The Elephant Times
Tide~ on-line magazine
from Worcester

Issue Six : May 2021
Welcome to Elephant Times 6

We, Elena Lengthorn & Richard Woolley, welcome you to this special edition of the Elephant Times! It is a collaboration between Tide~ and the School of Education at the University of Worcester.

This ET has a focus on the South African concept of Ubuntu – i.e. that I am because we are - and its potential to inform our vision for education in a post-Covid world: an opportunity to explore our experiences and visions for the future.

The process: building on past relationships

The School of Education at University of Worcester has long-standing links with Tide~ going back over the decades. During the last year these have been renewed and refreshed, leading to the possibility of this special edition of the Elephant Times.

The result is, we hope, an engaging and creative interaction between our hopes for the future, practice, values and the lens of Ubuntu.

Early discussions between Scott Sinclair (former Director of Tide~), Clive Harber (Emeritus Professor, University of Birmingham) and Jeff Serf, (former Associate Dean, University of Wolverhampton) and ourselves - Elena Lengthorn and Richard Woolley at the University of Worcester - led to an initial seminar on the theme of Ubuntu in conjunction with the Social Justice Research Interest Group in the School of Education.

Subsequently, Clive and Jeff supported individual writers and the project team shared in collaborative seminars with authors. The process is summarised as a hermeneutic cycle, [See page 6] in other words a process of reflection and interpretation.

The Elephant Times is edited by Jeff Serf and Scott Sinclair.

We have taken on this voluntary role as Tide~ Trustees.

The views expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of Tide~.

Join the Tide~ Network

The first AGM of the new Tide~ Network.
By Zoom 7.30 pm Thursday 17th June 2021.
Join us for a lively discussion.

Join the Tide~ Network

Please Complete an Application Form
**Relationships and underpinning values**

Contributors to this ET were invited to connect with the notion of Ubuntu, and each other, through a series of virtual workshops, spending time in small groups developing individual and shared understandings of Ubuntu values ... as outlined opposite.

This explorative introduction enabled us to share something of our own personal values, our professional values and the areas of education with which we work most closely. The sessions provided a forum to identify like-minded Ubuntu thinkers and connect them for collaborative writing opportunities, as well as airing our Ubuntu experiences and visions for the future.

This Tide~ project created an opportunity for both new writers and those with more experience. It also created an opportunity to build on cross-European links. The authors came from a range of backgrounds, including current and former students, University staff and other education practitioners.

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<td>1. Democracy</td>
<td>Empowerment of population to exercise democratic rights; provision of skills to participate, think critically and act responsibly.</td>
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<td>2. Social justice &amp; equity</td>
<td>Access to education is the most important resource in addressing poverty - only then will liberty be achieved. Reconciliation requires social justice to address past injustices - education for all is an essential element of social justice.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Equality</td>
<td>Access for all to an educational provision that does not discriminate on any grounds. Equality in the treatment of all, by all.</td>
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<td>4. Non-sexism &amp; non-racism</td>
<td>Regardless of race or gender, learners afforded the same opportunities and the same degrees of security.</td>
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<td>6. Open society</td>
<td>Participation rather than observation; empowerment to think and act; a culture of dialogue and debate.</td>
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<td>7. Accountability [Responsibility]</td>
<td>Power and responsibility for all involved in education - learners, educators, managers, parents, etc.</td>
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<td>8. Rule of law</td>
<td>Rules within which learners, educators, managers, parents etc, operate - including the law of the land.</td>
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<td>9. Respect</td>
<td>Precondition for communication and teamwork - schools require mutual respect between all partners.</td>
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<td>10. Reconciliation</td>
<td>Acceptance of all individuals through learning about each other, valuing differences and diversity.</td>
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Table from ‘Towards Ubuntu’

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Two key resources used to stimulate the process

Click on covers to review / download

What is that duck doing there?
Building new and reflective relationships
The project allowed participants to reflect on the Ubuntu values and practices in their own spaces through the facilitation of a shared online space. Each contributor worked in and from their own context, bringing their own ingredients to contribute to the creation of a shared, metaphorical, ‘Ubuntu soup’ that nourished the thinking processes of all involved. To continue the analogy, each added their own seasoning, taking the learning back to their own contexts and reflecting on the implications for their own space. This involved learning from the concept of Ubuntu, taken from the context of South Africa, but not seeking to replicate or copy it. Rather, Ubuntu was a stimulus to provoke and support learning in our own spaces and situations.

A hermeneutic cycle of reflection on Ubuntu values: the project process

Prioritising relationships
As has been suggested elsewhere, albeit tentatively, “there is a perception that [primary] teacher training courses in universities in England may be covering issues relating to relationships less than a decade ago” (Woolley, 2020: 184). This makes an understanding of Ubuntu all the more pertinent.

If we understand who we are through our interrelationship with others, an appreciation of that relatedness and of the importance of human interactions is an absolutely essential part of helping young people (and ourselves) in finding their place in the world, developing their identity and sense of self and purpose.

