
education review

Speaking Up for Schools



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Preface by Christine Blower, General Secretary, National Union of Teachers

Teachers and school leaders could be forgiven for being in the doldrums at the moment. We are all reeling from a raft of initiatives that even the most enthusiastic education policy wonk would have trouble keeping up with let alone hard working and hard pressed teachers and head teachers.

In Wales, school banding was 'in' but now it is no longer on the immediate agenda. In England, no sooner have we got to grips with the new Ofsted framework which came into force in January this year than fresh changes to the inspection regime are looming from September. Phonics teaching is the new flavour of the month but how long will that remain in vogue before some new fashion for reading comes along? A curriculum review is underway; citizenship in schools is under review; and schools are being encouraged, and in some cases forced, to change their status and become academies. The increasing number of schools operating outside the local family of schools is putting severe strain on local authority finances and in turn on the education services they are able to provide. Whilst this is impacting on provision across the board, as is usually the case, it is the most vulnerable children who are being hit the hardest.

All these issues and more are considered in this edition of *Education Review* which once again provides a platform for some of the key thinking around the big education issues of the day. The theme of this issue is 'Speaking Up for Schools' and a lively and informed selection of articles are included along with the regular book reviews highlighting valuable resources for busy teachers.

In March I attended the International Summit on the Teaching Profession in New York where government ministers, union leaders and teacher leaders from 23 of the 25 highest-performing education systems internationally met to discuss school improvement and teaching. Andreas Schleicher, the Deputy Director for Education at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), describes what took place at the summit and sets out the intention of ministers and union leaders to move the education agenda forward over the coming year.

As Brian Lightman, General Secretary of school and college leaders' union ASCL, makes clear in his article, the current review of the National Curriculum for English schools was not something that the teaching profession asked for. I echo his call for the profession to rise to the Government's offer of autonomy and take back the leading role over the content of the curriculum and how we teach and assess it.

In a related article Professor Terry Wrigley argues that Government policies have failed young people growing up in poverty and teachers need

greater freedom to develop a curriculum that will engage and motivate them towards achievement.

David Reedy, Past President of the United Kingdom Literacy Association (UKLA) has written a compelling article critiquing the Government's policy initiatives in respect of the teaching of early reading and the Year 1 Phonics Check for six-year-olds imposed upon all English primary schools in June. As he so clearly demonstrates, the process of becoming a reader is more than simply saying the words on the page and even doing that requires more than phonic decoding in order to be accurate and meaningful.

The NUT is campaigning for an end to the phonics screening check which we believe will damage young children's learning in the same way that KS2 SATs tests have distorted the curriculum for older primary children. The Union will continue to campaign for an alternative approach through Reading for Pleasure and I welcome the work of the UKLA and its partner organisations in promoting an approach to literacy that aims to develop readers for pleasure for life in contrast to the Government's utilitarian and narrow view of the development and teaching of early reading.

Professor John MacBeath raises some fascinating issues in his article exploring some of the factors which provide teachers with job satisfaction ('satisfiers') as opposed to those that cause dissatisfaction ('dissatisfiers') and those that empower rather than disenfranchise teachers as professionals.

Not surprisingly satisfiers include autonomy, being valued, trusted and listened to, time for learning, teaching and planning, collegiality, initiative, creativity, contact with pupils, the scope for innovation and experimentation and challenge. In contrast, dissatisfiers include not feeling in control, lack of time, professional isolation, a prescribed or inflexible curriculum, bureaucracy, testing, policy initiative overload, pressure to meet targets, poor student behaviour and stress. Since there is a clear body of international research to demonstrate that no school system can be better than the quality of its teachers, any government that was sincerely committed to raising standards of education would do well to consider these checklists each and every time a new policy initiative is proposed and ask themselves a simple question: Is this policy more likely to satisfy or dissatisfy teachers? If the answer is the latter, then it cannot possibly be in the interests of the children that they teach.

The Children's Commissioner has recently completed an important inquiry looking at the processes for excluding students from state funded schools and the factors influencing a school's decision to exclude a child. The NUT understands that there are situations when, despite their best efforts to keep a child in school, schools feel they have no remaining options. However many schools are working hard to find alternatives to exclusions including alternative provision both within schools and in the wider community as well as area-based alternatives to exclusion between groups

of local schools.

The NUT is concerned about the high exclusion rates of particular groups of children including those from certain ethnic groups, those with special educational needs (SEN) and children eligible for free school meals. In addition the Union is deeply concerned at the high exclusion rates from academy schools – double those of maintained schools. There is a real danger that in a climate of high stakes testing and league tables some schools may feel tempted to rid themselves of the children whose academic performance, it is feared, may bring down overall results for the school. Clearly this is not an education system that NUT members want to be part of. Upholding children's rights to an education that meets their needs and is of the highest standard possible as well as complying with the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child is something that we would all wish to achieve.

NUT Wales members had something to celebrate earlier in the year following the announcement by the Education Minister of a two-year postponement to the proposed new primary school banding system which had been due to come into effect this year. While the campaign to oppose the system will continue, the postponement will allow greater discussion to take place around the flaws of the system. The Minister's decision was welcomed by NUT teachers across Wales who have worked hard to highlight the problems a primary school banding system would create.

In his article, Gareth Rees explores the background to the so-called 'crisis of Welsh education' that has provided the basis for the new policy approaches in Wales. However, he argues that there is a danger that simplistic readings of the OECD's PISA international education rankings and other external bench-markings of Welsh educational performance are serving to close off debate, rather than to open up new avenues for educational development. Gareth advocates a more nuanced analysis of Welsh educational attainment and he suggests that policies more centrally concerned with addressing issues of educational inequality may be more appropriate.

The Campaign for State Education (CASE) has been advocating for good local schools for many years. In her article, Melian Mansfield, Chair of CASE, sets out the elements of a good local school and warns of the dangers posed by a test-driven rather than a child-centred curriculum and a school system that values school autonomy and competition above local collaboration between schools. Melian makes a powerful case for a strong role for governing bodies. Involved, informed and active governors are needed now more than ever and I would urge all NUT members to get involved as teacher or parent governors and remind you that NUT training is available to support you in this important role.

