

Title: Reflexivity in Quest of Identity and Lifelong Learning

A paper for the Annual Conference of the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain, Friday 3rd to Sunday 5th of April 2009, New College, Oxford.

Author's name: Kang Zhao

Institution affiliation: School of Education and Lifelong Learning, University of Exeter, UK

Postal Address: 153 Fore Street,
Heavitree
Exeter, EX1 3BR
UK

E-mail address: kangzhao.mail@gmail.com

Reflexivity in Quest of Identity and Lifelong Learning

Kang Zhao

University of Exeter

“The *self* is implied reflexively in operations, the analysis of which precedes the return towards this self. Upon this dialectic of analysis and reflection is grafted that of *idem* and *ipse*. Finally, the dialectic of the same and the other crowns the first two dialectics.”

Paul Ricoeur 1992, p.18

Introduction: reflexivity and lifelong learning

It could be well argued that one's reflexivity in quest of one's sense of self, or more particularly, one's identity, has something to do with one's learning. This is first because one's decision on the nature, kinds and contents of learning is and could be largely underpinned by one's self-understanding, including his/her identity that is acquired through his/her reflexivity on him/herself. Another important assumption of the relevance between reflexivity concerning identity and learning could be that learning itself might be seen as a reflexive process of promotion and development of self-understanding, and hence is the process of questioning, discovering and recognizing of one's identity. No matter what kind of argument can be linked to the relevance between reflexivity concerning identity and learning, the most obvious examples of such relevance can be found in today's theories, practices and policies of lifelong learning in many Western countries (e.g. Edwards 1997, 1998, Hake 1998, 1999, CEC 1998, Field 2000, Edwards et al 2002). While it is important to reveal the relevance of 'reflexivity' concerning identity to learning and lifelong learning, perhaps the more fundamental question is how we should understand the 'reflexivity' in relation to self and identity, since the understandings of these notions entail assumptions of and implications for many policies, theories and practices of learning and lifelong learning.

There seems to be a prevailing trend in recent field of lifelong learning that the notion of 'reflexivity' concerning self and identity increasingly attaches to a set of popular ideals that advocate *flexibility*, *adaptation* and *self-realization*. The formation of such trend seems to have something to do with certain social-economic conditions and governmental agenda. Such relation could be evidently perceived from the current discourse of lifelong learning. The dominant discourse of lifelong learning policy has been said to be economy and employment-orientated (e.g., see Edwards 1997, Field 2000, Biesta 2006, Bagnall 2000). Richard Edwards's analyses show that this orientation is driven by economic competition caused by globalization and personal insecurity threatened by social exclusion, e.g., differentiation between employed workers and unemployed workers (see Edwards 1997, p.29ff). He further analyses that in responses to economic competition and individual insecurity, the need for flexibility seems to be increasingly emerged in capital markets, in production

techniques, in business organizations and among the labor forces. Such flexibility implies adaptation to changes both at institutional and individual levels, which implicitly demand 'reflexivity' at both levels. As Edwards comments, 'Changes and adaptation to change have become watchwords of policy, including educational policy. Many such characterizations incorporate a view that contemporary change processes require greater *reflexivity* by individuals, organizations and societies and that this is achieved through learning' (Edwards et al 2002, *emph. added*).

This analysis of the current orientation of lifelong learning resonated with the sociological analysis in the *late modernist* view, which is particularly noticeable in work-based learning. An organization/workplace in a late modern context is *reflexively* organized and reorganized with its capacity to reflect on and learn from its practices in order to change, be adaptable, flexible, competitive, efficient and/or profitable and/or effective. Hence, this view seems to be applauded by many new organisational and management theories. But the key factor here is that only when staff members within organizations change, can an organization change. It is here that the role of learning for changing becomes conspicuous. In this logic, staff members as learners have to flexibly renew themselves in order to help the organisation to achieve its goals. Hence, it is not difficult to understand why Barry Hake summarizes the key characteristics of European Union's lifelong learning policy as 'flexibility' and 'individual responsibility' (Hake 1998, p.34). But the problem is such a mode of self-transformation is a constant process given the constant changes and competition in capital market. Probably this can explain why individual identity as '*a reflexive project*' seems to be hailed as a theoretical rationale for managing organization and managing workers, hence a governing principle of work-based learning. The popular use of 'reflexivity' then seems to focus on the purpose of continual changes for 'flexibility', which have been criticized for causing endless fatigue to individuals (see e.g. Bauman 2000).