The separations in lockdown have impacted on how we relate to one another. As we move forward, there is real potential to re-evaluate the focus within the school curriculum to ensure that the pro-social behaviours of care, compassion, respect and mutual appreciation are not marginalised by an obsession with the formal curriculum.

At a time when the populist media is highlighting that the focus on the 3 Rs is leading to the killing of children’s imagination and also that children have become kinder during the pandemic (Daily Star 30th April 2021: 21) there is opportunity to pause to reflect on what it is we wish our education system to achieve in the post-COVID world. The articles in this special edition provide stimulus for those reflections.

References
DIVERSITY DUCK

In spring 2020 Diversity Duck began Tweeting (@duckdiversity) to highlight matters relating to equality, diversity and inclusion. Based in the Department for Education and Inclusion in the School of Education, the focus soon moved from highlighting issues and news items when lockdown began in March 2020.

Diversity Duck explored Worcester throughout the year, enabling potential and current students and staff to keep in touch. They maintained a connection between the University and the locality.

Indeed, Diversity Duck covered over 2,500 socially distanced miles along the highways and byways of the city.

In this ET we share some images taken during the pandemic.

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I respond to the Ubuntu challenge by proposing practical ways educators can encourage a whole school approach to inclusion and diversity using Ubuntu philosophy.

Educational settings have a significant role in bringing together children and young people from different backgrounds, and a responsibility to provide a safe, inclusive, equal and intercultural school environment, enabling all children to mirror these values in tomorrow’s society.

The Ubuntu philosophy (a Zulu phrase meaning human dignity) of demonstrating democracy, social justice & equity, equality, non-sexism & non-racism, human dignity, open society, responsibility, rule of law, respect and reconciliation (Harber and Serf, 2004) provides an excellent framework for a more inclusive and diverse school culture.

I use the term intercultural as opposed to the term multicultural deliberately. Koopmans (2010) argues that the term ‘multiculturalism’ contributes to cultural and political marginalisation, and Brubaker (2002) goes further, suggesting it implies ‘tribalism’ and ‘groupism’, where a dominant society is choosing to celebrate cultures at their discretion. Instead, celebrating interculturalism acknowledges a more equal footing, where we celebrate the quirks and differences between ourselves as fellow human beings and, thus, promote a more inclusive and understanding society. Accordingly, Zapata-Barrero (2017) describes interculturalism as a ‘mutual belonging’, rather than the imperialistic connotations of multiculturalism.

The global pandemic has highlighted many flaws in our education system including racial, social and gender inequalities, so I feel this would be an ideal time for reform and to emerge stronger together by implementing Ubuntu philosophy.

I offer some practical suggestions based on my observations on how school life could be a more immersive, enriching and intercultural experience for all – students, teachers, parents and the wider community .........
My practical suggestions ...

Creating a School Council or Parent Forum where all backgrounds, genders and ethnicities are represented, enabling all members to listen and understand others’ viewpoints and discuss topics relevant and significant to them in a respectful and tactful way, fostering a proclivity to reason and compromise, thus forming solutions to challenges and problems.

Encouraging students to talk about their own backgrounds and ethnicities (if they feel comfortable to do so), cultivating open-mindedness and a respect for other cultures and beliefs.

Develop a visually inclusive environment by using a diverse range of people depicted in posters and displays around the school, demonstrating community cohesion and a sense of belonging for all.

Managing a diverse range of students to work together during lesson-time, in sports teams and in playground activities, promoting mixing and friendship forming from different cultures – I have seen this achieved with great success.

Achieving an inclusive curriculum that recognises and reflects different cultures and backgrounds by using minority ethnic voices and identities contextualising learning – I have seen this done very successfully in English, social science and history lessons.

Include books and resources from all cultures and backgrounds giving identifiable role-models to all students and facilitating conversations on a range of diverse topics.

Role-model fairness, equality, democracy, and tolerance along with challenging undesirable behaviour, enabling students to mirror these actions. In my experience, it's not only what I teach, but how I conduct myself that proves to be an effective learning tool.

Use racial or gender inequality incidents as learning opportunities, encouraging a discussion to challenge stereotypical assumptions – taking care not to aim the language or behaviour at anyone specific, but more of a general class discussion.

Achieve an inclusive curriculum that recognises and reflects different cultures and backgrounds by using minority ethnic voices and identities contextualising learning – I have seen this done very successfully in English, social science and history lessons.

Incorporating these values in school-life will prepare students to take their rightful place in a future built on the foundations of a more inclusive, equal and intercultural society.

This is only the beginning of what could be achieved by incorporating Ubuntu values in school life and beyond.

Each child learns a firm understanding and respect for different cultures and for children of all ethnicities. They learn to celebrate and be proud of their own individualism and heritage, resulting in them developing their own identity without the need to assimilate with the majority culture in order to be accepted and to feel belonging.

