



# A note on pedagogy from the researchers

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**IKON**



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Dear educator,

We're delighted and grateful that you're considering using our educational resources! We have intended these packs to be used by all educators whether in formal or non-formal settings. And we want you and your learning and teaching communities to make use of them as you see fit, drawing upon the wealth of your expertise and experiences.

But in case it's useful, we would also like to share with you our thinking behind these packs, and offer some suggestions on the scope and aim of the activities contained within them. The packs were co-produced with our non-academic partners. But this statement reflects only the views of the academic researchers.

Among education's many values and functions, we place a great deal of importance on education as a tool to enable learners to critically engage with the surrounding social world, developing their awareness, knowledge and capacity to challenge social relations and inequalities. These skills are important for all people – and especially younger generations – to navigate an increasingly diverse world, but one in which diversity isn't necessarily welcomed and valued by everyone. Our packs are specifically concerned with racial, religious and cultural diversity. They focus on individuals' stories of migration and difference but are equally conscious of their settlement and similarities (as "Brummies").

We would suggest that a useful way to approach these packs is through the ideas of the famous Brazilian educationalist, Paulo Freire. Freire's pedagogy is highly collaborative and invites teachers to be "partners of the students in their relations with them"<sup>1</sup>. This partnership is in essence the breaking down of a rigid teacher-student dichotomy; it rejects the notion that "important knowledge" can be hand-picked by a select group of people and simply drip-fed to students. The objective, rather, is for teaching/learning communities to work together, utilizing all their knowledge, to gain greater awareness of the inequalities, as well as the *opportunities*, in the world around them.

One way to achieve this, we would suggest, is to borrow Freire's concept of *culture circle*, in which students and teachers work together on what Freire calls *generative themes*, i.e. themes that are of interest to the community, and that have a significance within the context of students' lives. We anticipate that our packs will provide plenty of stimuli for such themes to develop. Apart from the subject matter of the photographs taken by the great artist Vanley Burke, and the rich individual accounts<sup>2</sup>, these packs are the result of collaboration between academics, educators, artists and civil society organisations, each with their own mission, vision, ideas and modes of practice, but nevertheless unanimously striving for the cause of social and educational justice. We hope this multi-dimensionality and rich authenticity proves stimulating for your educational community.

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<sup>1</sup> Freire, P. (1993 [1970]) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London: Penguin Random House UK. Page 48

<sup>2</sup> We have included a few extracts from the stories below. These are anonymised so cannot be linked to specific photographs. The idea is simply to give you the option of using the stories for a glimpse into the lives of the individuals who participated in the project.

Finally, we want to draw your attention to three other concepts, namely “codification”, “de-codification” and “re-codification”. In presenting to you the materials in the way that we have – i.e. composing and depicting the photographs in a certain way; asking particular questions; writing this statement, etc. – we have given you our interpretation, our representation of the images and the stories. In other words, we have *codified* the meanings, knowledges and ideas found in our participants’ stories. In the packs, different portraits are included, together with some questions to challenge the classroom’s understanding of specific concepts linked migration, settlement and diversity. We codified our generative themes using photography, with the intent to allow students and teachers to *decode* and freely explore the themes embedded in the portraits. This could promote the creation of new generative themes through classroom discussion, as well as the activities suggested in the packs. Using the packs in this way should, hopefully, already be highly valuable.

However, we would suggest going even further and enabling students to *re-codify* the generative themes developed within the classroom using their preferred form of art: painting, poetry, narrative, music, indeed film and photography. The key question here is: following students’ de-codification of the materials, how will they draw upon their knowledge and experience to engage creatively with the themes? Through re-codification, they will develop a sense of ownership and stronger agency in relation to the issues investigated, which we believe will deeply enrich their experience and understanding of the themes, not to mention opening up possibilities for entirely new experiences and knowledge.

We hope you will enjoy using these packs! If you have any questions, concerns or feedback, we’d love to hear from you. Please get in touch (contact below).

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# Extracts from life stories

**NB: All the stories shared are from people who have permanently settled in Birmingham.**

## **Male from Sudan in his 50s/60s**

"I also see myself as an immigrant because my story is I was born in a refugee camp and I'm being an immigrant from the time. We got, we kept on migrating, migrating outside, and coming back to the country and as even coming to the UK I still feel that I'm an immigrant. Even if I came to the UK as a student on a scholarship but still, I still feel myself as an immigrant. This is my identity, like I know whenever I go, I'll still feel myself as immigrant. Even if I have the British citizenship."

## **Male from Afghanistan in his 20s/30s**

"When I first came here, the social worker I had, assigned me to a family from my country, where I stayed for a month and half. But when I was there they had a baby, so they had a lot of responsibilities, they said you know, you have to go somewhere else. So my social worker brought me to Birmingham, and she gave me to an English family for 4 and a half years. I was 14 years old. They put me in school in Birmingham, in year 9, and then when I finished, I went to college in Birmingham. When I was in school, I really didn't meet many other people from my country or from other places. So it was people born here but from different places like China. But mostly original people from here so it was what we call it a white school. And I used to go to school and then come back home, have some food and then go to work. When I moved to college in 2012, they refused me and told me to go back [to my country] but I told them "look I cannot go back", and they exhausted my case, saying that I had no choice. "I can't go back to Afghanistan, I got no choice" I said, and so I went to a community organization (Migrant Voice), where they helped me with the bureaucracy."

