

Institution: Bishop Grosseteste University
Unit of Assessment: UOA 25 Education
Title of case study: Children's spiritual development and its neglect in primary education. Dr. Kate Adams.
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>The impact relating to this case study is situated in three domains. The first domain focuses on impacting policy on spiritual development in the primary curriculum, achieved via membership of a Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) working party. The second element is lay engagement with understandings of spirituality and its contextualisation in primary schools, achieved primarily through media coverage of research findings. The third area relates to informing understanding about the processes and meaning making of dreaming (as a specific area of spirituality) through expert comments in mass media outlets and the hosting of events attended by the general public and practitioners as well as academics. These achievements are complemented by high profile roles in international professional associations.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The research detailed in this case study focuses on children's spirituality. In educational terms, it is contextualised in schools' legal requirement to promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of children. The spiritual component is the least well understood of the four elements, being sources of confusion for teachers, Ofsted inspectors and the general public. Adams' research aims to advance understanding of it from the child's viewpoint. Specifically, the work offers original research into children's spiritual experiences, underpinned by the overarching philosophical concept of the child's voice, and in particular the notion of the child's spiritual voice(s).</p> <p>Adams' research into children's spirituality began in 1999, initially exploring spiritual dreams. Spiritual dreams have a long history in many world religions' scriptures and practices, and experiences of adults have been documented. However, children's spiritual dreams have rarely been researched in a systematic manner. Over a five year period, her research was funded by three grants totalling £38,000. The funding comprised £7,500 from the Farmington Institute of Christian Studies at Oxford University, a £30,000 PhD scholarship from the University of Glasgow, and £500 from The Keswick Hall Trust, University of East Anglia.</p> <p>The research adopts an interdisciplinary approach. Elements of religion, psychology and anthropology are synthesised together with original empirical research with children in order to elicit dream reports and explanations of children's understandings of the experience. The relevance of the findings to primary education is explored, with a focus on Religious Education and spiritual development. This focus on children's dreams and their significance for children forms the first of two key strands of this case study detailed in publications submitted to this panel (i.e. Adams, Hyde and Woolley 2008; Adams 2008; Adams 2009).</p> <p>The second strand relates to a key finding of the empirical studies, which was that many children felt that their spiritual voice(s) often went unheard. Drawing on a wider range of children's spiritual experiences, the work (e.g. Adams 2009) argues that despite the contemporary educational and sociological discourse on the importance of the child's voice, the spiritual voice(s) are often silenced by wider cultural practices. In turn, this silencing (combined with other factors) impacts negatively on teachers' understanding of children's spirituality, particularly from children's viewpoints, and hence hinders the promotion of spiritual development in schools.</p>
<p>3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)</p> <p>Adams, K., Hyde, B., and Woolley, R. (2008) <i>The Spiritual Dimension of Childhood</i>. London:</p>

Impact case study (REF3b)

Jessica Kingsley. ISBN: 978-1-84310-602-9

- ‘...excellent, very informative and concise study... some of the ideas are truly inspiring’ *Implicit Religion* (King 2012: 97-101)
- ‘This is a provocative book which challenges adults to think about the way we live our lives, our value systems, our economic, political, health and education systems, and the impact all these have on children’s spirituality’. *Scottish Journal of Healthcare Chaplaincy* (Upton 2009: 34-35)
- ‘I challenge any reader of this volume not to have their horizons expanded by this excellent study... This book deserves to be both widely read and acted upon... There is knowledge, wisdom and challenge in the text’ (Woodward, no date). Available from: <http://jameswoodward.sdnet.co.uk/review-jkp-children.htm#4>

Adams, K. (2008) The dreaming child: dreams, religion and religious education. *British Journal of Religious Education*, 30:1, 59-67. DOI: 10.1080/01416200701711725

- 120 article online views

Adams, K. (2009) The rise of the child’s voice; the silencing of the spiritual voice. *Journal of Beliefs & Values*, 30:2, 113-122. DOI: 10.1080/13617670903174991

- 111 article online views

Adams, K. (2010) *Unseen worlds: Looking through the lens of childhood*. London: Jessica Kingsley. ISBN: 978-1-84905-051-7

- ‘This is obviously a difficult field, but Adams brings to it a creditable academic rigour’. *The Good Book Stall Guide* (Scott 2011)
- ‘This book is thought provoking and Kate Adams approaches each chapter from an original and unique perspective’. *Counselling Children and Young People* (2011)
- ‘This is a book which supports the incontestable case for... sufficient time and opportunities to really get to know the children we teach and to create an emotionally literate school. ...Kate Adams’ book is warmly commended to all who... think of progress as the development of the whole child rather than the meeting of performance targets.’ *Primary First* (Coe 2010: 24)
- The book ‘adds to what we know about the inner life of children...[which] can help validate and expand our understanding of what this inner world is like.’ *International Journal of Children’s Spirituality* (Hart 2011: 377)

Adams, K. (2010) Seeking and sharing the spiritual in the classroom, in: M. de Souza, L. J. Francis, J. O’Higgins-Norman and D. Scott (eds) *The International Handbook of Education for Spirituality, Care and Wellbeing*. Dordrecht: Springer. ISBN 978-1-4020-9018-9

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Impact on national education policy

Adams’ international research profile has led to a range of high profile positions within professional associations and media attention as detailed further below. The profile led to an invitation to join the then Qualifications and Curriculum Development Authority’s (QCDA) working group on spiritual development in schools which impacted on national education policy on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC). The outcome of the group was a statement of position and guidance for primary teachers on the QCDA website. Particular influence was the argument that spirituality cannot be defined (articulated in Adams, Hyde and Woolley 2008); a view that superseded the QCDA’s previous stance of offering definitions for teachers, which was a practice welcomed by teachers but contested by some academics.