See link for further suggestions and classroom resources.
The impact of COVID-19 on children with Special Needs in primary education has changed the delivery of education by professionals in their attempts to reduce the effect of social isolation. Social isolation is in direct contrast to Ubuntu’s fundamental values of equality, accountability and reconciliation. Without appropriate provision, pupils with Special Needs may well find themselves unable to access non-discriminatory educational provision to an even greater degree than is “normal”, and will be failed by a system that does not treat all fairly.

Teachers and children have experienced social isolation as a result of COVID-19 and teachers have to plan work for children not knowing the number who will attend face to face in the classroom or online. The children have had to adapt to remote learning in sometimes difficult situations; for example, not having good and reliable access to network or hardware and/or in an environment not always conducive to learning.

Curriculum development has become dormant due to staff missing the interaction and collaboration with other professionals and, therefore, attempts to reduce their feeling of isolation through virtual networking helps to bridge the gap.

Children have been forced to adapt to a new environment, not seeing their friends or teachers. This can lead to a feeling of isolation. For children with Special Needs, living in isolation has meant their challenges have been accentuated.

To reduce social isolation, and promote inclusivity, justice and equality the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognises Alternative Augmented Communication (AAC) as a method of effective communication. The potential for AAC to support communication cannot be underestimated offering the possibility of improving the lives of individuals with communication difficulties by supporting independence, the development of social relationships, and enhancing education so as to reduce social isolation.

The value of AAC in reducing social isolation has been emphasised by the COVID-19 lockdown. This has highlighted the need for greater understanding in designing effective CPD for teachers, going beyond traditional settings (Timperley et al., 2007; Weißenrieder et al. 2015) and focussing on virtual learning, a medium which the majority of teachers have not used previously on a regular basis.

To support teachers’ virtual learning, network groups need to be established by specialist professional advisors where shared social experiences enable challenges and problem solving to be discussed, knowledge to be “socially constructed”, ideas pooled, and shared agreements reached about the use of AAC.

Despite the challenges COVID-19 has presented, if we continue to foster the right culture, signpost opportunities and provide encouragement, practitioners can continue to benefit from collaboration even in the virtual world (Scutt, 2020).

To reboot the future and sustain social inclusion for Post-COVID-19, education needs to be examined through the lens of Ubuntu’s framework and its potential to celebrate and value all aspects of diversity.

A fuller discussion of AAC and its contribution to the development of education in Post-Covid times is available to download.

Suzette is willing to discuss using network groups in the future. Email: suzette.kearns@gloucestershire.gov.uk.
Supportive leadership ... in schools

Carla Solvason, Emma Bailey & Emma Davis

We respond to the Ubuntu challenge by featuring the collaborative principles of Ubuntu and how they can support school leaders.

Leadership can be a messy affair, a tangled web of pedagogy, culture, emotions, politics, social interactions and values. The role of a leader, whether in a school or Early Years setting (nurseries or children’s centres, for example), is one rife with emotionality. Leaders are often called upon by their staff, for a myriad of reasons: guidance, resources, clarification and reassurance, and usually this is in isolation from any form of emotional support for themselves. In this respect, the role can be a lonely and a draining one. If the stressors of the setting are not shared with other staff, who can leaders lean on? How could anyone who is not in the role really understand everything it entails?

Solvason and Kington (2019, p:3) describe leadership as being ‘emotional labour’. It is driven not only by our desire to succeed for children and colleagues, but also by a fear of failure (Blackmore, 2010). This includes the fear of failing ourselves, our professional life and reputation, but also the fear of failing others. Many others.

Few leaders are immune to these pressures and they can lead to guilt, stress, and anger. Blackmore (2010) recognises these as the emotions associated with the consistent strain of being intellectually and physically available to others. Solvason and Kington’s (2019) research acknowledged this human side of leadership and its association with Ubuntu - the way that we display our human values together as a community.

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Emma Bailey is a teacher at a first school in Worcestershire, who is currently studying for a PhD in Educational Leadership at the University of Worcester.

Emma Davis is a nursery manager and is also currently studying for a PhD.

Swans as symbols - D. Duck observes models of leadership
The community investigated in the research above were cluster groups of head teachers who came together, across a number of schools, to meet regularly. Despite being made up of different and theoretically ‘competing’ schools, these cluster groups became a space where leaders could reveal their human frailty beneath the “superhuman role” that they carried out on a daily basis; where they could be understood by equals without fear of criticism. These collaborations came to constitute a community with a shared identity, creating a bond of genuine care for one another that could support through difficult times. Leaders commented on the sense of safety created by the groups. Their view of the children was a collective one, they wanted what was best for all children in the district.

One head teacher likened the culture of shared responsibility to Ubuntu - a connected, collaborative relationship with their peers. In terms of supporting leaders, Ubuntu principles that are established and maintained through a connective work community, can not only enable individuals to share burdens, but can also challenge, motivate, recognise qualities, and reassure. These values can provide vital sustenance for heads who might be isolated within their schools, although they are surrounded by others.

