

Collateral victims of cultural conflicts

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Abstract

The main aim of this piece of work is to explore the views and opinions of young people of African origins (especially those from the DR Congo) who have come to settle in the United Kingdom, on how they would cope with being raised in a country with a different culture. Though the study emphasized more the reactions and attitudes of young people on being raised by their parents in an African manner, the views of parents on trying to educate their children in an African manner in a country with a different approach, understanding and different principles, are also taken into consideration.

The introductory chapters give a brief overview of the reasons why this topic was chosen, the study aims and objectives and also the research methodology. The following chapters focus more on the complexities of multiculturalism and of the different styles of educating children both in the DR Congo and in the UK.

Despite the work finally closing with a summary conclusion and key recommendations for ways forwards, further research may still be necessary to determine if the opinions and views of the participants may be representative of the majority.

Chap 1: Introduction.

This paper will be an attempt to critically look at the lives of children of asylum seekers/refugees/migrants living in the UK, especially those coming from Central Africa and more particularly from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). While parents of Congolese origin will tend to think that the

Western society has brain 'spoilt' and/or 'damaged' their children, turning them into 'little rebels', the western world will instead have the perspective that these parents are simply abusing their children with their way of educating them or dealing with their issues. Victoria Climbié is one such example that many living in the United Kingdom will still have in mind. The main reason for these different perspectives will be the respective cultures of the two parts. The innocent children would therefore find themselves in the middle as 'collateral victims' of a cultural conflict. Do these parents have the right to be harsh on their children because of their beliefs/culture? Do they really understand how things work in the UK, with the evident problem of language being the first barrier for their integration? What is the right balance between the two extremes? Is a certain type of media which is stereotyping parents of African origin as 'child abusers' helping? And finally, what should be the contribution of a youth and community worker to both the lives of young people and parents finding themselves in these situations. These are some of the questions that this piece of work will attempt to answer in an impartial way.

Coming from the same background (the African one), reasons for prioritising this topic is the fact that both as a youth and community worker and as an African of origins, personal hope is that some change and challenge will be made to, if not necessarily the way children are being treated by some African parents, but to the way they believe is the best way of dealing with children, on the one hand. In fact, from personal experience, being born in Africa and having being raised there until the age of 30 when I then permanently moved to the United Kingdom, personal understanding and

perspective is effectively that parents of African origins will generally tend to give their children very little 'voice' and/or 'space' or simply no voice at all in the all process of their education. They will, more than their European counterparts, appear to use 'reasonable chastisement' to 'discipline' their offspring, a practice still permitted by the law in most African countries. Considerations of matters such as children/young people's rights will generally have very little importance or even in some extreme cases no importance at all in the sights of some/many parents of African origins. Many parents of DR Congo origins will only effectively hear about children/young people's rights when arriving in the UK as these are not 'popular' topics in African contexts and countries, where issues of power, equality, respect and social justice are highly placed at the rear plan due to political, economic and cultural factors. Conversely, on the other hand personal hope is also that, some serious reflexion on the negative sides of giving 'too much voice and/or space' to children/young people will also be honestly and critically examined. In fact, so many times emphasis will be put on parents (of African origins) being 'rude' with their children. But little or even nothing at all would be done in cases where so many parents (of African descents) will go through depression, rejection, abjectness, misery and even physical assaults, all due to the fact that their children/young people would be 'excessively using their rights of being children/young people'.

Finally, another expectation of this work is to try and get the British/Western society to understand better where these parents of African origins are coming from in terms of their culture and consequently stops stereotyping/stigmatising them. There would tend to be more assumptions

than real insights/knowledge when it comes to African cultures amongst the British/western public opinion. From personal experience of living in the UK for more than ten years now, it would appear that native form the UK would know very little about African cultures and would generally show very little interest in knowing what's going on beyond the UK's boundaries, particularly in Africa.

Overview of following chapters

The following are some of the issues that will be addressed in this dissertation:

Chapter 2: Literature review

This part will propose a comprehensive and extensive review of relevant literature on the topic area, including reliable internet sources, academic texts and journals articles. It will be an attempt to relate the chosen topic to existing knowledge, finding the gaps in them and eventually necessary future research/works to be done.

Chapter 3: Research methodology

In this chapter, principles and rules employed for the study will be analysed. The main issues to be discussed will include:

The research design

Procedures for data collection

Why some specific procedures would have been preferred to others

Participants observations

Ethical considerations

The process of interviews, its advantages and difficulties.

Chapter 4: Social policy

This piece of work will move on trying to link the issue to current and/or contemporary social policies. A particular focus will be on the 'Every Child Matters' (ECM) policy though others social policies such as 'Aiming high for children' may also be taken into consideration.

Chapter 5: Research findings and analysis

This is obviously the most important part of the work where all live conducted interviews will critically, carefully and impartially be analysed. Their results will then be related to the main topic of this piece of work to try and learn something from them.