The understanding of 'reflexivity' relevant to 'flexibility' also seems to be regarded as a kind of expression of an individual's self-understanding in terms of a mode of reflexive learning concerning personal identity in our life. This is why John Field claims that 'our informal learning now tries to deal, however unsatisfactorily, with fundamental questions of our individual identity and intimate relations...these have now become defining characteristics of our way of life' (Field 2000, p.67). The problem is: our self-understanding simply directed by reflexivity for changing and flexibility not only exaggerates *social* shape of identity, but also implies an active agent underpinned by a 'hyper-individualism' for continual self-transformation, self-actualization and self-realization, with little reference to others.

In this paper, I wish to rethink the understanding of 'reflexivity' concerning self and identity and its relevance to lifelong learning. I will do this first by analysing the theoretical assumption of recent theories and policies of lifelong learning. Then I focus on examining sociologist Anthony Giddens's notion of 'reflexive project of the

self' which those theories and policies of lifelong learning are mainly underpinned. I argue although this theoretical assumption is helpful in our understanding of current social conditions and the change of sense-making of self, it is problematic to understand it as a norm. This theory itself is also problematic because flexibility and strong agent might cause ethical issues. I then turn to French Philosopher Paul Ricoeur's work to explore a different way to understand the relevance of reflexivity to self and identity. In concluding section, I argue that the notion of 'reflexivity' implied in Ricoeur's theory raises new questions of and contributes new insights into the dimensions and configuration of lifelong learning.

The role of reflexivity in current discourse of lifelong learning: a sociological assumption

Many academic contributions to the field of lifelong learning have suggested that the 'reflexivity' implied in the theories, policies and practice of current lifelong learning is linked with or drawn from the notion of 'reflexivity' in sociological analyses from the late modernist views, particularly, from the works of Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck (e.g., Edwards 1997, Hake 1997, Field 2000, Edwards et al. 2002). Giddens himself has argued briefly on an individual's ongoing reflexivity for changing one's self in the context of social transitions in the sense of lifelong learning, though it is limited to work-based learning. He writes, 'Although training in specific skills may be necessary for many job transition, more important is the development of cognitive and emotional competence' (Giddens 1998, p.125 cited in field 2000, p.138).

While Giddens's and Beck's theories could be seen as *one* of important assumptions and agendas for lifelong learning, they seem to be regarded as a normative understanding and hence as the major theoretical source for the theory, policy and practice of lifelong learning today. Such normative reading of theories of Giddens and Beck in relation to lifelong learning can be evidently perceived in many arguments of lifelong learning theorists. For instance, John Field argues, 'they (Giddens and Beck) certainly contribute something to our understanding of the scope of lifelong learning, as well as of its ultimate significance' (Field 2000, p.61) and 'their work seems to me central in grasping the underlying function and place of lifelong learning in contemporary societies' (ibid., p.62). In a similar way, Hake argues, 'Giddens's discussion of the structural necessity of reflexivity provides one way of understanding why learning is a permanent feature of social life in late modern societies' (Hake 1998, p.33). By referring to Beck's notion of 'individual reflexive modernization' (1986), Hake argues, 'A corollary of organizational reflexivity is intentional learning as a vehicle for "individual reflexive modernization"' and 'late modern societies are typified by learning challenges and necessity of lifelong learning as a structural characteristic' (Hake 1998, p.39). He even makes a claim that 'learning can be understood as an active acquisition and application of knowledge and skills in all forms of social interaction. From this perspective, lifelong learning is constructed by learners themselves in the very process of institutional, organizational and individual *reflexivity*' (Hake 1999, p.88, *emph added*).