What is needed in order for the values of Ubuntu to flourish within such collaborative groups? It is important that leaders acknowledge that they bring personal values to a collaborative group, it is part of their being. Therefore, during the Solvason and Kington (2019) research, leaders stressed how important it was to choose to work with those who shared similar principles. Another key finding was that in order to trust others and be trusted, it is necessary to become vulnerable. The leaders shared their weaknesses and their flaws as well as their strengths. Without honesty there is no room for growth.

The collaborative ‘journey’ of the leaders in Solvason and Kington (2019) did not end with those heads. The principles were extended to all their staff and even to the children, who came together to develop a name and a motto for their collective cluster of schools. The principles impacted the entire school community. In acting as a role model, the leaders nurtured those in their schools to see themselves as part of a wider, formidable, collaborative team; one that values diversity, challenge and change; one that inspires trust and respect.

Research suggests that by adopting the values underpinning Ubuntu – such as dialogue and debate; communication and teamwork; participation rather than observation - there is hope for a harmonious culture within what has become a largely competitive educational landscape; a culture that can be driven by ethical values based upon the achievement of the other, collegiality and improving the experience for all, rather than individual success.
Hopes for Future Early Years Care and Education

I have always been fascinated by a person-centred, humanistic approach to Early Years Care and Education (EYCE), taking inspiration from Rogers’ (1961) person-centred approach and Maslow’s (1962) hierarchy of needs. In developing our kindergarten’s Person/Child-Centred Approach to EYCE, I began to feel that the ethos focused too much on individuals, failing to highlight how individuals are interconnected, how others help us to develop and flourish, and how we can support others to do the same.

So, our ethos changed. We still draw upon much of Maslow’s and of Rogers’ works, but have added a new goal and central focus - ‘Freedom With Connections’.

Freedom With Connections ...

... incorporates the main aspects of our philosophy and our aspirations for everyone. Children must feel safe, comfortable and supported in the physical and emotional environments we have created, because only then will they be able to explore, take risks, develop relationships, and grow emotionally. We want children to be free to develop in their own uniqueness and experience the freedom to flourish.

Each child has a unique, full potential and only when in a supportive environment will they achieve this. We share our world with others, plants, animals, for no one is an island. If we all focus on ourselves, no one would ever truly achieve their full potential.

Ubuntu’s “I am me because you are you” reflects all aspects of an individual’s life, and one’s development and achievements result from interactions with others. Individuals are unique, offering different skills and knowledge, and it is only when we connect that all our full potentials are achievable.

The challenge for all educators, not just us in EYCE, is to support learners to recognize the importance of connections in adding meaning to, for example, the notion of freedom, and the responsibilities such a benefit brings.

Hopefully, individuals are free to be who they wish, to become the best person possible. However, not at the cost of harming others or our planet. Individuals cannot act in ways so as to stop or inhibit others reaching their full potential. Our actions have implications for others.
Connection With Nature ...  
… which is the ideal classroom and the perfect place for young children. No other place can both calm and stimulate the senses, no other place can ignite the imagination and silence us with wonder in the same moment. Nature changes with the seasons and is different every minute of the day, just as we are. It is growing, adapting and in a continual state of flow. When we walk peacefully through a forest, turn over a rock to find the insects underneath or see our seeds growing, we have the opportunity to connect with nature. Time spent in and surrounded by nature has benefits besides contributing to learning, for example, about where food comes from and how to care for our planet and wildlife.

Connection With Community ...  
… is, one could argue, becoming more difficult in a time when the internet and social media makes it seem easier. Connections with others in our community are vital if we want children to grow up to have a say in their community and shape their future – if they are to function in Ubuntu’s Open Society. The local community is full of wonders, inspirational people and opportunities. Through regular and frequent visits into the local community, children experience being part of a wider family.

Education must contribute to developing a sense of “freedom with connections” - more freedom to explore our own unique full skills and potentials, whilst recognizing that we are connected to each other and have a vital role to play in supporting everyone to become the best they can be.

Only then will we become the best we can.

Connection With Self and Others ...  
… is vital in learning to value oneself and treating others fairly and equally, and reflects Ubuntu values. Recognizing and valuing others is one of the most important skills learned in the foundation years of life and connecting with others through Active Listening, sharing and communication is vital to success. Knowing oneself is the first step in feeling comfortable with who one is and the unique value each of us adds to the world.
We are beginning to have a fuller picture of the vital importance of connections to nature in relation to our health, our happiness, as well as our pro-environmental behaviours and perhaps, most importantly, our *eudaemonic wellbeing.

We are all, no matter how far we have moved ourselves from nature, dependent on natural systems for our life support services – air, water, food, shelter – and our “nature connectedness”, recently defined as a measurable psychological construct that describes a person’s natural connection with the world (Natural England, 2020), enables us to see our lives as part of a wider and interconnected system.