The global Occupy movement has struck a chord with young people around the world. Although the camp at London's St Paul's Cathedral is no longer present the movement is going strong in its many dimensions. One

of these is the Occupy Citizenship arm of the movement which seeks to provide young people with the opportunity to tackle controversial issues through informed debate and engagement within their schools. Jamie Kelsey-Fry, a secondary school teacher with 23 years' experience and an author of citizenship materials for schools, explains in his article how Occupy Citizenship addresses the core content of the citizenship curriculum – rights and responsibilities, democracy and justice and identity and diversity. He argues that in order to meet the challenges that young people face in the current economic climate and in a world riven by social and political unrest, young people need as firm a grounding in active citizenship learning as they currently receive in the core subjects.

The interim report of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Social Mobility was published in May. The report showed that social mobility in Britain is low by international standards and does not appear to be improving. It identified seven “key truths” about social mobility, one of which was that the point of greatest leverage for social mobility is what happens between ages nought to three, primarily in the home. Whilst some intervention is possible in areas such as parenting skills and techniques, home life is difficult territory for the state to become involved. In contrast, school and nursery is the most obvious place in which it can have a positive impact. The value of high quality state nursery education is well understood in addressing the inequality gap that already exists by the age of three. As the Parliamentary Group's report makes clear, this means provision of quality early years settings and investment in qualified nursery teachers.

Ben Hasan, the head teacher of an inner London maintained nursery school uses his article to describe the characteristics of quality early years education and examines the future of nursery schools. He outlines what needs to be done to ensure that nursery schools can continue to make a substantial impact on the outcomes of young children and argues for the continuation of active campaigns, such as the National Campaign for Real Nursery Education, to which the NUT is affiliated, to ensure the future of quality state nursery provision.

A survey by the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) last year revealed the shocking statistic that almost one in five English local authorities were cutting vital specialist education services for deaf children. An article by the NDCS Deputy Director of Policy and Campaigns, Jo Campion, explains why specialist education support for deaf children is so important, the extent of the cuts that have been made and the impact this is having on deaf children and their teachers.

The NDCS has had some significant successes working with parents to challenge and reverse cuts and teachers can also play a vital role in highlighting where cuts in services are occurring and the impact these are having. I would urge NUT members to get involved in the NDCS's campaign,

how to do so is explained in Jo's article.

This edition of *Education Review* is a guaranteed good-read for the summer holidays and I recommend it to teachers, school leaders and educators everywhere.

Christine Slawes

Preparing education systems for the 21st-century

Andreas Schleicher

Andreas Schleicher is Deputy Director for Education at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and Special Adviser on Education to the OECD's Director General.

Abstract: *This article summarises and reflects on approaches to school improvement and teaching discussed at the 2012 International Summit on the Teaching Profession. The Summit demonstrated how debates about education policy have become internationalised and reflected a common set of concerns: leadership, 21st-century skills, and ensuring that there is a better match between teacher demand and supply.*

Ministers, union leaders and teacher leaders from 23 of the 25 highest-performing and most rapidly improving education systems according to the international education rankings, PISA, accepted an invitation from U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and Education International to discuss how to prepare teachers and develop school leaders for the 21st-century. There was an unprecedented turnout of those in education who can make change happen. They met because they realise the urgency of raising the status of the education profession, because they know that governments and the profession are in this together, and no doubt also because they were convened by an education secretary who has demonstrated that bold reform can be successfully implemented even in the most challenging times.

It was striking to see how much education – traditionally inward-looking, siloed and at times provincial – has become internationalised, with success no longer measured by national standards alone but by what the best-performing education systems show can be achieved. Secretary Duncan may have surprised delegates when he explained how much of his reform agenda builds on the experience of the most successful educational systems and the outcomes from last year's Summit. But no less so did Shang Minxuan, mastermind of Shanghai's school reform that helped to propel the province to the top of rankings on the most recent PISA assessment. He recounted how he and his colleagues had toured the world in the 1990s to find out how countries as different as the United States and Switzerland were successfully addressing the policy challenges his province had faced at that time. The idea

was not to copy what they were doing, but to learn from them and put together a design for Shanghai that would be superior to anything that they had seen anywhere. Though one can always question whether policies that are successful in one place will succeed in another – and surely no country can simply adopt another nation's system or policies – comparative data and analysis seem to rapidly expand the scope for learning from the successes and failures of education policies and practices around the world.

The importance of leadership

Where important things are happening in schools, there are people that make these things happen. A consistent thread throughout discussions at the Summit was the central role of leadership in high-performing education systems. This was all about supporting, evaluating and developing teacher

The success in leveraging the knowledge and skills of talented leaders for system-wide improvement and developing effective leaders at scale, as reported by high-performing countries as different as Canada, Finland or Singapore, seemed truly remarkable.

quality; about vision for results, equity and accountability and a culture of commitment rather than compliance; and about aligning pedagogical goals with strategic resource management.

I also took away from the discussions how important it is to have a system-wide perspective and connect school leaders so that their work is coherently aligned with the larger goals of the systems. Ministers and union leaders stressed the need to distribute leadership effectively so that school leaders can take on this larger system-level role. As the Swedish Minister Jan Björklund put it, if there are too few people involved in leadership, things simply will not change because there are so few people promoting change and so many against it. Or, in the words of the Slovenian Minister Žiga Turk, in the age of Twitter, your effectiveness as a leader depends much less on your administrative powers than on your capacity to attract followers. But it became equally clear that there can be tension between leadership and leaders, between structures and coherence, on the one hand, and visionary and entrepreneurial individuals, on the other. And there can be tension

between the need to pinpoint responsibilities in schools and avoid autocratic school leadership that undermines the profession and precludes the development of 21st-century teaching skills.

While everyone seemed to agree on what leadership in the 21st-century needs to look like, there was much debate about how best to develop effective leaders. Some countries explained that they put the premium on professionalised recruitment, seeking to attract high-quality candidates and carefully selecting candidates with strong instructional knowledge, a track record of improved learning outcomes, and leadership potential. Others underlined the central role of high-quality training, careful induction and ongoing development and appraisal in order to enable school leaders to set a strategic direction for their schools, remain responsive to local needs, enhance their role in teachers' professional development, and promote teamwork among teachers.