Chap 6: Comparative element (secondary materials)

This is where issues of power and/or differences in relation with raising children of DR Congolese origins and children of Indian origins/culture will be analysed and compared. Results from primary research will also be compared to secondary materials where possible.

Chap 7: The Role of the Youth and Community Worker.

This chapter will look at the crucial role the youth and community worker can particularly play with young person finding themselves in such complex situations, but also what support can they bring to the parents involved in the same process.

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Chapter 8: Conclusion and recommendations

After some considerations on the limitations of the study and some useful recommendations in relation to the exploited topic, a general conclusion will finally be drawn.

Chap 2: Literature Review

This chapter's main aim will be to critically review the points of current knowledge on the study's topic, generally looking at relevant literature/materials in connection with the study.

From outset, it might be important to signal here that not much has been previously written in the specific area of the DR Congo's children being raised in the UK. Especially in Greater Manchester where the study has been conducted, same studies or research work to do with children/young people from the DR Congo being raised by parents of African origins are very difficult to find. But from an initial internet search, the few relevant materials in connection with this dissertation's topic have been some articles on children from the DR Congo been maltreated by their parents mainly due to religion which is sometimes infused with elements of the traditional in many African countries. One particular case was a story on many newspaper front pages, of a young boy branded by a hot iron because his father thought he was a witch (BBC website, 2007). Looking at most of the newspapers and websites in relation to this story, what came out was that there was a general feeling of incrimination rightly based on the horrible act committed by this DR Congolese father without looking any further at ways to try and help the parents involved if not to recommend their community leaders to

some kind of child protection courses. One may rightly confirm that there was no sympathy at all from the general public.

Some materials in relation with children/young persons of other African countries such as Ivory Coast which is a country close to the DR Congo in terms of cultures have been considered. One really notable case resulting is the one of the Victoria Climbié's Inquiry Report from the House of Commons Health Committee (2002-2003). Victoria Climbié was a young girl who died on 25th February 2000 as I just arrived in the UK on the 2nd February 2000. The case, which is still fresh in my memory as it really shocked me at the time, will be another key point of this literature review. The reporting committee found that this young girl from Ivory Coast who came to live in London with her great-aunt, Marie-Therese Kouao and with her grant-aunt's partner, died because of multiple injuries arising from months of ill-treatment and abuse by her great-aunt and her partner who were both convicted and sentenced later on. Without going back into the details of this traumatic and shocking story, something to be noticed in the report is the Inquiry's findings of staff making assumptions that because people originated from a particular culture, that behaviour could be described as being culturally determined when in fact they knew nothing about that culture and had never visited the country. The report clearly suggested that Victoria's African culture (and religion) were the reasons why the all regrettable tragedy happened, while acknowledging that this culture misled some of those who came to deal with the case directly. On this one, African culture (and religion) was clearly be put on the bench of accused as having a

very bad influence and bad consequences on the education, safety and protection of children.

Moving from there and looking at books/materials on multiculturalism, a theme closely linked to the main title of this study, one point of focus was the excellent study of Taylor et al (1994) on multiculturalism in which they made the point that cultures deserve admiration and respect, even if it is accompanied by much that we have to abhor and reject. Similar point of view could also be found and read in others books and authors writing on the same theme. Many writers while agreeing on the necessity of multiculturalism in today's society would however always make sure that those coming from outside should to some extents be 'assimilated' into the new culture they were joining. A very recent study on multiculturalism from the Journal of Intercultural Studies (2011) rightly pointed out that

Contemporary popular debates around multiculturalism – or even worse multiculturalism – have tended to take a sceptical stance, to the extent it is understood as a 'failure'.

This will join in agreement with Thomas (2011) who argued that

Since the 2001 'race riots' in the North of England and the 7/7/2005 horrific events in London bombings, the botched attacks two years later on a Glasgow airport and a number of very serious foiled plots, Britain appeared to reject multiculturalism. One critic called it 'the death of multiculturalism'.

One thinking moving a bit in the opposite direction was the work of Paul Gilroy (1993) 'The Black Atlantic' who made a strong liberating call to the

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forces of cultural nationalism trapped in their respective camps. He made the interesting point that being both European and black requires some specific forms of double consciousness. McCalla (2003) seemed to argue in the same sense, going even a bit further in her book 'Black Success in the UK', suggesting that one of the strategy utilised by mothers of Caribbean/African origin in their childrearing to challenge racism is to provide their children with a sense of cultural belonging and a collective racialised identity that they can draw strength from in times of difficulties. She seems to make the point that the original culture of the child of African/Caribbean origin can be 'positively' used for their success in the British society, giving them some kind of strong identity.

Despite all the above considerations, it might however be reasonable enough to say that most of these books/writings/materials have one major weakness: they don't really understand African cultures and in some cases don't even want to understand them. For the few who have attempted to get some deep insight on them, it is mainly about acknowledging and recognizing their existence without real will of practical understanding/knowledge of them. Personal concern when doing this literature review was also that no matter long could have a study conducted or a book written by a non African taken, it would still be very difficult for such a writer or researcher, despite all their willingness, to deeply grasp and understand some complex elements of African culture.