Nature connectedness includes people’s cognitive and emotional relationship to nature, as well as their own sense of place in nature. It facilitates increased understanding of the idea that our individual well being is connected to others at a range of scales from local to global. ‘I am because we are!’

It can be argued that Ubuntu is about beingness, the interconnectedness of humankind and the environment (Etieyibo, 2017). Chibvongodze (2016) proposes an understanding of Ubuntu as an essential relationship between the natural environment and humankind, recognising that we have a moral obligation to our surroundings and to wildlife.

Whilst Covid-19 has seen many detrimental impacts across society, one surprising and celebrated side effect has been the impact of the series of lockdowns on our relationship with nature and the outdoors. Evidence suggests that this time has been accompanied for many by re-connection or strengthening of connection to nature, through spending more time outside. In June 2020 the BBC shared a survey that revealed young people’s concerns about missing the outdoors after lockdown, parents sharing that their children have “taken more interest in nature” since lockdown began and that the accompanying connection with the outdoors was a positive to have emerged from lockdown (BBC, 2020). Research from a University of Cumbria study into Covid-19 connections with nature, asserts that UK parents and guardians are now considerably more likely to encourage their children to spend time in nature (Lemmey, 2020).
Unfortunately, these benefits have not been universal and the disparities in access to nature tend to reflect wider social inequalities, with strong evidence suggesting those on low income, ethnic minorities and those with disabilities all have lower levels of access and opportunity to develop nature connections. There is also a further worrying trend for secondary school aged children; whilst most generations show increased connection, the evidence suggests that at a critical time of self-development 13-19 year-olds are the least connected to nature.

This finding echoes a further study by the RSPB and University of Essex which identified that 15-16-year-olds are the least connected to nature (Hughes et al. 2019). These studies reveal that there is little understanding of whether this lack of connectedness to nature will continue throughout their lifetimes or if this is something characteristic of all teens. This reflects the lack of a systematic approach to understanding nature connectedness more generally (Ives et al. 2017). Frustratingly, there is also a paucity of research exploring the reasons for teen disconnect.

In their work Hughes et al. (2019) suggest that this is an age where lifestyles undergo dramatic change with increased freedom, exams and interaction with social media which might account for a slump. Other potential reasons are rebellion, a rejection of parents and their association with family outdoor activities. Or it may be much less deliberate, simply the increased use of virtual space and obsession with likes, popular culture and a myriad of alternate activities may compete for attention thereby precluding the natural world.

It is important that the causes of the significant drop in nature connectedness during puberty are explored and understood, and integral to Ubuntu that teens involved in environmental and social activism on issues such as climate change and tackling plastic waste are nurtured and empowered.

It might be pertinent to explore how the identified teen decline in nature connectedness contrasts with the action of the Fridays for the Future youth strikes.

Does the dire situation of our climate and ecological emergency only engender extreme reactions of complete apathy or total immersion?

Education is critical to building nature connectedness (Dasgupta 2021) and is, therefore, a core strategy both in formal contexts such as schools, but also in less formal contexts.

A number of strategies are currently underway; for example, there are calls for integrating the SDGs within the national curriculum across all Key Stages to increase active citizenship (NAEE 2019). In addition, following naturalist Mary Colwell's 2019 campaign a new GCSE in Natural History is being developed, providing young people the essential semantics for engaging in key debates and offering a potential spring-board to future green jobs. Colwell asserts, “You only really form a relationship with something by giving it a name. The more we know, the more we’ll understand, the more we’ll love, the more we’ll protect” (Hazell 2020).

Other wider developments include the development of freely available nature apps such as ‘seek’ by iNaturalist that use image recognition technology for identification of plants and wildlife. Cleverly combining nature connectedness with much loved smart phones and social media and facilitating multi-generational discussions. In these volatile, yet exciting times, undoubtedly an appreciation of Ubuntu will help teens forge fulfilling lives.
Ubuntu, I am because we are, holds that a person becomes a person through others, through relationships and through reciprocal recognition (Akinola 2018, p.95; Mutti 2006, p.31)

Ubuntu guides the interaction of members within a community (Akinola 2018, p.95). According to Mutti (2006, p32), conflict resolution becomes a matter for the community at large and reconciliation becomes vital in order to re-build and maintain social trust and cohesion. During the reconciliation process the guiding principals of Ubuntu are problem resolution through co-operation, and empathising with others.

The Stadtteilschule Winterhude, with over 1,200 6-18-year-old pupils, is located in inner city Hamburg and draws on Steiner/Montessori approaches to education. There are no classes as such, with groups of about 24 mixed age children and no time table.

Children work on whatever topic/subject they wish and every 10 to 14 days individuals meet with a teacher to plan their next period of work. One result of this is that a Third Grader can work on the exactly right level for him/her in all subjects, e.g. second grade level in German, but fourth grade level in mathematics. This allows teachers to follow the learning pace and interests of the children and not the children having to follow whatever the teacher teaches.