The success in leveraging the knowledge and skills of talented leaders for system-wide improvement and developing effective leaders at scale, as reported by high-performing countries as different as Canada, Finland or Singapore, seemed truly remarkable. These countries do not wait until teachers have reached the level of seniority to apply for leadership positions; they assess young teachers continuously for their leadership potential and give them ample opportunity to develop their leadership capacity. They put far-sighted succession planning in place and show that leaders are not just born but can be developed and supported. It was widely agreed that success will depend on school leaders defining and assuming their professional responsibilities or, as the Dutch Minister Marja van Bijsterveldt put it, governments will need to listen to the voices of principals and teachers to articulate what the standards of their professional practice should be.

Skills for the 21st-century

The Summit then turned to how to prepare and enable teachers to deliver the skills that students will need to succeed in the 21st-century. Everyone realises that the skills that are easiest to teach and easiest to test are now also the skills that are easiest to automate, digitise and outsource. Of ever-growing importance, but so much harder to develop, are ways of thinking – creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making and learning; ways of working – including communication and collaboration; and tools for working – including information and communications technologies. The Nordic countries, in particular, also highlighted the importance of skills as they relate to citizenship, life and career, and to personal and social responsibility.

That led ministers and union leaders to debate the kind of learning environments that would be conducive to the development of such skills. It became clear that 21st-century learning environments must: make learning

central and encourage student engagement; ensure that learning is social and collaborative; be relevant and highly attuned to students' motivations; be acutely sensitive to individual differences and provide formative feedback; promote connections across activities and subjects, both in and out of school; and perhaps most important, be demanding of all students without overloading them. Hong Kong brought up the interesting question of where the spiral of equipping students for the 21st-century, preparing teachers to teach those students, and creating the teacher training institutions that can develop those teachers' ends. Nobody was able to provide an answer, but the list of demands participants placed on teachers in the 21st-century seemed very long. They need to be well-versed in the subjects they teach, and that

Many education systems are giving teachers mixed messages about the skills they know are needed, on the one hand, and what they make visible and thus value in the form of examinations and assessments, on the other.

includes both content-specific strategies and teaching methods. They need a deep understanding of how learning occurs and mastery of a broad range of learning strategies. They need to work in highly collaborative ways with other teachers and professionals in networks of professional communities. They need to reflect on their practices in order to learn from their experience. And they need to master the skills in technology required both to optimise the use of digital resources in their teaching and to use information-management systems to track student learning.

While countries such as Singapore and Finland were acknowledged as being somewhat further advanced than others in the pursuit of these goals, every country seems to struggle with the widening gap between what modern societies demand and what today's school systems deliver. One thing became clear, however: many education systems are giving teachers mixed messages about the skills they know are needed, on the one hand, and what they make visible and thus value in the form of examinations and assessments, on the other. Unions brought this up and underlined the urgency for examinations and assessments to re-appraise trade-offs between validity gains and efficiency gains. Governments will need to deliver on this

if they are serious about walking the walk about 21st-century skills.

Teacher demand and supply

Ministers and union leaders struggled equally hard with the third theme of the Summit: how to improve the match between teacher demand and supply. Even if some ministers stated that they had plenty of teachers, virtually all seemed to have difficulties in attracting the most talented teachers to the most challenging classrooms to ensure that every student benefits from

high-quality teaching. In a number of countries, the challenge is compounded by aging teacher populations, frequently leading to an overload of instruction and administrative work for teachers and, at the system level, to lowered requirements for entry into the profession and teaching for additional subjects. In some countries, there was talk of a downward spiral – from lowered standards for entry, to lowered

confidence in the profession, resulting in more prescriptive teaching and less personalisation – that risked driving the most talented teachers out of the profession, thus further aggravating the mismatch between teacher supply and demand.

Not surprisingly, this was also the area where governments and unions seemed widest apart. Union leaders were right in emphasising that, in many countries, teacher pay is not up to the pay in other professions requiring similar qualifications. As a Finnish union leader put it: if you pay peanuts you will get monkeys. But this discussion overlooked that many of the countries that are paying their teachers well are simply making more effective spending choices between teacher pay and professional development, on one hand, and instruction time and class sizes, on the other. These countries often end up spending far less overall than countries that have tied up much of their spending in smaller class sizes, which unions also continue to push for. It has been easy to achieve more with more resources, but in these times of economic difficulties, governments and unions will need to take a hard look at how to achieve more with less.

Ministers and union leaders agreed, however, that making teaching a well-respected profession and a more attractive career choice, both intellectually and financially, investing in teacher development, and creating competitive employment conditions were all essential for achieving a better balance between teacher supply and demand. It was striking to see how high-performing education systems have generally transformed the work organisation in their schools by replacing administrative forms of

Seeking short-term political gains by shaming teachers will not strengthen the profession but tear it apart.

management with norms that provide the status, pay, autonomy and accountability, and the high-quality training, responsibility and collaborative work that are integral to all professions. These countries also tend to provide effective systems of social dialogue, and appealing forms of employment that balance flexibility with job security, and grant sufficient authority for schools to manage and deploy their human resources. Not least, they complement policies and practices to expand the pool of talented teachers with targeted responses to particular types of teacher shortages that offer incentives for teachers to work in tougher conditions.

Delegates also pointed out that matching teacher supply and demand relies on an environment that facilitates success and that encourages effective teachers to continue in teaching. Teacher leaders, in particular, emphasised that they place a premium on: self-efficacy in their instructional environment; genuine career prospects; the quality of their relations with students and colleagues; feeling supported by their school leaders; and adequate working conditions.

Last but not least, it became clear that education needs to become a social project. Partnerships and coalitions are necessary for strengthening and building the profession. Such coalitions demand trust and respect, and require all actors to move beyond their comfort zone. As several speakers noted, seeking short-term political gains by shaming teachers will not strengthen the profession but tear it apart.