Moreover, for some books/materials, by trying to protect the (African) child (only), it seems like the parents' point of view (and culture) is simply ignored in many material relating to the subject. Assumption has instead always

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been made as to the conclusion that these children are being held ‘ captives’ without their own consent. Very little has been done to try and find if the child themselves prefer the parent original culture. There is like a ‘ taxation’ of the western culture and an obligation to renounce at one’s original culture. By trying to protect the British/European culture, the African culture is generally ignored. Not much help and effort to understand where the parents come from and try to help them as others in similar situations would benefit and get some compassion from the general public. In fact, Looking at an article from the Guardian (2009) – ‘ Tracey Connelly: the story of a woman defined by abuse’- on a similar horrible similar story to the Victoria Climbié’s one, committed by the parents of baby Peter Connolly can reinforce this stand point. The Guardian effectively tried to look at the reasons why Tracey Connelly, the mother of this lovely innocent baby, would commit such an atrocity on her own child and came to the conclusion that the fact that she had had a similar childhood(of abuse) which consequently led her into a drinking and pornographic life should be into consideration.

Looking at a blog/debate linked to this article got to personal conclusion that many in fact became a bit sympathetic with Tracey, arguing that it would be important not only to look at what had happened but to try and find the reasons/roots and try and fight them from there to ensure that such events do not re happen in the future.

Personal expectations are now that the following chapters of this work will give a better balanced view of the topic and hopefully suggest some positive recommendations related to the main theme of the study.

Chap 3: Research Methodology

This third chapter of the paper will explore the process of information gathering, including a rationale for any specific research methods chosen and relevant ethical issues.

This study has drawn on a wide range of sources. However, for the purpose of information gathering, it has mainly used ‘ qualitative’ methods. As Bedford and Wilson (2006) argued,

while quantitative research collects facts and study the relationship between one set and another, gauging public opinion, qualitative research, almost the opposite of quantitative research, is more concerned with trying to gain an insight into human perception of the world and, as such, recognize that it is not wise to generalise about human reactions, opinions, attitudes and so on. In the qualitative research, the hypothesis or theory comes after the data collection.

For the purpose of qualitative research, the strategy mainly consisted on organising face to face interviews with different members of the public who were susceptible to bring any kind of contribution to the study. Most interviews were live and were recorded. The original idea was to conduct interviews with some young people of African origin and others interviews with parents of the same backgrounds. But after the first interview with one young person, some serious difficulties due to disclosure and maturity problems led to a change of approach. As a matter of facts, after consultation with the university tutor, it was then agreed to only interview adults of African origin who came in the United Kingdom as children, who

would then relate their experience of being raised by parents of African origins in the a British context/culture. This strategy was found as being more reasonable and protective for the interviewer, and was consequently used. Insistence was on asking them to try and be as honest as possible and give their feelings/thoughts/perspectives of those times when they first arrived so young. This was because in the due process of growing up and becoming parents, some of them slightly/completely shifted their position today on the subject of being raised by African of Congolese origins. This was so important not to allow the research to get wrong answers, consequently wrong data.

All together, 6 interviews have been conducted, recorded and transcribed. Four interviews were conducted on the experience of being raised in the UK by parents of African origins and the other two were done with parents of African origins raising children in the UK. Two of the six interviewees are people with whom previous rapport was established in the past.

Difficulty wise, as said a bit above, one key problem was the one of disclosure. In fact, the topic being a very sensitive one, it was not easy to find people ready and happy to talk about such difficult and private things. For some reasons, 2 of the interviewees consented to be interviewed at the condition that they would not be recorded live. The methodology with them was to take note straight as they were answering the interview's questionnaire. African beliefs and culture in general and specifically DR Congolese's one was also a serious problem. In fact, coming from the same ground, personal strong knowledge and experience have usually shown that people from the DR Congo are very sceptical whenever it comes to anything <https://assignbuster.com/collateral-victims-of-cultural-conflicts/>

like interview or similar things. It took a lot to convince interviewees about the well founded of the all thing and its benefits for the general society. Personal privilege of being able to speak many DR Congolese main languages really helped in the all process. In fact, in the absence of financial support/vouchers to encourage those taking part into the research, the technique used to convince people was to speak to them in their respective dialect. This put them into confidence and made them more relaxed.

The interview questions were agreed in consultation with the university tutor. One vital element in conceiving them was to avoid using 'leading' and/or 'misleading' questions. General questions were to be used instead of questions which were susceptible of leading into private areas of the interviewees lives. An example of an interview questionnaire can be found in the index at the end of the work.