The school tries to transfer as much responsibility for school life in general to the children and practises Streitschlichter (peer mediation) - reconciliation in the spirit of Ubuntu.

Streitschlichter is not a coordinated programme as such, but empirical research has found it to be beneficial for school life. Teachers are trained in Schreitschlichter, although implementation varies between schools. One common feature is mediator training for volunteer pupils, and according to the Schulbehörde Hamburg (Hamburg's school authorities) around 2,000 children have received Streitschlichter training.

How do children perceive this approach to conflict reconciliation and understanding of school community?

I discussed Streitschlichter with Lasse and Antonia, two of the school's trained peer mediators. Part of our conversation is on page 30-31.

It is clear that when incorporating Ubuntu into the school context, children become equal and active participants in the school community alongside teaching staff and other adult participants.
How do children perceive this approach to conflict reconciliation and understanding of school community?

Lasse (L) and Antonia (A) are 10 years old, in the fourth grade and peer mediators.

Why did you become a mediator?
L: I wanted to try it out.
A: I really wanted to learn how to help other children to settle their fights.

What do you learn during the course?
A: It’s a real training programme. At the end we received a certificate. We learned how to be impartial, how to understand what is going on, and how to help others.
L: We learned the rules of how to mediate. We were taught by teachers…

Imagine there is a fight at recess and you are already mediators.
A: … and also by other children, who are already mediators.

L: We learned the rules of how to mediate. We were taught by teachers…
A: … and also by other children, who are already mediators.

Are children better at helping other children?
L: That’s a difficult question…yes, because children know how children fight.

What is it like helping other children?
L: It’s a cool feeling. And it helps the school. I am happy when the children leave us as friends.
A: It feels good. It’s nice to see the children play happily with each other after a fight. It is important that everybody feels good at school and remain friends.

How do the other children see the mediators?
A: Some find us daft and ridiculous. But the most like us, they like to be helped by other children.
L: Some would prefer to be helped by the teachers. Often teachers will send children to us, so that we can help them.

Have you been a mediator outside of school?
L: At football practice, I didn’t think much about it, it was very spontaneous.
A: I really wanted to learn how to help other children.
L: I wanted to try it out.

What have you learnt being a mediator?
L: I have learnt about the feelings someone has. I also now know what it feels like to be in a fight. Before I joined the mediators I would often end up in fights. I don’t fight as much now.
A: You shouldn’t fight as much - it is not helpful to fight. It feels better not to fight… and that I like to help other children.

During lockdown, you had online school. Have you been a mediator during this time?
L: No, not really, it is difficult online. If somebody writes something stupid in the chat, I would write, “Please, stop that”. But either they didn’t read it or they are not online, or they don’t even care about what I wrote.
A: I haven’t either, but I think mediation would be possible. We could have a conference call and then we could find a solution.

Would you recommend the mediator course to others?
L: YES! It’s fun. And you find good solutions to problems. I would also like to be a mediator in secondary school.

What about you, Antonia?
A: YES! The training was fun and it is also fun to help other children. Perhaps I will continue in secondary. The other children will be much older than me and their fights are more fierce. I don’t know, if I will be brave enough.

Thank you very much for speaking to me.
L: Bitte schön. (You’re welcome.)
A: Danke. Es hat Spaß gemacht. (Thank you. It was fun.)

The interviews were conducted in German and translated by Nina.

The interview demonstrates that the school’s teachers as well as the children value the work of the peer mediators and their contribution to the school community, and both Antonia and Lasse gladly take on this responsibility for their school community. They are proud to contribute to a supportive school environment. Both children stress the importance of children having friends and feeling good about going to school.

Schools offering children opportunities to grow and learn who they are as human beings is an important aspect of Ubuntu;
I respond to the Ubuntu challenge by exploring understandings of our own musicality, and finding ways into culturally responsive teaching of Music History.

Kate has produced a video to set the scene: Ubuntu and Primary Music.mp4

Social injustices rumble constantly under the surface of our daily lives, but the death of George Floyd, in Spring 2020, caused an earthquake of emotion that sent shockwaves around the globe. Never have I heard the term ‘white privilege’ so often, with such increasing awareness and understanding among my own social and professional circles.

My own response was deep. A complete undoing of my understanding of my own privileges as a white woman in Britain and a rebuilding of my perceptions of how to be anti-racist.

Education opens minds and enables change

The incredible power we have as educators to connect and make a real difference is our privilege and we have a responsibility to keep listening; to keep learning; to respond to changes in our society; to challenge social injustices.

As the world entered lockdown, many people turned to the arts for solace - books, TV, film and music.

Music is a curriculum subject that often struggles to find a place in school settings and has issues with equality of access, which COVID 19 has brought into focus more sharply (Daubney and Fautley, 2020).
Music comforts us, lifts us up and connects us when we are further away from our loved ones than we could ever have imagined. Music develops awareness of our place in the world, the ways in which we connect with others, and provides a stimulus to develop global citizenship within our classrooms. Using songs as stimulus such as Bob Marley’s Buffalo Soldier can galvanise pupils’ learning of American history as it is *lyrical Ubuntu*. It allows us to participate in society; it allows us to respect and be respected.