As complex as the challenges are, and as much as one could be tempted to dwell on their complexity and despair, it was encouraging to see how ministers and union leaders took away important lessons for their own country in the concluding session of the Summit. **Belgium** intends to conclude a pact with providers of education and trade unions on the teaching career. **China** aims to improve pre-service education for teachers and expand early childhood education for all children. **Denmark** wants to make it a priority to elevate the status of the teaching profession and strike a balance between social and subject-matter skills in education from birth to age 18. **Estonia** aspires to a comprehensive reform of pre-service, in-service and co-operative professional development, following the model of the most advanced education systems. **Finland** seeks to develop new collaborative models for school development and teacher-education development, a better alignment between curricular goals and educational assessment, and improved pedagogical use of social media. **Germany** will bring its ministers and union leaders together to advance the dialogue among the social partners beyond rhetoric. **Hungary** seeks to better align and reinforce the context, process, feedback and relationships among key players, aiming for genuine collaboration among stakeholders. **Japan** will advance its holistic reform of preparation, recruitment and professional development. **Korea** wants to strengthen collaboration between school leadership and local communities.

The Netherlands will introduce peer reviews for school leaders and teachers as the primary instrument for quality assurance. New Zealand will further develop a systemic approach to making successful practice common practice. Norway intends to work on career paths for teachers that can be combined with distributed and collaborative leadership, and focus on how to implement national reforms in the classroom. Poland will place the premium on preparing teachers for 21st-century skills. Singapore seeks to advance its whole-system approach to education reform to achieve impact and sustainability. Sweden wants to do more to attract top students into the teaching profession and to create incentives to reward high-performing teachers throughout their careers. Switzerland will seek new ways to create careers for teachers and integrate other professionals into teaching. The United Kingdom seeks to promote an atmosphere that promotes trust in and respect for teachers. The United States seeks to build a coherent and systemic process for engaging all actors in comprehensive, large-scale change, challenging every assumption, big or small.

Of course, none of these pronouncements implies a formal commitment on the part of governments or unions, but they underline the intention of ministers and union leaders to move the education agenda forward. The 2013 Summit will show how fast these visions turn into reality.

Schools speaking up for themselves

Abstract: *The 2011 review of the National Curriculum was not something that the teaching profession asked for. In spite of an excellently researched, wide ranging and thought-provoking report by the Expert Panel the review was severely constrained by a remit which appeared to reflect Ministerial opinion more than a well-researched case for change. This article calls on the teaching profession to rise to the Government's offer of autonomy and take back the leading role over what is taught in their schools.*

Those readers who have been teaching for long enough to remember when the National Curriculum was first introduced have probably felt a strong sense of disbelief and confusion about the case presented for the current National Curriculum review. Those times now seem like a parallel universe.

Prior to 1988, and certainly prior to James Callaghan's Ruskin College speech, the content of the curriculum varied enormously across the country. The kind of curriculum that I experienced as a pupil in the late 1960s omitted whole areas of experience leaving me well-qualified in languages but sadly ignorant of many aspects of science, humanities, creative and technical subjects. It is often convenient for policymakers to ignore the facts about how few children qualified to continue their education beyond 16 let alone enter into higher education and why the time was right to introduce a National Curriculum.

It was not until around the time of the introduction of the National Curriculum that the five points – entitlement, a national framework, a renewed interest in pedagogy, transfer/continuity and expectations/ambitions for what young people can achieve – really began to be debated in full (Brighouse and Moon (eds.), 1990).

Brian Lightman

Brian Lightman became General Secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) in September 2010. He previously served as ASCL President, and Honorary Treasurer. He formerly worked as a head teacher and a teacher of modern foreign languages.

Now the concept of entitlement applies to every single child and no excuses for underperformance are acceptable. Our profession recognises that every child has the right to achieve and to have access to a broad and balanced curriculum wherever they go to school. We have a core curriculum which few would dispute although recent emphasis on the English Baccalaureate and changes to regulations regarding vocational courses have polarised discussion and seriously undermined the capacity of some schools to offer a broad and balanced curriculum which genuinely meets the needs of all of

their learners. In a period of increasing mobility it is particularly important that students remain able to access this wherever they are located so a national framework becomes very important.

Our profession recognises that every child has the right to achieve and to have access to a broad and balanced curriculum wherever they go to school.

With the growing fragmentation of the school system and increased emphasis on 'parental choice' (which in reality always has meant and still means parental preference), the issue of continuity and transfer is enormously important if this entitlement is to apply throughout the country.

Although the coalition government claims that pedagogy is the role of professionals and that it does not wish to tell schools how to

teach this is not reflected in ministerial statements exemplified by the strong emphasis on phonics. Over the last two decades a vast amount of progress has been made in our collective understanding of those methods and approaches which are most effective in the classroom. We have also learnt a great deal about neuroscience and the way children learn. As our knowledge and experience have developed so have our expectations and ambitions which are currently higher than they have ever been before and which continue to rise.

But the National Curriculum is only a small part of the learning experience in schools. Too often in debate at national level the curriculum is viewed in narrow terms and those important aspects of education which cannot be included in a list of normally academic subjects are relegated to a second division such as the one currently referred to as the 'school curriculum'. In my view the broad definition of a school curriculum produced by HMI in 1985 still has much to commend it:

"A school's curriculum consists of all those activities encouraged within its organisational framework to promote the intellectual, personal, social and physical development of its pupils. It includes not only the formal programme of lessons, but also the 'informal' programme of the so-called 'extra-curricular

activities' as well as those features which produce the schools' ethos', such as the quality of relationships the concern for equality of opportunity, the values exemplified in the way the school sets about its task, and the way in which it is organised and managed."

(Department for Education and Science and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools, 1985).

The problem of course was that the early versions of the National Curriculum were hopelessly overcrowded and risked squeezing out those aspects of the HMI definition of curriculum which we all know are so important when talking about a rounded education. Thankfully it was subsequently slimmed back down to one which made it manageable again. Those overarching aims were not lost as that happened.

Since the introduction of a National Curriculum public expectations of the outcomes of compulsory education have changed beyond recognition. All schools and all local authorities used their newly implemented 'Baker Days' to develop curriculum aims and objectives and curriculum policy statements. In the best practice these discussions, far from being a bureaucratic exercise, enabled all teachers to debate the purposes of the curriculum and develop an overarching ethos and set of values which formed the strong base for the education provided in those schools. Today it would rightly be seen as a major weakness of the school if it did not have a clear policy and rationale underpinning its curriculum.