In terms of ethical issues, it is important to note here that 'respect' of both human being and opinions of people either interviewed or simply approached to get an interview was vital and capital, constituting the basis of all research process. When for example there was a strict refusal for the interview to be recorded as the interviewee as said above, the interviewee not wanting their voice and/or answers to stay somewhere, it was important to show total respect of their opinion and not to insist on recording the interview. The specific context of African mentality being difficult and also because of the sensibility of the topic which may lead to some legal persecution, consent forms were used before all interviews. Permanent consultation took place with the dissertation tutor about the right decision to take in case of incertitude or in complex situations. Again as said a bit above, <https://assignbuster.com/collateral-victims-of-cultural-conflicts/>

because two of the interviewees were of people with whom previous contacts were established in the past and because of personal social position in the DR Congolese community in Greater Manchester doing that many people know me, the aspect of confidentiality was essential in the all study. Despite the use of consent forms at the beginning of all interviews, it was really necessary to make strong assurances to each interview that none of the collected information would be used without their consent.

Finally, from recent work undertaken during a university placement in a local non for profit organisation in Greater Manchester mainly working asylum seekers/refugees/migrants from the DR Congo, some information were also gathered from that experience. The placement took place in an organisation called African Francophone Integration Project Ltd (AFIP). This organisation located in Beswick, has as main objective to help asylum seekers/refugees/migrants newly arriving in the UK in their integration process. Most service users of the organisation are form the DR Congo, some form different countries of Africa. Some personal non recorded informal talking with the first Director of the organisation on the subject also gave some interesting elements which this work will at some point draw on. The first Director related some of his personal experience in dealing with some personal cases in relationship with this study theme, notably one case of a parent and their child who were referred to them by the Central Manchester social services.

Summarizing this important topic on the methodology used for this research, one key point may be that despite all difficulties encountered when conducting this research, the certitude is that the information harvested

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during this entire project have provided a strong base for analysing the main topic. Another important point in closing this section is that all research was really conducted in a professional and ethical way.

Chap 4: Social Policy

This chapter will outline the key reference to historical and contemporary developments in social policy, legislation and welfare interventions relative to this paper's topic. It will also briefly explore wider policies that take into consideration the well being and/or protection of young people (of diverse backgrounds).

The main piece of legislation which this piece of work is concerned with is the ' Every Child Matters' (ECM) policy. The Government Department for Education Website (2011) explains that the Every Child Matters policy is a set of reforms supported by the Children Act 2004. Its aim is for every child, to have the support they need to:

Be healthy

Stay safe

Enjoy and achieve

Make a positive contribution

Achieve economic well-being

Still from the department of Education Website on the origins of this policy, it can be understood that the ECM policy came into power after the horrendous death of a young girl called Victoria Climbié. This case was briefly evoked in the literature review. At the hands of those entrusted with her cares, Victoria suffered appallingly and eventually died. Her case was a shocking example
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from a list of children terribly abused and mistreated. Every inquiry related to this specific case has brought forwards proposals for change and improvement to the child protection system. There have been reforms. The Green Paper, Every Child Matters, which sets out the government's proposals for reforming the delivery of services for children, young people and families, builds on existing measures to ensure that children at risk of harm and neglect are protected from negative outcomes and support all children to develop their full potential. Beyond this, this Green paper also address the problem of children falling through the cracks between different services, emphasizing that child protection can not be separated from policies to improve children's lives as a whole. The document looks at the progress towards a framework of services which will support every child, using this as a context in which to consider the specific need of children at risk. It stresses the importance of information sharing between different government agencies and of a higher level of accountability. One may rightly agree that since the implementation of this social policy, there have been so many positive improvements in the protection and well being of children, though much still need to be done.

Trying to link this wonderful social policy which has certainly brought more protection and safety for children and young people to the DR Congo culture of raising children, one certain fact is that they unfortunately don't always walk along. In fact, most parents really close to the culture of ' discipline' will tend to think that this policy has given children/young people to much space for ' rebellion' against their parents, despite the fact that most of them would acknowledged that cases such as the Victoria Climbié's one are not to

be encouraged at all or to be repeated, ever. The reasoning beyond this from the perspective of African parents is that policies such as the ECM have unfortunately treated all parents as being Victoria's parents, not recognizing that all parents are not as evil as Victoria's tutors were. The ECM would however acknowledge that all parents are not to maltreat and suffer their children as Victoria Climbié's tutors did, but would instead prefer 'safety than being sorry'.

Another really inescapable social policy that is certainly linked to the study's topic is the 'Aiming High for Children' Policy. The Department for Education website (2011) summarizes this policy in these terms:

The government's aim is to ensure that, every child irrespective of race, gender, backgrounds or circumstances, gets the best start in life and the ongoing support that they and their families need to allow them to fulfil their potential. It wants to do this in a partnership with active, responsible parents and empowered communities, supported by public services that delivered packages of support tailored to families' needs.

To support parents to meet their responsibilities in raising their children and to help strengthen the role of communities in supporting parents, the government has made tackling child'spovertya priority since 1997, has created a network of Sure Starts Children's Centres to support children and their families in the vital early years. The government wants to ensure that the primary role of public services is to support families and communities to improve children's outcomes.