Lifelong learning merely based on normative reading of such sociological analysis thus seems to reduce lifelong learning to ‘learning to be flexible’, ‘learning to adapt’ and ‘learning to survive’ in a rapid changing society. However, reading Giddens (and Beck) as a norm and take it as the foundation for of lifelong learning might be at risk of excluding other constitutive dimensions and configuration of lifelong learning (see, e.g., Bagnall 2000, Edwards et al. 2002, Biesta 2006a). Given such understanding of lifelong learning is based on the sociological analysis in the late modernist views, not least the notion of ‘reflexivity’, there is a need to have a critical look at this notion for further understanding. For this, in next section, I will focus on analyzing Giddens’s notion of ‘reflexive project of the self’, since Giddens and Beck’s notions on ‘reflexivity’ are quite similar in many respects (see, e.g. Edwards 1997, Field 2000).

Rereading the ‘reflexive project of the self’

One of the key ideas in Giddens’s analysis of late-modern societies is that the reflexivity that is characteristic of such societies ‘extends into the core of the self’ (Giddens 1991, p.32). This is why he argues that identity can no longer be seen as ‘something that is just given’ but has to be understood as ‘something that has to be routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual’ (ibid., p.52). The main reason for this is that late-modern societies no longer provide stable ‘anchor points’ for the self. Society and the self are both ‘in flux’ which is why Giddens writes that ‘the altered self has to be explored and constructed as part of a reflexive process of connecting personal and social change’ (ibid., p.33). This is at least partly in order to respond to the anxieties raised by rapid social change. In this regard we might say that the reflexive construction of the self is aimed at keeping these anxieties at bay. It is, in other words, a particular response and way to deal or ‘cope’ with the uncertainties of rapid social change. Thus, the reference points for the construction of the self have to be set ‘from the inside,’ i.e., ‘in terms of how the individual constructs/reconstructs his or her life story’ (see ibid., p.80). As Giddens explains, the ‘first loyalty’ of the individual becomes a loyalty to himself (see ibid.). The morality underpinning this is a morality of authenticity, i.e., being true to oneself, which plays an important part in self-actualisation. As Giddens writes: ‘In so far as it is dominated by the core perspectives of modernity, the project of the self remains one of control, guided only by morality of “authenticity”’ (ibid., p.225).

While Giddens’s depiction concerning self and identity might be plausible if we follow his analysis on the characteristics of current Western societies, there are certain assumptions in Giddens’s view about self and identity in late-modernity that raise questions. For the purpose of this paper, I wish to make two major critical observations. Firstly, Giddens presents us with a picture in which the self is constantly engaged in a process of adapting oneself to eternally changing circumstances. Anxiety, as Giddens argues, is not only ‘caused by disturbing circumstances, or their threat’ but can at the very same time ‘mobilise adaptive responses and novel initiatives’ (ibid., p.13). In Giddens’s view individuals appear to have no choice but to change

themselves in order to adapt to changing circumstances. The question here is not only whether this is indeed inevitable – which is firstly an empirical question. There is also the normative question whether this depiction of the individual as flexible and constantly adaptive is a desirable way of understanding the individual in late-modern societies. Here we can think, for example, of Sennett's claim that the adaptive and flexible self actually expresses a 'corrosion of character' (see Sennett 1999) rather than a desirable way to exist under late-modern conditions.

This, in turn, relates to my second observation, i.e., it relates to a particular issue regarding morality and ethics in Giddens's view. By locating the reference point for the construction of the self within the self and by making authenticity the main criterion for the reconstruction of the self and/or life-planning, Giddens runs the risk of advocating a hyper-individualism where the individual seems to be unaffected by others and by relationships with others. This then raises questions about the ethical 'position' of the self, and this question is particularly salient in what he describes about 'pure relationship', i.e., 'one in which external criteria have become dissolved: the relationship exists solely for whatever rewards that relationship can deliver' (Giddens 1991, p.6).