## **Female from Jamaica in her 30s. Mother of two**

"My life experience was hard! At first it wasn't so bad, and I went to school which I found enjoyable but then it all began after school, and I found that because my immigration status wasn't resolved due to my family member that set it for me here and I couldn't continue college. And then after that I fell pregnant with my daughter, who was no longer here. I lost her for infant death. I didn't feel like I had any support, and I didn't feel like that was taken into consideration. You know what I went through it just literally got harder and harder and over the years until having my second daughter and then even after that, it was still at a roller coaster journey for me to get this whole immigration stuff sorted."

"For my daughter when we first moved here in 2015 and primary school wasn't so bad, she tended to enjoy primary school. But as she started in secondary school, she hasn't had a good journey, since she is there, she's not been happy in school, she's complaining about racism she's complaining about teachers just never taking her side in no situation whatsoever, so she's made to feel like she's not wanted, or she doesn't...she doesn't belong."

### **Female of Somali heritage in her 20s; born in the Netherlands; moved to the UK at the age of two**

"I came here when I was very young maybe about one or two so I feel like I adapted well to the culture because I was very young so I was technically brought up in it, but my parents did not grow up in the UK they moved here as refugees so I witnessed their kind of struggle with like culture, the language – and this was mainly when they were taking me to school or like in contact with the housing or the borough and stuff like that. I was always like excited to learn I really liked education but going to university was a completely different culture shock coming from an area and a school where everyone was similar to me or from an immigrant or ethnic background it was like mine and then go to university where everyone is white that was a huge cultural shock. And then I also realize how much, but I didn't learn about it when I was in school and I'm still not learning about it in the university like stuff to do with like my history or other peoples' histories from places like Africa, Asia, South America. There's a lot that I missed out, but now I'm learning a lot more about it... in my area or places that I am familiar with I do belong, but when I go to areas like where my university is like Egdbaston, I really feel out of place because like it's a majority white area."

### **Female from Poland in her 30s**

"I used to speak with much more British accent actually a couple of years ago when I still like cared about sounding British so for the first couple of years I was just like striving to like climb to the top and like you know kind of acted British but couple of years ago you know and just before Brexit when all this facility against migrants started to stir I decided to just not be bothered by it. I kind of embrace the migrant identity."

### **Female from Bangladesh in her 40s**

"You know I've been here for what almost 40 years now, so you know I don't see myself as a newly arrived. You know, I know my Heritage is Bangladeshi, I see myself as a brummie you know, my kids don't see themselves as anything but Brummie; they don't even see themselves as Bangladeshis, their first language is English, so I think, you know, the dynamics change depending on how long you've been here and sometimes you also forget, like I didn't struggle here, my parents did, my dad did, my mom couldn't speak English, so I didn't really struggle as much as my mother. Then the fact that my parents couldn't speak English or support me the struggle was that huge, my kids don't have a struggle at all other than the fact that they're not white so there may be a bit of an identity issue, but there is a...but I think what I've seen you know, even we need this sort of core visually you could have seen newly arrivals clustering together and I think they find that kind of support because they all have similar concerns and issues so it's either housing, getting their kids into school, or you know immigration issues, getting this voice heard, we're settled community a bit more settled so they've got their own house, their kids are sort of growing up, so I think there needs a slightly different and because of that we group differently yeah. But there is definitely a divide from the indigenous white community to more sort of migrant community to the more newly arrival you could sort of see that."

I think for me the best thing about where we come is its diversity and you know you could be yourself in Birmingham you could really express yourself. It's a fantastic city... I've lived here for 40 years and I travel quite extensively and I wouldn't live anywhere else in the world. I actually really...you know despite its flaws and so forth I think generally you know and it's given me my everything in terms of my identity it's shaped me. It's given me my family so you know I've got a huge love of this city."

### **Female from South Africa in her 40s/50s**

"coming to the UK was a decision OK as a family we made. It was due to the crime in South Africa and our middle child Luke, who has dyslexia so that we made a decision to come across here. Funny enough my roots are from the UK. My great grandfather came over to South Africa and in the World War, fought the war and stayed over. That was on my dad side and then on my mom's side Scottish and English...so basically it was almost myself coming over here I thought you know I should be alright. I think my biggest challenge was when I started working and I just kind of thought you know if every English person – you know the way they pronounce things or the vocabulary as in different parts, I couldn't believe the difference of English the slang which on pronunciation of different things. Then being a nurse I had to actually start as a carer...it was odd to shadow some English girls and some carers and they kind of screamed across the road to me "are you from Poland?" you know and I just looked at them all strange thinking what the heck is gonna do with you know but I could get to feel that antagonism or you know, kind of you're a foreigner coming to take...I don't know what was going through their heads."