However, many teachers feel unconfident and unprepared to teach this subject, and to address and engage with the cultural context learning opportunities music provides.

**Enabling Student Teachers and pupils**

**to understand their own Musicality**

In order to teach Music, our next generation of teachers should begin with a journey to understanding their own musicality. This would assist them in supporting their pupils to understand their own musical journeys.

This can begin with creating a personal timeline of their own musical history; noting key events, people, genres and places that have affected their own musical journey before sharing and listening to others. [See my own example - page 33]

Using a general timeline of Music History with great composers and musicians, students and pupils can then compare their journeys, highlighting similarities and differences. This provides the opportunity to challenge the list of composers most often taught in the music curriculum, to find the true variety of backgrounds and influences that make up the whole of Musical History across the world.

> “Musical ability is now viewed by many as a social construction, acquiring different meanings in different cultures, sub-groups within cultures and at the individual level …”

(Hallam and Prince, 2003)

This brings increased self-awareness, an understanding of how our lives are shaped by our musical experiences, and how self-perceptions of a subject can prevent successful teaching of an important element of the curriculum. This allows us to focus on our musicality as part of self identity, our link to global citizenship, a valuing of difference and diversity, and a recognition of the worth of every person around the world.

The timeline strategy can be implemented in the school classroom, enabling a similar journey to a greater self-awareness of pupils’ musicality, along with the opportunities to express self-identity through dialogue, and the building of an understanding of their peers in the process.

**Examples of Feedback from Students**

>> The greatest impact on me through the music sessions has been our progression from considering ourselves NOT MUSICAL to MUSICAL beings. It is not only about singing a note or playing an instrument but finding music and musical patterns in everyday life and movements. It has given me more confidence and willingness to explore ideas...
and even look forward to planning music lessons, whereas before it was something I was quite nervous about.

>> I believe what has had the greatest impact on me through the music lessons is understanding the freedom that you have to make music. Also, the creativity that you can bring out of children and yourself during the music session. There is very much a sense of freedom when composing, listening or just talking about music.

>> At the start of the sessions, I would not have considered myself musical at all but on reflection music plays a huge role in lots of aspects of my life.

>> I really liked how we started the first music session, where we were asked to think of a personal music timeline.

Building Culturally Responsive Approaches

Once we understand our own musicality, we can extend to composers and musicians, both historical and contemporary, through an approach that enables empathy of difference and celebration of connection through human musicality.

“Music educators can offer students a unique opportunity to engage in local and global community concerns, extend learning beyond the classroom or the rehearsal hall, and bridge the gap between passive performance in a traditional benefit concert format and meaningful social action ...”

(Fisher and Fisher, 2020)

It is our responsibility to use resources that represent the diversity, both seen and unseen, presented across the world of music and throughout History. This approach is practical Ubuntu; raising awareness through knowing the barriers that have been overcome and those still to be overcome, and the people fighting social injustice through this innovative art form.

We can teach the evolution of music and the people who create it, demonstrating how to look behind the history books and find the influences: gender, race, religion and the historical, geographical, sociological, psychological, technological and emotional context of composers, genres and particular pieces of music.

Involuntary Humanity

Whether it is a memory surfacing, or an unexpected emotion catching you the moment a song begins, music is a part of our lives. Music tells our stories.

Our role as educators is to show pupils what makes music, exploring how compositions evolve, and finding relevance in the people behind the music to the lives we are living in the present. To sum up ......

To understand that you do not have to be a musician to be musical.

To see that loving music and connecting with music forms parts of your identity.

To appreciate that everyone is musical, that musicality is global and transcends cultures, while yet allowing cultural expression and unique expressions of self-identity.

Our children deserve a fully appreciated music curriculum that is built on equality to allow them to flourish and heal after the global losses of the pandemic and, if they choose, challenge social injustice all over the world.

We are all human and, therefore, we are all musical.
Friends ... pupils return to the classroom

Sue Rees

Ubuntu is a difficult concept to translate as the African notion of humanism finds expression in community rather than the individualism of the West. The Xhosa proverb – *People are people through other people* – illustrates the idea that each individual’s humanity is ideally expressed through her/his relationship with others and theirs in turn through a recognition of her/his humanity. Ubuntu relates to the quality of being human and is expressed through charitableness and sharing.

“I want to see my friends!” To most people, living within a community is important. We learn from others’ actions; we relate to people of different ages, and we love our families. However, the importance of friends to most people is paramount - this is the reason most of our children wanted to go back to school.

Being unable to meet other people has shown us just how vital interaction can be. My granddaughters, aged four and six, met a toddler on our village green playground. He had not seen other children for a year. He found it impossible to play with them and stood almost impassively as they ran, jumped, and shouted.

