 |
| African cosmology | 166 |
| Economic questions | 168 |
| The History and Context..... | 168 |
| My concerns | 170 |
| Searching for transformational ways of working | 170 |
| Evolving my practice | 177 |
| Narratives of transition | 178 |
| People ‘seeing’ me on the Masters programme..... | 181 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| The man crying | 182 |
| The tree outside | 182 |
| The men's courses | 183 |
| Reflections on working and learning with Black people..... | 192 |
| Inquiring in meeting at major international consulting firm..... | 196 |
| The influence of my learning on my embodiment and articulation of theories, models and practices | 199 |
| Societal reidentification | 199 |
| Guiltless recognition - -a strategic practice..... | 200 |
| Equal opportunity and Diversity – a transformational approach | 201 |
| Bicultural competence | 202 |
| Conclusion of Consultant section | 203 |
| CONCLUSION | 206 |
| Final thoughts..... | 208 |
| REFERENCES/BIBLIOGRAPHY | 211 |
| APPENDICES | 221 |
| Appendix 1 Section One: Dialogue with Paulus | 222 |
| Appendices Section Three: Inquiring into my practice as a father..... | 234 |
| Appendix 1 Section Three (Father) Research on a drive to a rugby match | 235 |
| Appendix 1 Section Three: The story of Doogs | 237 |
| Appendices Section Four: My Educational Inquiry | 238 |
| Appendix 1 Section Four My Educational Inquiry: My own experience of being schooled in the UK | 239 |
| Appendix 2 Section Four: Why an Independent School? | 243 |
| Appendix 2a. Section Four: Why new Education Initiatives..... | 245 |
| Appendix 2b. Section Four: Teachers seeing Black boys as a threat..... | 247 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Appendix 3. Section Four: What would make a difference | 247 |
| Appendix 4. Section Four:New Education Initiatives/Pyramid Academy: Who are we?..... | 252 |
| Appendix 5. Section Four: My log 1998. On creating the Sankofa Learning Centre | 255 |
| Appendix 6. Section Four: My log on first day of Sankofa Learning Centre | 257 |
| Appendix 7. Section Four: Log entry – The shift in my practice..... | 259 |
| Appendix 8a. Section Four: The boys’ camp – an inquiry into evolving liberatory relationships | 261 |
| Appendix 8b. Section Four: The boys’ camp..... | 263 |
| Appendix 8. Section Four: Anonymous Poem..... | 266 |
| Appendix 9. Section Four: Conference address | 267 |
| Appendix 9. Section Four: Guidance Society postcolonial address..... | 272 |
| Appendix 10. Section Four: Children’s response, what success means to me | 281 |
| Appendix 11. Section Four: Other Research Activity..... | 283 |
| Appendices Section Five: Me as a Consultant..... | 287 |
| Appendix 1a. Section Five: African & Asian approaches to the world as compared to the European..... | 288 |
| Appendix 1b. Section Five: African approaches to the world as compared to the European - redesigned..... | 289 |
| Appendix 2. Section Five: Explaining and evolving | 290 |
| Appendix 3 Section Five: Email from participant on course | 293 |
| Appendix 4 Section Five: From: ‘Towards An Anti Colonial Approach To Therapy’ to: ‘Thoughts On A Transformational Approach To Our Work’ | 294 |
| Appendix 5 Section Five: Feedback from men’s course..... | 301 |
| Appendix 6, Section Five: Inquiring in a meeting..... | 303 |
| Appendix 7 Section Five: Response from Paula. | 310 |
| Appendix 8 Section Five: Feedback on my presentation..... | 312 |
| Appendix 8b, Section Five: The man crying | 314 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Appendix 9 Section Five: Dickens & Dickens..... | 316 |
| Appendix 10 Section Five: The Holmsow meeting | 318 |
| Appendix 11 Section Five: Why I grew my dreadlocks..... | 324 |
| Appendix 12 Section Five: Bi-Cultural Competence Model | 325 |
| Appendix 13 Section Five: Feedback from colleagues..... | 328 |
| Appendix 14 Section Five: Evidence of my influence | 330 |

ABSTRACT

How Can I Bring Ubuntu As A Living Standard of Judgement Into The Academy? Moving Beyond Decolonisation Through Societal Reidentification And Guiltless Recognition

This is a living theory thesis which traces my engagement in seeking answers to my question that focuses on how I can improve my practice as someone seeking to make a transformational contribution to the position of people of African origin. In the course of my enquiry I have recognised and embraced Ubuntu, as part of an African cosmology, both as my living practice and as a living standard of judgement for this thesis. It is through my Ubuntu way of being, enquiring and knowing that my original contribution to knowledge has emerged.

Two key approaches are identified and described in depth: ‘guiltless recognition’ and ‘societal re-identification’. These emerge from a perception of self that is distinct within but not isolated in an awareness of ‘inclusionality’.

They are intimately related concepts. Guiltless recognition allows us to move beyond the guilt and blame that maintains separation and closes down possibility. It provides a basis for action and conception that moves us towards the imagined possibilities of societal reidentification with Ubuntu.

Both ‘guiltless recognition’ and ‘societal reidentification’ embody strategic and epistemological practices that move away from severing, colonising thought, towards ways of being that open up new possibilities for people of African origin and for humanity generally.

- Visual narratives are used to represent and help to communicate the inclusional meanings of these living standards of judgement. The narratives are focused on my work as a management consultant and include my work with Black managers. They explain my educational influence in creating and sustaining the Sankofa Learning Centre for Black young people in London. They include my living as a Black father seeking to remain present and of value to my son within a dominant discourse/context in which this is a contradiction to the prevalent stereotype.