

Report on Professor Andre du Plessis visit – University Centre Colchester 4 January to 16th of January 2018

Thursday the 4th of January Professor du Plessis arrived early in the morning at Heathrow to begin his 12-day research and academic visit to England. The Itinerary for his visit reflected the various aims and intended outcomes:

- To meet and share best practice with academics at University Centre Colchester (UCC), University of East Anglia (UEA), teachers and students at Gainsborough Academy.
- To conduct a series of workshops and lectures with students at UCC.
- To do research on mentoring and coaching with a range of education students from MA in Education, BA in Education and PGCE/CertEd in-service and pre-service students.

Thursday the 4th of January Professor du Plessis did a 4-hour narrative research workshop with a first year MA in Education group who were finishing off their first module on research methodology, so it was a very good experience for the students to be led through a visual narrative method linked to the important roles of mentors and coaches in both further and higher education.

Friday the 5th of January from 9h00 to 16h00 in the afternoon we worked with full time PGCE/CertEd students who are nearing the end of their one-year training as they are a February cohort. A series of interesting discussions and some very valuable exchange on the role and responsibilities of mentors and choices as although a small cohort, only 6 students, they are all doing their teaching placements in very different educational contexts.

Saturday the 6th of January, we went to London where we met a headmaster of a prep school in London in the Natural Science Museum where we discussed the differences and similarities between the two educational systems and shared ideas of best practice. The headmaster previously worked at a private prep school in Port Elizabeth, South Africa so was able to speak knowledgeably about the areas that may be of benefit both to Professor du Plessis and his students, having experienced both systems at primary school level.

Sunday the 7th of January, we spent some time going over key texts, discussing a range of journal articles and refining the research questions around coaching and mentoring.

Monday the 8th of January, we travelled to University of East Anglia where we met Dr Eleni Biza, who generously shared ideas, latest publications and other maths and general educational matters. The afternoon was spent in the University library where we found an impressive pile of books on mentoring and coaching which were duly divided and we went through them that evening. There is an imposing body of research and literature on mentoring and coaching, both pertaining to the United Kingdom educational landscape and the of international concern. However, it would appear, despite this, there are still challenges concerning effective mentoring for teacher trainees, both at UCC and in South Africa at Mandela University. Our research focuses on the 'trainee' voice and what the expectations are, how they are or are not met during their initial teacher training.

Tuesday the 9th of January began with good coffee, delicious pastries in the company of Professor Richard Andrews, who is the Head of the School of Education and Lifelong Learning at University of East Anglia. We had a very interesting and informative meeting in which the change of the Secretary of Education was mentioned, what that potentially means for both the FE and HE sectors. It was

interesting to listen to two well informed and experienced individuals share ideas and discuss mutual concerns, challenges, opportunities and areas of best practice.

That evening we were back in Colchester where Professor du Plessis took the second year MA in Education students through the visual narrative workshop on mentoring and coaching.

Wednesday the 10th we spent from 9 in the morning to 16h00 with the BA in Education students who are in their first year of study but many of whom already work in the education sector, primarily primary schools to the same research process.

That evening we were able to spend an hour with the part time PGCE/CertEd second year students doing a shorted version of the extended workshop, but gaining their experience of how their expectations were either met or how they felt that they had not had the benefit they would have liked from their mentoring experiences.

Thursday, 11th of January, we went to Thomas Gainsborough school which is a research academy. Their school motto is 'Excellence: for each, for all' and this was clearly visible both in the architecture (it is a brand-new school building, 2 years old) and in the conduct and level of professionalism, the obvious pride of both their students and staff. Their website suggests: "It is a school where every single individual matter. We strive to personalise a young person's education, putting them at the centre of their own learning, to ensure that each student achieves his or her full potential enjoying an education that focuses on their own individual skills, strengths and aptitudes. Each student has a voice here – it is their school and their education. Yet each student is also part of a community, locally, nationally and globally. We want our students to become outstanding citizens and contribute greatly to the society in which they live". The school certainly seemed to reflect this in practice.

We were met by a former colleague of mine, Stacy Stone who worked with me at the Plume comprehensive as an art teacher, but who has retrained as a maths teacher. We were warmly welcomed by Mr Wayne Lloyd, the head teacher. The notion of a research school was of interest and we were able to discuss their successful and effective mentoring and coaching scheme. The importance of research, one staff dedicated to this role, to share best practice and promote the practice and sharing the outcomes of critical reflective teacher-researchers was fascinating. We spent the rest of the afternoon visiting classrooms, speaking to maths and history teachers, seeing the excellent use of technology and other resources in practice. Since then Stacey has shared a range of resources with Professor du Plessis which should benefit both his students generally, but specifically those who are teaching maths at secondary school level.

That evening Professor du Plessis gave a 4-hour workshop lecture on leadership and management to the first year MA students. He shared interesting case studies from his own experience as a manager and leader, both at primary school and University level, and the recent LEAP training he benefitted from in his current leadership role. At the end of the evening we had a very informative tutorial with Julia Smith, who had developed the 5R maths revision curriculum and is currently in her first year of a MA. Julia also generously shared a range of resources with Professor du Plessis.

Friday the 12th we enjoyed a lunch with our Dean of Higher Education, Nils Franke and the head of Education, social work and counselling, Neil Barnes accompanied by Charlie Fouracres, course leader for PGCE/CertEd in-and-preservice teacher trainees and myself at our CHEFS. This is an on-site restaurant that boasts of the culinary expertise (developing and accomplished) of our trainee chefs at Colchester Institute.

The rest of the weekend and Monday was spent going over the data collected, photographing all the drawings completed in the workshops, collating the audio and visual recordings and adjusting the survey questionnaire that we are going to be using by Peter Hudson, an academic from Australia. This survey will be circulated to all the students who participated in the initial visual narrative workshops for additional data to inform the final research outcomes.

Professor du Plessis left on Tuesday to return to South Africa and the start of the academic year with induction week for the PGCE students at Mandela University.

It was a very rewarding visit for both our students and my own professional practice, both in general educational terms but specifically in watching an experienced researcher conduct the visual narrative workshops. Our students benefitted in a range of ways but specifically in hearing of the experiences and realities of another countries educational system and teacher training programme.

The proposed dates for my visits to South Africa are as follows:

April 7th returning on April 20th (pilot study and semi-structured interviews if ethics approval has been granted; working on the coaching and mentoring articles)

July 14th returning on August 11th (data collection: motivation survey and semi-structured interviews with PGCE teacher trainees, early and late career educators)



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