This great policy which has effectively ensured that many children, especially those from low income families, a group where many asylum seekers/refugees from the DR Congo would find themselves, have a real good start in life. However, there would appear again to have some conflicts in terms of what children of Africans origins receive as early education which some parents believe sets them on a wrong path from start. As this will be soon explored in the next chapter on the results and analysis of interviews one parent complained that their children are taught from very early ‘ how to dial 999 for anything they might think their parents do to them which they would not approve’. The debate may go on for so long.

Closing this chapter, it might be of help to recall that the UK government social policies in relationship with the education and protection of children/young people have made such a great difference in so many lives, though they don’t always go along with some parents of African origins opinions, and also though much still need to be done to improve them.

Chap 5: Research Findings and Analysis.

This chapter, obviously the most important part of the dissertation, will focus on all live (recorded) interviews conducted for the purpose of this study. The chapter will be composed of two main parts: in the first part, all conducted interviews will be reported and explained. The second part will mainly focus on critically analysing their results.

All together, a total of 6 interviews were conducted. All of the six persons interviewed live in Greater Manchester, UK. There were 4 females and two males. As said a bit above in the third chapter on the methodology of

research, because of some complications to do with disclosure and age, it was decided after consultation with my university tutor to only interview adults, but who had come to the UK as children/young persons. The study being interested not only with the experience of young people of African descent being raised in the UK by their parents/tutors but also with the parents themselves, four interviews were related to the experience of young people and the other two were of the parents talking about their experience of raising up children/young people in the UK. All of the six persons interviewed were aged between the age of 25 and 35 at the moment of the interviews taking place. Most of the participants relating their experience of young people came to the UK when they were aged between 8 and 14. Three of them were living with their direct biological parents and one with an uncle. All of their parents/uncle was originally from the DR Congo. One particular point which may be important to signal here is that one of the interviewee, who gave their experience of young person of African origins living in the UK, first came to live in the UK themselves as a young person and has now become parent themselves at a very early age when still living with her parents. She's now living alone and has consequently the double experience of have been in both positions the study was interested with. Carefully looking at all answers given by all the persons interviewed, one key thing to be noted first was that the answers of ' young people' were diverse/different from one to another while in the answers given by parents, many similarities could be found.

Young people.

Answering the key interview question of briefly relating their personal experience of being raised in the UK by parents of African origins, two amongst the four 'young persons' interviewed thought the experience was negative and difficult. One striking point was that all two mentioned the fact that at the very beginning when they first came to live in the UK with their parents, there was no problem at all. But it is only after a few months (for one of them) or a few years (for the other one) that difficulties started arising. They all raised the point that when they got used to the way their peers were living and started imitating/copying them, that's when they got into disagreement with their parents who were for all of the two persons interviewed very 'traditional' (according to the term used by one of them) or very 'old fashion' (according to the second interviewee). The two 'young people' found really painful and difficult the fact that they, at the same time loved their parents and loved their 'new world', as they put it. They reported that they found it difficult to try and choose between the British way of life and what their parents were asking them to follow as strict rules. They all unanimously thought that they were misunderstood by their 'old fashion' parents and would sometimes not know what to do as they had originally been raised (in Africa) in a way of total submission to their parents with no rights to argue with their decisions at all.

The third 'young person' answering the interview questions came to live in the UK at the age of 9 with her parents of African origin. Her parents were strict on the fact that the way to 'live her life' was the African manner but were more understanding' when she had different opinions. The parents were well educated persons since back in Africa where the dad had a BA

from a DR Congolese university. They would however clearly state to her that the British way of life was ‘ dangerous and wrong’ has it could leads her into a lot of trouble in the future. She reported that she eventually got into a ‘ bad group’ of friends from school/college and ended up with becoming pregnant at nearly 16 years old. Her words were that the all experience of been raised by parents of African descent was not too bad because of the fact that her parents were more ‘ open minded’ than most African parents who would give very little time to listen to their children and discuss with them. She nevertheless tried and made the point that, reflecting on her life after the pregnancy, she thought that despite the fact she thought at some point that her parents were too much like ‘ village people’, had she followed their ‘ way of life’ tough she didn’t like it much, she might have had a (positive) different life today.

Answering the same crucial interview question on the personal experience of being raised by parents of African culture in a British environment and culture, the fourth ‘ young person’ however went a bit in the opposite direction. In fact, he related that the all experience was a very good one without any ‘ difficulty’ as he completely stayed in the line of what his parents told him to do. He continued saying that because his personal understanding of the all thing was that the British way of life was ‘ deceptive’ and could potentially lead into a lot of troubles, he decided to stick with his parents way of education and didn’t find any problem with being raised in Europe/the UK by parents educating her in ‘ an African manner’.

Parents.