In the late 1980s, when working as a curriculum deputy in Essex, school leaders and teachers worked with the local authority on a curriculum statement which aimed to set out a vision for every learner in the county:

"In Essex, every learner is entitled to a curriculum rich and varied, challenging and inspiring, which enables every individual to fulfil her or his potential to the highest possible standard; so that all, for the benefit of all, are able to shape their destinies and create a better world."

(Essex County Council, Education Department, 1992).

Some might dismiss this as too aspirational but I would argue strongly that you cannot design a curriculum without this kind of overarching vision which underpins what you are trying to achieve. A rich debate about learning took place amongst the profession. So, when the expert panel report stated: *"the first consideration when designing a curriculum is to be clear about the purposes the curriculum is expected to serve. . . . Defining curricular aims is, in our view, the most effective way of establishing and maintaining clear purpose"* and when it stated that *"they make transparent the values and ambitions to which a nation aspires"* (Department for Education, 2011) this felt like a statement of the obvious, highlighting the fundamental difficulty with which this review is faced.

In discussion with Department for Education (DfE) ministers I have argued that the current National Curriculum review started in the wrong place. It was not preceded by any kind of debate as to what the whole curriculum should look like and so, went straight into specifics at far too early a stage. The emphasis by ministers on 'core knowledge', was a major distraction (Hirsch, 1999). It seems to me that the process looks rather like it would look in school if I asked each of my heads of department in isolation to design a curriculum without giving them any more than the most general brief and without sitting everyone down together to agree what we were trying to achieve. They would probably all have wanted a large proportion of the week for their subject area and we would have ended up in the kind of situation that led to the overcrowding of the very first versions of the National Curriculum.

Since the introduction of a National Curriculum public expectations of the outcomes of compulsory education have changed beyond recognition.

Teachers and school leaders feel little ownership of the review process which they feel has been driven by ministerial opinion and a very selective use of evidence. In the secondary sector there has generally been very little appetite to change a curriculum which most schools feel is flexible enough to suit their aims. The best teachers have always taken their students well beyond the minimum requirements of the Programmes of Study or examination specifications. What constrains their ability to offer a curriculum which genuinely extends and inspires their students is the high stakes accountability system in which performance tables and floor targets drive schools towards an unhealthy focus on threshold measures such as the C/D borderline or the English Baccalaureate. In a recent show of hands at ASCL's annual conference less than a handful of the 900+ delegates agreed that we need a new National Curriculum especially in an era when some 50 per cent of secondary schools will not be required to implement it anyway.

The theme of this journal '*Speaking up for schools*' resonates strongly with what needs to be done but I would be inclined to add a matching statement: '*Schools speaking up for themselves*'. For teachers, school leaders and unions like the NUT and ASCL there has never been a more propitious time to reassert our professional ground very strongly in the context of the new autonomy we have been promised. We too as a profession need to seize that opportunity and take back control over what is at the heart of our professional ground, namely the content of the curriculum and how we teach and assess it. That is, of course, an awesome responsibility for which we will ultimately be accountable. My speech to ASCL annual conference highlighted this issue (Lightman, 2012).

Rather than making unnecessary changes to a curriculum which is generally developing well, what we do need in every school in the country is a debate with the whole of the profession about what the curriculum should look like in the 21st-century. This needs to be informed by evidence from academic research, best practice in our schools and colleges in the UK and in education systems throughout the world. Rather than straying into the dangerous area of specifics which immediately flushes out every single vested interest, the starting point should be the kind of learner, citizen and future employee we want to create in our schools and colleges.

In doing this we need to step back for a moment and reflect on whether those aspects of our curriculum which have hardly changed for nearly a century are still suitable in 2012. Stepping back from the limelight of the polemic approach of the media and political standpoints we need to think the unthinkable and ask ourselves some very challenging questions driven by our professional knowledge and experience.

The reality is that for most schools the move away from the current subject-based curriculum structure is something they would be unlikely to countenance for very valid reasons. Our entire qualifications and assessment systems are built upon it and it is understood by parents, employers and

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providers of further and higher education. Nevertheless the very sterile debate about knowledge and skills, thankfully dismissed by the expert panel, still reflects a view widely held in some quarters that skills are somehow less important and reflect a 'dumbing down of the curriculum'. We need to decide which skills are important and how they should be made an integral part of our curriculum in which they are explicitly and actively developed and promoted.

It has been argued by Claxton and others that *"the core purpose of education is to prepare young people for life after school. . . . that this is a goal that is valuable for all young people and that this aim is particularly relevant in societies like ours that are full of change, complexity, risk, opportunity and individual responsibility for making your own way in life."* (Claxton, Chambers, Powell and Lucas, 2011). They have created a vocabulary of 'learning related dispositions' which form the basis for discussion in schools when designing a curriculum. A particular emphasis of this approach is about building resilience in young people so that they learn how to manage distractions, to persevere and to become

absorbed in learning.

Instead of allowing employers to repeat their concerns year after year “in relation to the low level of ... Employability skills of many school and college leavers” (CBI, 2011), employers need to be welcomed into this debate and invited to help us to define those skills in less nebulous terms and to plan for the development in our curriculum.

The publication date for this article is likely to coincide with publication of the DfE’s response to the expert report. Our response to that as a profession could well be one of the most defining moments of the century for the young people in our schools and colleges.

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Speaking up for teachers

Abstract: *Do we have a people problem or a systems problem? A practice or policy problem? A disjunction between the rhetoric of teacher professional development and the reality of teachers' lives? This article explores some of the satisfiers and dissatisfiers in teachers' professional lives and the factors which contribute to disenfranchise teachers on the one hand, and to empower them on the other. Drawing on a recent study for Education International it argues for teachers as map makers rather than map readers and for the power of the collective as counter balance to the individualistic policies which divide, rather than unite, teachers.*

The Oslo Declaration states:

"National governments must strike a balance between the short-term need to get teachers into classrooms and the longer-term goal of building up a high-quality professional teaching force. Addressing the teacher gap requires country driven long-term strategies and firm commitments. Policies must encompass attention to professional development opportunities, adequate employment and teaching conditions and greater participation." (Unesco, 2008, para. 17).