If it is assumed that post-traditional societies can only exist reflexively, then it is also not too difficult to follow Giddens's suggestion that this reflexivity extends to the self and that precisely for this reason the late modern self can only exist in a reflexive manner, in a process of continuous and never-ending making and remaking of the self. It is here, one may see some implications for the lifelong learning as continual learning for adaptation and innovation of oneself over one's lifetime. However, there are some issues in this view of the self. Giddens advocates the self as adaptive and flexible – and thus seems to assume that such flexibility is a good thing rather than a weakness of character. Also, he suggests that any individual has a strong agent to reflexively construct and reconstruct one's self and one's identity. The reference points of reflexivity seem to be only interior, i.e., based on 'self-actualisation' and 'self-realization'; the importance of exterior criteria and 'others' seem to have been significantly overlooked.

The question we should ask here is whether the notion of 'reflexive project of the self' should be the *only* or *major* theoretical assumption for current discourse of lifelong learning. The first step in answering this question is to ask whether the relationship between reflexivity and identity can be understood differently. One author who has tried to analyse the question of self and identity in a way that is indeed different from the current discourse about reflexivity and identity is the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur.

Paul Ricoeur on reflexivity and identity

While Giddens's theory of identity claims that the identity has to be continually made and remade based on one's reflexivity that steers its course in the interplay between

social change and self-actualisation, Paul Ricoeur locates ‘reflexivity’ of oneself in three dialects, which could be argued as a different view in understanding the notion of reflexivity and its relation to lifelong learning concerning our identity.

For Ricour, it is through the dialectic of *analysis* and *reflection* (or we may say, reflexivity) in an operation that is attached to two other dialectics, that we identify ourselves, our identity. He argues,

The *self* is implied reflexively in operations, the analysis of which precedes the return towards this self. Upon this dialectic of analysis and reflection is grafted that of *idem* and *ipse*. Finally, the dialectic of the same and the other crowns the first two dialectics (Ricoeur 1992, p.18, emph. in original).

This quotation indicates that the first dialectic, i.e. the dialectic of *analysis* and *reflection* concerning the understanding of the self could be seen as the dialectic of *others* and *oneself*, or what Ricoeur calls the dialectic of *other than self* and *self* (ibid., p.3). This is because it could be argued that the dialectic of analysis and reflexivity in operation could also be understood as a process of interplay that operates in a circular activity starting from inside self to outside self and then returning to this self. Further, the dialectic of analysis and reflexivity in this operation, in the light of Ricoeur’s argument, steer a course between *idem* and *ipse* and between the *sameness* and the *other*. ‘Other’ here should not be simply understood as social influences in sociological sense, but also implies ascriptions and imputations to the self from other persons. It is these dimensions of otherness that we can hardly see in Giddens’s analysis of the self and identity. But we can find their significance in Ricoeur’s analysis of ‘*ipse*-identity’.

But what are ‘*ipse*-identity’ and ‘*idem*-identity’? How should we understand the dialectic relationship between ‘*idem*-identity’ and ‘*ipse*-identity’? Ricoeur presents us with a conceptual analysis of the distinction between these two modes of identity and their dialectic relationship. He argues that there are two forms of identity: permanence in time in sameness (i.e., the idea that something remains the same with itself over time) and permanence in time implied in selfhood (i.e. individuality, uniqueness over time). He refers to the first form of identity as *idem*-identity or *sameness* and to the second form as *ipse*-identity or identity of *selfhood* (see Ricoeur 1992, p.116ff). There exists a dialectic relationship between the *idem*-identity and *ipse*-identity in the field of selfhood. On one pole of the dialectic relationship, *ipse*-identity is overlapped by *idem*-identity, which is expressed as *character*; on the other pole of the dialectic relationship, *ipse*-identity departs from *idem*-identity and stands alone being identified as *self-constancy*.