As said a bit above, both parents who were females for the two them, have many similarities. As a matter of facts, they both made the common point in their answers that raising children in Europe/the UK is not easy at all, according to them. The reason why was about exactly the same. According to them, when they would like to raise their children in a disciplinary way as they had themselves been raised since back in Africa, they would encountered ' the resistance' of their child (as they put it) who would in many cases not listen to them anymore because they would have ' known their rights'. One of them insisted on the fact that giving a sense of discipline to children doesn't necessarily mean using physical punishment. She gave an example of the way of being dressed which she tried to inculcate to her daughter since they moved to the UK 11 years ago. In a DR Congolese context, she said that it would be such an embarrassing thing for a young girl to be dressed with ' revealing clothes'. According to the point she made, a woman in the Congo with a trouser/skirt revealing her underpants or with a too short skirt would be ' badly looked at. These types of things are completely normal in Europe she said. She made the point that the way of life in UK has encouraged her daughter to dress ' freely', forgetting her origins and/or culture. Her daughter would sometimes embarrassed her in front of her husband as she wouldn't listen to anybody, copying her peers at school, on TV, on the streets etc. The second parent though a bit more ' flexible ' on such issues, however still made the point that she sincerely thought that the Congolese' way of educating children would teach them to have more respect towards society in general and towards grown up/adults specifically. One clear point she made on the difficulty of raising her daughter in the UK was effectively emphasized on the fact she noticed a

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complete change in the sense of lack of respect towards them when they moved to the UK and that their daughter started 'being assimilated' (according to her words by her friends styles of life. She reported how her daughter would simply threaten them to dial 999 and ring the police for any 'little' thing she would disagree with. Her most serious concerns was raised in these terms: if seems as they (meaning the police, the social services, the government, those in powers, those making law etc) only care about protecting children, which is right. But what about us parents the children are also giving us a terrible time. You've nothing to say and nothing to do as for any little thing not only she may call the police but also you may easily end up as listed on a child abusers list somewhere. Linking with the above question, both parents were asked about their knowledge of children/young people rights. Both parents acknowledged that they had never heard about children/young people rights back in the DR Congo.

As Bedford and Elizabeth (2006) pointed out, no matter how interested the researcher is interested in her/his topic (which was my case), she/he do have to keep an open mind about the subject and be careful not to pre-judge the answers. Impartially and critically analyzing the above findings from all interviews, and without trying to over generalize, many may join in agreement with the statement according to which the all process of passing from being educated in an African context with different legislation, beliefs, culture etc to being raised in a very democratic western country such as the United Kingdom must be a really confusing one for the child/young person. In fact, as the answers of most young people appear to suggest they would at some point, agreeing with the parents' culture or not, have to make a

difficult decision on the best way to follow. And unfortunately some of them have had to make such decisions being as young as 7 or 8. The parents, who for most of them were raised up in a specific way of seeing things for all their lives, would be of no help at all, giving their children, as one of the young lads said, no space at all for dialogue. This 'waterproof' and 'no openness' attitude of parents combined with the hidden desire to enjoy the British way of life will eventually make of these innocent young people without any kind of voice 'collateral victims' of a cultural conflict which they have never asked for. They have just unfortunately found themselves at the wrong place and at the wrong time, one may say.

However, trying to read carefully between the lines, from interviews done with the 'young people', one important factor is that all young people do not necessarily think that the African way of raising children is 'old fashion' and wrong. Even though amongst the 'young people' interviewed, only one of them went in that direction, it is still a very important fact to be considered. This is really important because the general impression of the general audience/public may generally be that these poor children are being held captive despite their own will to do things which they think is detrimental to their good causes.

Turning sights towards the parents, one who might have read their answers reported above will certainly conclude that they also feel like being misunderstood by the general society and being treated unfairly. As said at some point at the opening of this chapter, contrary to the young people's answers which were sometimes completely different from one youngest to another, the parents however, despite some minor differences in opinions, <https://assignbuster.com/collateral-victims-of-cultural-conflicts/>

seem to be of the point of view that the western culture and/or way of life is causing 'more damages than good' to children education. Reading their answers will understand that they, of course, are coming from an African point of view on the education of children. Even though, they were no clear allusion to the use of physical chastisement as the best way of education children, the certainty was that they are formal on the fact that the British way of raising up children, though with so many positive aspects, seem instead to lack 'some discipline taste and/or flavour' in it. They both thought that combining the actual wonderful way of educating children with some 'authority' would make a better job.

Chap 6: Comparative element (secondary materials)

This chapter, as one may deduct by its title, will essentially be about a comparison between the DR Congolese culture/way of life, way of educating children in the UK the Indian's ones. This comparison will be placed into the context of this paper main topic to try and get some lessons.

While many or most of children and young people will generally tend to behave the same way and/or have same attitudes/reactions/feelings because of the simple common fact that they are all just 'children', it may however be right to confirm that each child/young person's original backgrounds, culture, beliefs, religion etc., will have a strong influence in the way they perceive society. This may lead to say that children of African origins will to some extent be different to those from Asia, in their understanding of how they are being educated by their parents of DR Congolese/Indian descents. Both parents (of DR Congolese and Indian origins) will in the same way, tend to educate their respective offspring accordingly to their respective cultures.