Yet, such a statement appears to bear little relation to the reality of teachers' lives, not only in the UK but in a wider international context. For governments, solutions to the persisting gap between high and low

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achievement are, it appears, to be found in educational institutions. If children are not succeeding, it is obviously the fault of teachers, their low expectations or incompetence, the malign influence of unions on teachers, or failures of leadership to raise standards of children and those who teach them. There may be a nodding acknowledgement to social and economic factors but successive governments in the UK have regarded any reference to these as excuses and insisted that background factors can be overcome by good teachers and inspirational leaders.

This is to ignore the growing body of evidence on socio-economic circumstances, social capital and the quality of child care not only in the early years but also the critical impact on the growing foetus. It is now understood that the developing human being, with at that stage unimagined potential, is subject to the effects of smoking, bad diet, drugs and foetal alcohol syndrome. These can cause damage which is often beyond the repair of the most enlightened of teachers and the most expert of interventions. A PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) report identified key causes for the growing discontent of teachers with the impact of government policy in England and Wales. These were:

- Inappropriate expectations of what schools and teachers could achieve;
 - intensified pressure, especially in a context of deteriorating pupil behaviour and a lack of parental support;
 - the need to put on a 'performance' for many hours each day. While it could at times be exhilarating, it was also often exhausting;
 - resentment about having to engage in tasks which did not support learning;
 - lack of trust;
 - unsustainable workloads; and
 - not being in control of your own work.
- (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2001: 32)

While each of these has its own impact on a teacher's sense of professional efficacy and morale, it is the last of these which weighs most heavily with teachers and effects a slow cumulative attrition. In his book, *The Sickening Mind* (1998), Paul Martin traces the correlation between feeling out of control and chronic illnesses such as heart disease and cancer. Other researchers (e.g. Cohen, Janiiki-Deverts and Miller, 1995; Cohen, Kessler and Gordon, 2007) have also identified the relationship between loss of control and psychiatric as well as physical illness, "triggering or worsening depression and cardiovascular disease".

At its roots is what can be described as "emotional dissonance", the mismatch between felt emotions and what are seen as "required" emotions

(Dollard, Winefield and Winefield, 2001). The reason why teachers are at greater risk of suffering from emotional dissonance than most other human service workers, is due to the heavy emotional investment that they make in their students (Dorman, 2003): “The more important that care is to a teacher, the more emotionally devastating is the experience of failing to provide it” (Hargreaves, 1994: 145).

These same issues loomed large in an NUT-sponsored study on inclusion. This concluded that doctrinaire and under-resourced inclusion could exacerbate inequality by depriving children of the kind of informed support

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they deserved. This in turn affected the morale of teachers who recognised their inability to give the kind of expert help that was needed, often expressing a sense of inadequacy and guilt:

“I think, it’s a funny thing to say, I think they (children with special needs) add guilt to my job. I go home sometimes and feel I haven’t done a good job because I haven’t given them enough time.”
(Reception Class Teacher)

The study noted:

“The most striking aspect of this study was the goodwill of teachers who believed in inclusion and tried to make it work but did not find their goodwill repaid by the level of professional support they deserved”
(Galton and MacBeath, 2008: 68).

“We have a systems problem, not a people problem”, writes Jamie Vollmer (2010), pointing to the futility of trying to change the school system without “touching the culture of the community”.

He adds that “*Everything that goes on inside a school is tied to local attitudes, values, traditions, and beliefs*” (Vollmer, 2010). Robert J. Starratt similarly takes issue with the notion that schools can somehow be studied detached from the world beyond their walls, and refers to the paucity of a “*meat and potatoes curriculum*”, which conveys the message that school learning stands outside, and insulated from, children’s personal and civic lives (Starratt, 2004).

Stephen J. Ball writes that:

“Schools are complex, contradictory, sometimes incoherent organisations like many others. They are assembled over time to form a bricolage of memories, commitments, routines, bright ideas and policy effects. They are changed, influenced and interfered with regularly and increasingly. They drift, decay and re-generate”

(Ball, 1997: 317).

Three As: appreciation, autonomy and affiliation

Teachers come into the profession for differing reasons in different country contexts, in differing economic circumstances and with varying expectations of the rewards and challenges of the role. Common to all, however, is a need for appreciation, autonomy and affiliation – the latitude and discretion to exercise professional judgment, together with recognition and endorsement for such initiative and a sense of belonging to a cadre of like-minded people whose interests and motivations you share. Wherever teachers have been questioned about their priorities and satisfiers, in South America, Sub-Saharan Africa, Europe or North America, they cite the importance of recognition and respect for the challenges they rise to on a daily basis.

Yet, how is teachers’ work acknowledged or rewarded? Michael Davidson (Senior Policy Analyst at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD), interviewed on TALIS international dataset, referred to “a shocking statistic” – that 75 per cent of teachers said that they would not be “rewarded in any way for improving the quality of their work”. This is an overall figure but, in some countries, he claimed, the figure was over 90 per cent (Bangs, MacBeath and Galton, 2011: 141).

The term “intrinsic satisfiers” is the term used by the Institute for Public Policy Research report (Edwards, 2002) to denote those things which are essential to teachers’ sense of professional fulfilment. Laura Edwards argues that professional wastage will only be reduced by enhancing the positive features of the job – the core work of classroom contact with pupils, enhancing responsibility to determine the course of events in the classroom, with scope and freedom to apply initiative and creative skills to both content and pedagogy.

Table 1 *Satisfiers and dissatisfiers*

<i>Satisfiers</i>	<i>Dissatisfiers</i>
■ Autonomy	■ Feeling of not being in control
■ Being valued	■ Lack of time
■ Being trusted	■ Isolation from colleagues
■ Being listened to	■ Prescribed or inflexible curriculum
■ Time for learning, teaching and planning	■ Bureaucracy
■ Collegiality	■ Testing
■ Initiative	■ Policy initiative overload
■ Creativity	■ Pressure to meet targets
■ Contact with pupils	■ Lack of parental support
■ Scope for innovation and experimentation	■ Poor student behaviour
■ Challenge	■ Stress

In a policy paper on the quality of teachers by the Association for Teacher Education in Europe, teaching is described as “a profession that entails reflective thinking, continuing professional development, autonomy, responsibility, creativity, research and personal judgments”. The author adds, “Indicators that identify the quality of teachers should reflect these values and attributes” (Smith, 2006: 7).