Character, which can be seen as a set of ‘*lasting dispositions*’, is made up of both *habit* (which is a result of an evolutionary interaction between sedimentation and innovation) and *acquired identifications*. The latter is a result of internalization

through the interplay between self and *otherness*, including significant others, norms, morals, values, ideals, cultures, models and heroes and so forth. Self-constancy for Ricoeur is a pure *ipse*-identity without the cover of sameness, which is a form of permanence in time *through* a self's persistence. 'Keeping a promise that one has given to others' is an example of self-constancy. Hence, self-constancy in this sense entails a responsibility to others, and so is a kind of *ethical* identity. In this sense, the notion of 'character' entails the crisscross of *idem*-identity and *ipse*-identity. The notion of 'self-constancy' expresses a mode of pure *ipse*-identity without the support of sameness, but is only supported by ethical empathy and moral obligation.

Within this dialectic framework, we can see personal identity in selfhood is not merely something that is made and remade as advocated by Giddens. Firstly, this is because *habit* is not simply a result of innovation by the self. It is the result of overlapping of sedimentation and innovation. What implies here is that innovation is partly based on a self's identification of itself and a self-understanding of its sedimentation. Secondly, *character* as an *acquired identification* amounts to a certain existing framework of pure 'identification-with'. Ricoeur argues, 'Recognizing oneself in [e.g., certain moral frameworks] contributes recognizing oneself by [both by oneself and others]' (see Ricoeur 1992, p.121). Thirdly, personal identity as *self-constancy* can be seen as the self's *maintenance* of itself as a consistent being in intersubjective relationship, which expresses both care of oneself (*Dasein*) and care of others. In all these senses, we are not merely what we *make* of ourselves; at the same time and even before we start to 'make' ourselves, we are 'what' and 'who' we *are*. In Giddens's approach to self-identity, we can only see an amplified *ipse*-identity, corrosive *idem*-identity, and little self-constancy underpinned by ethical imputations from others. It seems to be difficult to find two modes of *permanence in time* attached to the conception of personal identity in Giddens's analysis. What suggests here is that the person who has a 'flexible identity' is hard to be identified and/or re-identified as the same person and as a constant being, both by him/herself and by others. In the dialectic between *idem*-identity and *ipse*-identity, the subject might suffer from the problem that 'I' am 'nothing', if, as Ricoeur writes, '[a] self [is] deprived of the help of sameness' (Ricoeur 1992, p.166). Here, Ricoeur provides a view to explain the 'meaninglessness of personal identity' at a conceptual level by showing the importance of identity as *sameness* and its maintenance.

But what is the role of reflexivity in this second dialectic relationship? The answer could be found in the notion of *narrative identity*. Ricoeur argues, 'Understood in narrative terms, identity can be called by linguistic convention, the identity of the character' (Ricoeur 1992, p.141). Character here refers to 'the one who performs the action in the narrative' (ibid., p.143). Hence, '[t]he narrative constructs the identity of the character, what can be called his or her narrative identity, in constructing that of the story told (ibid., p.147-148). For Ricoeur, narrative identity is an ideal mediator between *idem*-identity and *ipse*-identity. He argues,

‘Having thus situated it (narrative identity) in this interval, we will not be surprised to see narrative identity oscillate between two limits: at lower limit, where permanence in time expresses the confusion of *idem* and *ipse*; and an upper limit, where the *ipse* poses the question of its identity without the aid and support of the *idem*’ (ibid., p.124).

Given the *need* of reflexivity in constructing a story a person tells about him/herself, what implies here is that reflexivity is an important condition of constructing a narrative identity and hence it also takes an important role in oscillating between *idem*-identity and *ipse*-identity. This understanding is very different from Giddens’s analysis of the role of ‘reflexivity’ in narrative, which seems to be mainly driven by ongoing social changes, and is made simply for adaptation and innovation.