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From an initial comparative study on DR Congolese culture and the Indian's one, it was noticed a lot of similarities between the two. From a study on the Indian child website (2011), here are some of the most important characteristics in Indian culture (family culture, values, clothing etc) which will also be found in DR Congolese culture:

Indians are highly flexible in the sense that they would like to imbibe the changes dictated by western influence and yet clearly affirms their beliefs in tradition.

Indian dress etiquette discourages exposure of skin and wearing transparent or tight clothes.

Family culture in Indian is about joy and sharing.

Generally India is patriarchal

Indian culture is diverse and rich

Ancient Indian culture believes in a lot of dogmas and rituals that can be termed as false beliefs.

It is customary to respect elders and seek their blessings. Hindu rituals are all about dance and songs.

Indians are known for their hospitality and level of tolerance.

Observing the belief that there is one God prevailing despite so many religions is a value in India. Family and religion are so closely linked.

Trying to compare the rights of children in both countries (DR Congo and India), the following results from the UNICEF's website on the rights of children in India:

In India, children's vulnerabilities and exposure to violations of their protection rights remain spread and multiple in nature.

Parents' attitudes and perceptions about child's labour and the value of education is one of the cause underlying child's labour, though poverty may be one the main reason.

The government of India ratified the UN Convention on the rights of the child in 1e November 1992.

Most of the rights detailed in the Convention are guaranteed in the Constitution of India.

Ensuring that child rights are met for every child is a daunting challenge for India.

Reflecting on the above reports on the culture and the rights of children/young people in India, one clear conclusion when comparing them with the same in the Democratic Republic of Congo is that there many similarities not to say that they are totally identical, despite some minors' differences. Linking this with this study's main topic/ideas, understanding that both DR Congolese and African culture having strong indications of the child's being an element with very little voice in the family setting from early and being raised in that context, it will be logical that many parents when coming to the UK would tend to try and keep educating their child in the same way. This will certainly put the innocent children in the same position of being collateral victims of a cultural conflict.

Chap 7: The Role of the Youth and Community Worker.

What should be the role of the community worker involved with young people of DR Congolese origins founding themselves in a position of '

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collateral victims' Does the youth worker have to take part for the young persons because that's their work Do youth workers have to ignore the parents What should be their positions in the cultural conflictual situation These are a few questions this chapter will attempt to address. The first part of the chapter will try and explain what's youth work is while its second part will critically examine the role of the worker in this situation.

As a personal experience undertaken during a very recent university placement (January to April 2011) done in an independent organisation in Beswick once again revealed, the general public doesn't seem to know much about the entire discipline of youth and community work, not to talk about its invaluable contribution. In fact, at a first meeting with colleagues and volunteers working within the association which usually work more with all parts of the local community and not specifically with young people, I was introduced as a youth and community worker. This visibly raised some unexpressed questions as to not only how I would fit in their work, but further as to ' what I really was' (as a youth and community worker), as some of my colleagues confessed to me later on when we got very close. After explaining to them what youth and community work really was, they again confessed that all they knew was that it was about keeping young people happy with Nintendo, football table-tennis etc. Introducing me as a youth and community worker to the 6 interviewees who kindly gave their time to answer a few questions for the purpose of this study seemed also to raise the same questions. Two of the parents told me at the end that they thought that it was ' social workers' who were supposed to be dealing with

such issues. This introduction may easily take one to confirm that many still don't know or wrongly assume to know what youth and community work is.

Batsleer (2008) rightly pointed that youth and community work is about dialogue, about conversation. She keeps on saying that it is about enabling young people to 'come to voice'. This aspect of coming to voice is effectively a very crucial one when talking about youth work. As a matter of facts, may be because of what was seen and/or passed through generation after generation, until nowadays, people would wrongly tend to think of youth workers as people whose sole role is to 'animate' young people with different games, to keep them out of the streets. While youth work can indeed involve some recreational activities in the course of accomplishing its mission, that's definitely not the primordial role of this noble profession. Because society will hardly listen to young people, youth work has as one key mission to give them a voice by creating safe space in safe place where they would be able to have a voice. Youth work is there underpinned by a set of strong values and ethics. These allow our work to be guided by anti discriminatory practice, equality, social justice, a commitment to harnessing participation. The National youth Agency (NYA) website (2011) gives a more complete definition of youth work is the following terms:

The main purpose of youth work is the personal and social development of young people and their social inclusion. Youth work helps young people learn about themselves, others and society through non-formal educational activities that combine enjoyment, challenge, learning and achievement. We believe youth work methods can be applied in a range of settings by a wide

range of professionals, support staff and volunteers, and we are committed to helping people understand and use these approaches.

Youth workers will always aim to make their spaces safe for all young people, regardless of backgrounds, race, class, sex, ability, religion etc. in creating safe space in safe places for young people, we acknowledge that young people will feel better equipped to learn, share and influence society.

What can then be the role of the above defined youth and community worker involved with persons/parents in a cultural conflict.