Reach beyond academia

Media attention has been a regular feature of research dissemination. In 2009, a paper on teachers neglecting children’s spirituality in schools, derived from an article submitted to this REF panel (Adams 2009), was presented at the British Educational Research Association (BERA)

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conference in Manchester, UK. The paper attracted a wide range of media coverage. For example, articles based on the research were published in the *Daily Telegraph* (3.9.09), *The Tablet* (5.9.09), *The Church Times* (11.9.09), the *Church of England News* (September 2009), the *Times Education Supplement* (one-page feature, 11.9.09) and *Metro* (3.9.09). In addition I was invited to discuss the research on BBC Radio Manchester (3.9.09), BBC Radio Lincolnshire (9.9.09) and BBC Radio Sheffield (13.9.09).

Other audiences beyond academia have also been reached through invitations to give keynotes on research findings to the Annual Conference for Primary RE Co-ordinators, Lincoln Diocese (2007), the Annual Conference of Catholic Headteachers, Nottingham Diocese, UK (2010) and a Westhill Trust conference entitled *Imagination, spiritual development and the RE curriculum: informing better practice from new research*, Leeds, UK (2011). *Radio Children* invited me to create a Vodcast on children's dreams, based on research findings on spiritual dreams, which was first broadcast on the internet in November 2007.

Adams' expertise on children's spiritual experiences disseminated in the doctoral work and subsequent publications (Adams, Hyde and Woolley 2008; Adams 2008, 2009) has also been sought by journalists for a range of high circulation publications. These included expert comments in articles on dreams in *Vogue* (December 2008), *Sainsbury's magazine* (October 2008) and *Reader's Digest* (March 2007). In addition, my research on children's dreams was broadcast in interviews on Radio 4's *Today* programme (14.7.07), BBC Radio Lincolnshire (9.9.09) and Dublin City FM (23.1.08). In 2010, Adams was invited to blog for the US-based website *Psychology Today*. Posts on the site, relating to a range of research outputs, receive an average of 2504 hits per blog.

Further engagement with non-academic audiences including the general public, artists, teachers, writers and psychoanalysts was achieved through the hosting of an international, interdisciplinary conference at Bishop Grosseteste entitled *Dreams and Culture* in 2007. The conference attracted 67 people from seven countries. The academic audience moved beyond education, also drawing in scholars from cognitive psychology, English literature, anthropology and psychoanalysis. Further reach to non-academic audiences was achieved via a journalist's report on the conference on the BBC Lincolnshire website.

Informing understanding

Common understandings of the processes of dreaming and people's responses to different types of dreams including the spiritual, have been influenced by 'New Age' teachings and wider popular culture, and are subject to a range of misunderstandings and inaccuracies. In order to help counter this, and to enhance cultural understanding of dreams from a research-informed perspective, Adams initiated a new multidisciplinary network called *Dreams Network UK* which aimed to engage lay members of the public and practitioners in addition to academics from different disciplines. The group followed on from the *Dreams and Culture* conference and has involved considerable networking. It has met at a range of venues including Bishop Grosseteste University, Durham University, Leeds Metropolitan University, the Centre for Counselling and Psychotherapy (London) and the Wellcome Trust to disseminate research findings and participate in workshops.

Executive positions on international professional associations

The high profile accorded to Adams' research in the media and beyond has also contributed to me gaining executive positions on international professional associations. She currently holds the position of executive member of the International Association for Children's Spirituality, which promotes and supports research and practice in relation to children's spirituality within education and wider contexts of children's care and wellbeing.

In 2007, Adams was invited to stand for election onto the Board of Directors of The International Association for the Study of Dreams, a long-standing multidisciplinary organisation based in the US which has members in 39 countries. She was elected to the Board and served from 2007-2010 before moving onto their Executive Committee in the role of Secretary (2010-2011). Currently Adams holds the post of UK representative. Through these roles she has been able to influence

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the association's mission and direction with a particular focus on children's dreams (rather than those of adults which comprise the majority of interdisciplinary dream research) and how research can impact on schools' practice.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)**Media sources available online**

Adams, K. (2010-2013) *Psychology Today* research-informed blogs. Available from: <http://www.psychologytoday.com/experts/kate-adams-phd>

Lamb, C. (2009) Children's spiritual needs neglected. *The Tablet*, 5.9.09. Available from: <http://tablet.archive.netcopy.co.uk/issue/5th-september-2009>

Paton, G. (2009) Angel sightings 'should not be dismissed': Children who believe they have seen angels often keep it quiet for fear of being ridiculed by adults, according to research. *Daily Telegraph*, 3.9.09. Available from: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/6126113/Angel-sightings-should-not-be-dismissed.html>

Other media sources

Invited expert comment in 'What your dreams say about you'. *Sainsbury's magazine*, October 2008

Invited expert comment in 'New Research: What your dreams really mean'. *Reader's Digest*, March 2007

Radio interview by John Humphreys on research into children's dreams. *Today Programme*, BBC Radio 4, 14 July 2007

External research grants

£30,000 PhD scholarship from the University of Glasgow (2000-2003)

£500 from The Keswick Hall Trust, University of East Anglia (2003)

£7,500 from the Farmington Institute of Christian Studies at Oxford University (1999)