The third dialectic relationship lies between *sameness* and the *other*. Although, as Ricoeur stresses, “‘other’ appears in the list of antonyms of “‘same’ alongside “‘contrary,’ “‘distinct,’ “‘diverse,’ and so on’ (ibid., p.3), *same* and *other* influences each other *through* selfhood. On the one hand, for the sake of the other, the sameness of a self can be changed through the action initiated by this very self, since otherness can be constitutive of selfhood as such (see ibid.). That is to say, selfhood entails others as an element that is constitutive of this selfhood, i.e., *oneself as another*. To care about his family members, Tom abandoned his identity as a heavy drinker. On the other hand, it is also possible that for the sake of being a same person, one may less care about certain need of others. For instance, to be faithful to a profession/cause, one may stick to this professional identity rather than changing him/herself for a different professional identity though such change might improve his/her financial condition for the sake of others, e.g., for family members. It is exactly selfhood that mediates between sameness and others. In this sense, it could be argued that the reflexivity entailed in making sense of one’s selfhood (*ipse*-identity) takes a role in mediating the dialectic of sameness and others.

Implications of a different understanding of ‘reflexivity’ for learning

Ricoeur’s conceptual analysis of personal identity and the reflexivity implied in this analysis indicates that some aspects of personal identity might be open for kinds of learning that are relevant to identity and the self.

From three modes of reflexivity that exist in three dialectics in Ricoeur’s analyses, certain modes of learning concerning self and identity could be drawn out. Firstly, through deliberately conducting reflexivity within three dialectical frameworks, one may learn whether he/she has a sense of stability of one’s personal identity by reflexively sensing the proportion of the *sameness* of the self; one may learn the degree of individuality of one’s personal identity by reflexively sensing the proportion of *ipse-identity*; and one can also learn to what extent one’s personal identity is imputed by others by reflexively sensing the proportion of *self-constancy*. Then one can further make a balanced adjustment on the constituents of his/her personal

identity by conducting such reflexivity.

Secondly, Ricoeur reveals that 'other than self' is constitutive of selfhood, which suggests that self receives imputations from others and sympathy of others. Self in this sense could be understood as the self in terms of 'oneself as another'. So, self-constancy expressed as what Ricoeur refers to as 'keeping one's word' to others indicates a learning process emerged in the intersubjective relationship, i.e., a mode of learning about showing who I am and where I stand in response to others and otherness. This resonates with Gert Biesta's notion of learning as responding (see Biesta 2006b). Taking a paralleling view on the personal identity as 'being' that is preconditioned by others, Biesta argues, 'what makes us into a unique, singular being – me, and not you – is precisely to be found in the way in which we respond to the others, to the question of the other, to the other as question' (ibid., p.28). Reflexivity conducted in such kind of response is a process of learning as responding to others, from which one's identity emerges.

Conclusion

In this paper, I started with a discussion on the relevance between 'reflexivity' concerning one's identity and learning. I then pointed out that the adoption of the notion of 'reflexivity' in current theories and policies of lifelong learning is largely limited to the need of flexibility and change in the current socio-economic contexts. I have also shown that this understanding increasingly not only affects the work-based learning in terms of endless self-transformation, but also advocates an idea of continual identity-making through lifelong learning encouraged by self-actualisation.

I revealed that the notion of 'reflexivity' concerning self and identity adopted in recent theories and policies of lifelong learning is operated on a sociological assumption, particularly in the late modernist views of current Western societies. Through re-reading Giddens's notion of 'reflexive project of the self', I argued that whereas Giddens's depiction of the condition of the self in the late modern societies may appear plausible, hence does have some implications for self-understanding and one's learning over lifetime, further inspection of his views indicates that he operates with rather specific assumptions about the self – assumptions that are not merely descriptive or factual but also seem to imply normative views about what a desirable way of leading one's life in the late modern societies is. Particularly, his notion of reflexivity concerning identity is underpinned by the notion of flexibility for adaptation to ongoing social changes, which not only cause endless fatigue to individuals, but also is corrosive to one's character. Also, such reflexivity is guided by continual innovation of self and identity based on the ideal of self-actualization, which is at risk of leading to hyper-individualism and is likely to cause ethical issue about the ethical 'position' of the self in relation to others.