To both the young person and the parents, it is first of all important to underline that, as seen in the definition of youth work, emphasis should always be put on 'fairness' in dealing with all matters. Despite the fact youth workers will have a sense of 'alliance' with the young persons for which they are advocating even for which they 'are alive', it may however be very important not to become 'too emotionally involved'. Clear boundaries must always be traced between personal beliefs, values, opinions and professional ones. Youth and community work should remain as 'neutral' as possible, professional, 'identifying' the community first. This should apply to parties involved in the 'conflict. In fact, as Belton (2009) argued, if we are to educate a community we must first identify it. He rightly insisted on the fact that youth workers should not label it or prejudice it as this would badly affect their work.

Having critically and impartially examined the all situation, the youth and community worker will then have to take a decision on either refer the case to the appropriate services when necessary or either continuing to work

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between the two parties to get to some kind of resolution of the dispute. In everything, the youth and community worker will ‘peacefully’ challenge any form of discrimination, inequality, lack of respect etc. without being ‘prejudgemental’, the role of the youth and community worker will basically be the one of encouraging debate and open/mature discussion between all parties. They will therefore encourage inclusion and promote social justice in doing so.

Chap 8: Conclusions and recommendations.

After going through a series of considerations on the very complex issues of children/young people of African origins, especially those from the DR Congo, the following can be said in conclusion:

Many parents of African origins moving to the UK with their children will usually know very little about the way of life in Britain. They would generally tend to assume that they should keep giving their children the same education they were giving them when at home. The problem of language would evidently be the first barrier for them as for anyone moving to a country with a different language. This would unfortunately put the innocent children in a position where they are between the wraths of their inflexible, traditional and ‘old fashion’ parents and the hidden love of enjoying the British way of life. Some have precedent tried to look at the subject of the complexity of multiculturalism. Though this is generally considered as a good thing for society in principles, it is however taken with a lot of precautions. Recent activities of terrorism in the past few years have unfortunately increased the sense of rejection of multiculturalism.

This study did use qualitative methods to try and get a better insight into the subject. For this, six interviews were conducted with members of the general public, originally from the DR Congo on living in the UK on their experience of being raised by parents of DR Congolese origins and on raising children in a DR Congolese manner, in the United Kingdom.

Some UK social policies relative to the subject were briefly looked at and put into the context avec the main topic. From this exercise, the conclusion is that parents of African origin will struggle to adapt to these specific social policies, despite agreeing on their numerous positive sides. The reason again is found in those original 'flames' of fire profoundly imbedded within them since so many years, since their childhood, since hundreds and hundreds of generation.

Analysing the results of all conducted interviews has provided the sense that most of the children being raised by parents on DR Congolese origins will struggle with the situation of being in between two cultures and will consequently especially suffer from a lack of understanding and/or support of a 'too old fashion' parent, who would give them very little support and voice/space for discussion, though they would not necessarily think that the African/Congolese way of raising children is a bad one.

Comparing the way parents of DR Congolese origins deal with their children to the way those from India do the same has been a fruitful point as well. In fact, from that comparison, it emerged that both cultures have many similarities. This led to the understandable point that both parents raising

their children in the UK will tend more to hang on to their original culture, not giving much 'space' for a shift into cultures to their children.

Looking at all the above, it may be right to conclude by saying that though the debate on the complex issue of multiculturalism will certainly keep going on for as long as no one knows, it is a very good thing as it helps society in becoming a more diverse one. However, if the newcomers don't necessarily need to completely be assimilated by the new culture they embrace, it may however be correct to give some thoughtful and honest considerations to their new homeland's way of doing things. This applies to the new homeland's way of educating children. Conversely, on the other side, the new homeland or its inhabitants may or would definitely also benefit from, not rejecting the newcomers' culture straight away, but by trying to be open to them and try and learn from them, on what they may consider as being positive points. Those being in position of communication may help more by passing around this type of message than one focused more on the negative sides of the culture/actions/deeds of people from abroad. Finally, the children/young who have the privilege of finding themselves in a western country where their rights are properly protected and where they have got a bigger voice and more space for dialogue, should in no case find there an opportunity to willingly become a cause of pain for their parents, despite their African beliefs. While it is perfectly true that children have the right to be children on the one hand, it is also perfectly correct that parents have got the rights to be parents, on the other hand. Things can work properly if there are clear boundaries.

Recommendations

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Once again, stressing the fact that though the above interview and the entire study is not to be necessarily as the reflection of the general public, the findings here may certainly inform many on what should be done.

Amongst the most recommendations:

- Putting more emphasis on educating the British general public on others' cultures may have a significant impact on the acceptance of multiculturalism

- More efforts may be needed in educating parents coming from abroad (especially from the Democratic Republic of Congo) on the way of life/the culture in the UK will certainly help a lot.

- Educating children living in the UK on the difference between using the right to use their rights/freedom and the respect they are expected to show respect to society is of the key recommendations this study would strongly suggest.

- The youth and community worker whose main role is to fight for social justice and promote a society where social exclusion is completely eradicated one day will have a major role to play in this complex situation. Staying impartial, the youth and community worker will have to help all parties involved in trying to find a right balance for a better society.

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