Teenagers may have retreated into a half-world of video links and media and have missed out on the most important part of their experience - meeting those of the opposite sex. Many have looked forward to that indescribable feeling of being with other children; something Zoom, or any other social media cannot fulfil.

It is not just in the playground where children relate to each other and share ideas. They talk as they walk or travel by bus to school, participate in group work in the classroom, chat at lunchtimes, as well as going to and from lessons. These experiences offer children the chance to catch up on the latest gossip, share ideas, and dreams. These links may last a lifetime.

Of course, for some home learning has been a positive experience. Those who find the cut-and-thrust of the playground challenging; the very shy, those with autism, for example, may have been able to cope and even thrive. Fine, but temporary. What next?

How are schools making sure that this aspect of our lives – the “Ubuntu factor” - sharing your life with and through others becomes embedded in their lives?

We do not need to revert to the old ‘normal’. We now have an opportunity for change. There is no rulebook when it comes to picking up the pieces. With sound communication and plenty of opportunities to talk, play, and ease into post-lockdown reality, all children and young people can be helped to thrive. The process of ensuring this needs to become a part of our learning at school, time needs to be put aside to ensure that young children, especially, reconnect with their friends or learn how to make friends.

10 books to share as children return to school after lock-down
See website – READ TEACH LEARN THINK
The RESTORE programme, adopted by many schools has a focus on relationships and engagement.

Rebuilding relationships takes time and this needs to be built into the school day. Primary schools may grow opportunities for developing relationships by giving children time to talk, to explore the changes that have occurred in each other’s lives; to play, use art, relaxation, and have time to talk over their worries and concerns they may have for the future.

During this time of engagement, teachers need to be mindful of the need to let the children lead the sessions and to follow their lead. This will enable children to become more confident as individuals and enable them to develop into confident and competent learners.

We do not learn when we are worried or lonely. Learning from each other, being with one another and having the safe space to grow will encourage confidence and enable children to feel safe and happy.

There appears to be a desire among all schools to make sure that their children have this “time to grow” as individuals alongside others. Some schools are using circle time to discuss topical issues and develop the idea of relating to each other to let students grow as people. Here is one space where young people can be encouraged to participate; to be treated equally and with respect; to listen to their peers and value what they have to say; to discuss and argue in a non-threatening environment.

We believe that by using Ubuntu, we will encourage strong, independent and capable young people who will know that working with others and maintaining friendships will make them stronger and more resilient to the challenges we meet throughout our lives. This must come from the individual; after all, we know that when we:

“…..do change to people they experience it as violence, but when people do change for themselves, they experience it as liberation.”

Rosabeth Moss Kanter

A year of lockdowns ... and growing awareness of climate change, the injustice experienced by many black people and the value of the NHS.
Can Ubuntu be put into practice?

Clive Harber & Jeff Serf

The joint Tide~/University of Worcester initiative that has resulted in this issue of The Elephant Times was borne out of the original Tide~ Ubuntu projects undertaken in South Africa in the early- to mid-2000s.

Ubuntu, a Zulu word, translates roughly as Human Dignity. Another way of coming to terms with the concept is to think of it as Human Connectiveness; I am me because of you.

The articles in this issue of ET offer a range of ways in which schools could embrace more fully the principles of Ubuntu. [As outlined on page 5]

Interestingly, there are overlaps between Ubuntu and the teaching of Fundamental British Values in British schools; for example, individual liberties, Rule of Law and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

See ...

Guidance on promoting British values in schools published and The problem with teaching ‘British values’ in school

At present there are often conflicts between the daily practices that occur in schools and the values underpinning Ubuntu. Schools around the globe are usually highly competitive, authoritarian, individualistic, and sometimes harmful to learners (Harber, 2021).

Widespread reform underpinned by Ubuntu values is highly unlikely, and so one needs to be realistic and offer practical small scale changes. This point in time may be an appropriate moment for such changes to take place. This is because Covid has created a “hiatus” in schooling, providing the opportunity to question the purposes and practices of contemporary educational provision.

In the present situation what may be possible are small, achievable moves towards a more co-operative, more collective educational experience for learners and teachers.

The danger is that in the rush to “return to normal”, we return to practice as it was, not as it could or should be.

This is why this collection of articles is so valuable in highlighting ways in which Ubuntu principles have been implemented in a range of educational settings.

Small, possible changes can be made, despite an unpromising wider educational context. The result, we would argue, is that the lives of individuals, individual classes and individual schools are changed for the better, and a more collaborative, less competitive culture develops, one that values personal respect and understanding; one in which all players have a voice and the means and skills to use it.

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Emeritus Professor,
University of Birmingham and
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Jeff Serf, Former Associate Dean,
University of Wolverhampton
and Tide~ Trustee.

Towards Ubuntu

Are we on the right track?

Clive & Jeff have suggested some updated focus questions.
References ... as presented by the authors.

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Page 20 Freedom with connections

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