For this, I turned to Ricoeur's theory of self and identity, from which I see an alternative understanding of reflexivity in three dialectics, i.e., the dialectic of oneself

and others, the dialectic of sameness and selfhood and finally the dialectic of sameness and the other. What is suggested in Ricoeur's analysis is that sameness, selfhood and others are constitutive of personal identity, and one's reflexivity steers a course among these elements. What implies in this understanding of 'reflexivity' concerning learning is a mode of reflexive learning that is relevant to self and identity. This mode of learning is not simply for changing and innovation of oneself, but also for maintenance in terms of one's sameness and self-constancy. In the meanwhile, a mode of learning as responding in relation to others emerges from maintaining one's self-constancy, which highlights the ethical position of the self in relation to others.

The main point I tries to make in this paper, as I have mentioned at the beginning of this paper, is that one's reflexivity in quest of his/her identity is relevant to one's learning. This is not only because one's judgments on the nature, kinds and contents of learning and continual learning is largely supported by one's self-understanding, one's identity that acquired through certain kind of reflexivity, but also because learning itself could be seen as a process of promotion and development of self-understanding, and hence is the process of questioning, discovering and recognizing of one's identity. Since reflexivity in quest of identity concerns our learning over our lifetime and entails our understanding of ourselves as a mode of learning about ourselves *in, over and through* our life, the idea of 'reflexivity in quest of identity' hence has great significance for our understanding of lifelong learning. In contrast to Giddens's notion of 'reflexivity' that suggests ongoing learning for flexibility and continual learning for (re-)making one's identity, Ricoeur indicates a different understanding of 'reflexivity' that implies the significance of learning for maintenance and consistency of self and identity. Particularly, Ricoeur contributes a new insight into the reflexivity that is relevant to the ethical dimension of the self and identity as responsibility to others, which is absent in Giddens's theory. Hence, Ricoeur's work helps us understand differently what are actually involved in the act of reflexivity in quest of identity and presents us with insightful implications for the new dimensions and configurations of lifelong learning.

References

Bagnall, R.G. (2000). Lifelong learning and the limitations of economic determinism. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 19 (1), 20-35.

Bauman, Z. (2000). *Liquid modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Biesta. G. J.J. (2006a). What's the point of lifelong learning if lifelong learning has no point? On the democratic deficit of policies for lifelong learning. *European Educational Research Journal*, 5(3-4), 169-180.

Biesta G.J.J (2006b). *Beyond learning: democratic education for a human future*. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers.

Commission of the European Communities (CEC) (1998). *Learning for active citizenship*. Directorate General for Education, Training and Youth, Brussels.

Edwards, R. (1997). *Changing places: flexibility, lifelong learning, and learning society*. London: Routledge.

Edwards, R. (1998). Flexibility, reflexivity and reflection in the contemporary workplace. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 17 (6), 377-388.

Edwards, R., Ranson, S. & Strain, M. (2002). Reflexivity: towards a theory of lifelong learning. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 21 (6), 525-536.

Field, J. (2000). *Lifelong learning and the new educational order*. Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham.

Giddens, A (1991). *Modernity and self-identity: Self and society in the late-modern age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Giddens, A. (1998). *The third way: The renewal of social democracy*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Hake, B. (1998). Lifelong learning and European Union: A critique from 'risk society' perspective. In J. Holford, P. Jarvis & C. Griffin (ed.), *International perspectives on lifelong learning*. London: Routledge.

Hake, B. (1999). Lifelong learning in Late-modernity: The challenges to society, organizations, and individuals. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 49 (2), pp.79-90.

Sennett, R. (1999). *The corrosion of character: The personal consequences of work in the new capitalism*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Ricoeur, P. (1992 [1990]). *Oneself as another*, Trans. Blamey, K. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Correspondence:

Kang Zhao

(PhD student at University of Exeter, School of Education and Lifelong Learning)

153 Fore Street, Heavitree, Exeter, EX1 3BR, UK

Email: kangzhao.mail@gmail.com