Professions Australia, a national council of professional organisations, described a profession in this way:

“A profession is a disciplined group of individuals who adhere to ethical standards and who hold themselves out as, and are accepted by the public as, possessing special knowledge and skills in a widely recognised body of learning derived from research, education and training at a high level, and who are prepared to apply this knowledge and exercise these skills in the interest of others.”
(Professions Australia, 1997: 1)

It is this sense of professionalism, a lack of self-interest or profit motive, “a commitment to public service” (Burbules and Densmore, 1991) that, above all, defines what it means to be a teacher. This does not imply that all teachers everywhere are exemplary models of that professional ethic but it does set teaching, as a vocation, apart from most other and less altruistic professions. How teachers themselves perceive their professional commitment is described as a “passion” (positive emotional attachment); as an investment of time outside of contact hours with students; as a focus on the individual needs of students; as a responsibility to impart knowledge,

attitudes, values; as “maintaining professional knowledge”; and as engagement with the school community (Croswell and Elliot, 2004).

Understanding the sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, as Edwards and others have shown (see, for example, Nias, 1996; Southworth, 1995), is a crucial prelude to addressing measures taken to lessen the impact on the personal and professional lives of teachers, at its most acute in induction and the early years of teaching.

The problem with the Government’s assessment of the accountability system is that it implies that schools welcome the opportunity to take “ownership of their own improvement” but then provides the perfect example of how they have been prevented from doing just that. The “flexibility” of the system, allowing a constant shift in priorities by central government, is precisely the reason why schools are struggling to engage with the accountability regime and myriad school improvement mechanisms. The Government refers to the flexibility of the accountability system as if this is an inherent benefit. The opposite is true (House of Commons. Children, Schools and Families Committee, 2010, para. 44).

According to the PWC report: “Finding the right balance between accountability and trust would therefore entail reduced requirements for documentation, greater capacity for local innovation and risk-taking” (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2001: 32). “Reading the tea leaves” (Hargreaves, 2005) implies for teachers and senior school leaders the ability to distinguish between the urgent, the important and unnecessary, having the courage and professional solidarity to “resist the juggernaut” (Frost, 2005) and, with support from professional associations, to maintain an educational vision, intellectual subversion and moral integrity.

Resilience, the ability to rise above problems, to maintain a sense of self-belief and mission is in part a personal attribute, but is to a greater extent a function of social relationships. Not all teachers have the same capacity to sustain frustrated aims and to maintain a high level of energy over time. Teachers respond differently to a policy mandate and how it is mediated through structure and culture. Self-efficacy is generally referred to as a personal trait rooted in individual psychology but it may also be seen as a collective attribute (Frost, 2011). In his report on teacher leadership in 15 East European countries, David Frost points to “collective self-efficacy” that inspired teachers to go beyond constraining policy mandate and external validation to engage in teacher-generated knowledge and knowledge validation.

The opportunity for such collective will to be mobilised, writes John Bangs, is when teacher associations/unions perceive, and act to fill, the vacuum left when intervention and support services are withdrawn. The progressive downward shift to local autonomy in many countries, motivated primarily for economic reasons, leaves the door for union-led professional

development, policy discourse and policy influence at school, network and system level.

“... with the responsibilities of the state for education receding it appears that unions have an opportunity to fill this vacuum . . . they have the opportunity to enhance the collective agency of teachers. The devolution of powers and responsibilities to schools, opens up significant opportunities for unions to provide the sites in which teachers can engage in professional discourse, exchange professional practice, and gain the confidence to lead professional change in their schools. . . teachers’ own organisations can provide national professional learning communities in which teachers can both enhance their learning and contribute to the formation of policy.”

(Bangs, 2011)

Maps and map makers

Jean-Michel Saussois’ distinction between maps and map makers is a telling metaphor. He compares the map to a transcript. The map of the educational system as we see it may offer differing routes to our destination but however much we travel we cannot change the nature of the landscape which is laid out for us. In education, to be a map-maker is to imagine different landscapes, to build up an image of what a system might look like in the future. (Saussois, 2006)

There is a Spanish saying attributed to Antonio Machado, “Caminante, no hay camino, se hace camino al andar” which translates as “Traveller, there is no path. We make the path by walking.” Leadership may be seen as creating the path for others to follow but, more adventurously, leadership is expressed in teachers willing to pioneer new untrodden paths, not necessarily to a predetermined destination but to new and previously unforeseen destinations. As Angus MacDonald, former head teacher and local authority adviser in Scotland warned, to stray too far from the well-trodden path is to enter Terra Incognita as “Here be Monsters” (MacDonald, 1998: 168) but risk, confidence and trust come from the strong collegial support that teacher organisations can offer to promote “confident uncertainty” (Claxton, 1998).

The message for teacher education is, as suggested, to focus much more on the personal processes involved in becoming a professional teacher, with a well-grounded balance between the cognitive and emotional dimensions of learning to teach (Malm, 2009). To be effective in that cross fertilisation, it requires a synergy between an evidence-based track and an existential and normative track (Hansen, 2007). The latter is concerned with how teachers understand themselves, which in turn depends on a little help from their friends – mentors, coaches or critical friends who not only help with adjustment to the demands of the organisation but help to push their

charges beyond the protective boundaries of their comfort zone. In a study of beginning teachers, those who benefited from “high guidance” from their higher education mentors demonstrated lower levels of burnout and were less likely to leave teaching than their colleagues who experienced “low guidance” (Fives, Hamman, and Olivarez, 2007).

Between the rock and the whirlpool

There is an apocryphal story of the drunken man looking for his keys under the lamppost, not near to where he actually dropped them but because that was where the light was. Policy solutions to the persisting problems, to the status of teachers, to achievement gap have consistently looked in the wrong place; to more testing, more targets, more, earlier, and longer time in the classroom and increased pressure, what has become known as ‘intensification’.

In Charles Hampden-Turner’s terminology, there is a “dilemma space” which occurs between the rock and the whirlpool. The rock values – consistency, transparency, reliability, comparison of performance – are counterpointed with the whirlpool values of choice, diversity, dynamism, spontaneity, autonomy. There are inevitably tensions between conservation and radical change, between certainty and uncertainty, between individuality and collectivity and, as Leicester and colleagues argue, “it is very easy to identify compromise solutions that suppress the tension without addressing it” (Hampden-Turner and Tormpenaars, 1993: 35). We cannot advance as long as there are dichotomies, paradigm wars, claims and counter claims between the “little enders” and “big enders”, the anticipation of confrontation which becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. The

much overused word “synergy” refers, not to unhappy compromise, but to an ability to engage with differences of viewpoint and values. Leicester and colleagues quote William Gibson’s axiom that “the future is already here, just unevenly distributed. But we first have to know what we are looking for” (Leicester, Bloomer, and Stewart, 2009).

The map of the educational system as we see it may offer differing routes to our destination but however much we travel we cannot change the nature of the landscape which is laid out for us.

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They never give up on you – the Children’s Commissioner’s Inquiry into School Exclusions

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Abstract: *This article summarises the findings of The Children’s Commissioner’s Inquiry into school exclusions which has examined the detail of the processes in place for excluding children from state funded schools, and the factors which influence schools’ decisions to exclude a child. Underlying this work is an assessment of how far the current exclusions systems, and the changes introduced by the current Government through the Education Act 2011, are consistent with children’s rights under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).*

The Children’s Commissioner’s Inquiry ‘They Never Give Up On You – The Children’s Commissioner’s Inquiry into School Exclusions’, examined:

- The factors which influence schools’ decisions to exclude, and their interaction with other public services;
- the effectiveness of the system of appeals against exclusions, and the likely impact of changes brought in

- through the Education Act 2011;
- the impact of legislation, government policy and regulation on practice in schools and other educational settings;
 - the impact of the support, monitoring, challenge and intervention mechanisms available to both schools and pupils from those running schools;
 - the effectiveness of in and out-of-school provision and support aimed at preventing permanent exclusions, particularly any which is actively targeted at helping those groups who are statistically most likely to be excluded;
 - the characteristics of children who are disproportionately more likely to be excluded; the interaction between these characteristics; and any proven reasons why these groups appear more likely to be excluded;
 - the impact of equality and diversity duties on schools; and
 - characteristics of good practice in managing children at risk of exclusion, and equally good practice in reducing variation in exclusion rates between different groups of pupils. In particular, this report examines the potential for this good practice to be spread more widely and to influence policy.

The Inquiry report examines the decision making process up to the point of exclusion, and the work undertaken in any subsequent appeal. It recognises that exclusion may be a necessary last case resort in rare cases, but argues that all exclusions must:

- Be fair and transparent;
- listen to the views of the child concerned;
- lead to high quality alternative provision for the child excluded; and
- be within the law.

The UN Convention of the Rights of the Child

The system of school exclusions is not compliant with the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). In particular, there are breaches of children's rights with regard to Articles 3 and 12 of the Convention.

Article 3 of the UNCRC states that the interests of the child must be a primary consideration in decisions made concerning that child. The evidence shows that, whilst in many cases the interests of the child are a prime consideration in schools' decisions to exclude, this is not always the case. Equally, the statutory guidance on exclusions does not specify that the best interests of the child should be a prime consideration.

To ensure schools make decisions consistent with the UNCRC, the new statutory guidance on exclusions should specify that the interests of the

child concerned must be a prime consideration in exclusion decisions. Guidance to independent review panels should specify this as grounds for appealing against a permanent exclusion.

Article 12 of the UNCRC states that children's views must be taken into account in decisions which affect them. There is no effective or systematic way for children's and young people's views to be heard, and taken account of, in the exclusions process, and no right for the child to appeal against an exclusion on their own behalf. In order for the exclusions system to be compliant with the UNCRC, these should be put in place.

Illegal activity by schools

'Unofficial' or 'informal' exclusions are situations when a school requires a young person to leave the premises, but does not record this as a formal exclusion. It also refers to instances when a young person or their family is 'persuaded' to move school, a move usually sold to the family and the child as an alternative to a permanent exclusion going on the child's record.

This Inquiry has found evidence of several examples of such activity. In one extreme case, this included a head teacher admitting to researchers that he:

"... managed Year 11 pupils from Christmas until May: we will get their parents in and ask them to keep their children at home for the rest of the academic year, otherwise it's a permanent exclusion. The pupils are coded as 'C' and slip under the radar."

This practice is illegal, and simply unacceptable. However, because it is usually covert and informal with no records kept, it is extremely hard to identify and quantify.

The Government should conduct research to identify the full extent of unlawful exclusions, and recommend measures to prevent a small proportion of schools continuing to act in this way. This research should investigate, in detail, the pattern of unlawful exclusions in a small sample of representative localities, with a view to identifying the scale of activity, and the lessons for both national policy making and school accountability which arise.

In addition, if a school is acting unlawfully to prevent some of their students from accessing education, they are by definition not providing a satisfactory education. As a result, Ofsted should judge any such schools as 'inadequate'.

The role of Ofsted

Ofsted inspections can be influential drivers of change in schools. It is vital that the inspections system encourages schools to use good practice in exclusions. Evidence to the Inquiry from Ofsted demonstrates that this is the inspectors' aim. Ofsted data show that the least effective schools are often

those with the highest exclusions. We therefore recommend that Ofsted should not award a 'good' or 'outstanding' assessment for behaviour if a school has very high rates of exclusion.

Under the Education Act 2011, the Secretary of State can exempt some schools from regular inspections. At the time of writing, schools which had received an 'outstanding' grade overall at their last inspection are to be exempt.

The Government should conduct research to identify the full extent of unlawful exclusions, and recommend measures to prevent a small proportion of schools continuing to act in this way.

However, Ofsted will have an ongoing role in monitoring these schools, and intervening where they feel it has become necessary.

To ensure schools exempt from inspection use exclusions appropriately and proportionately, Ofsted should monitor the following data from them:

- The number of permanent and fixed-term exclusions per academic year over the previous three years;
- complaints from parents of excluded children to Ofsted, the Secretary of State or local authorities regarding the circumstances of a child's exclusion; and
- the number of successful appeals against permanent exclusions in each academic year, or reviews of permanent exclusions where the review panel has sent the case back for the governing body to reconsider.

Where any of these data show trends which give cause for concern, Ofsted should conduct further investigations, potentially triggering an inspection in extreme cases.

Appeals against exclusions

Evidence presented to the Inquiry supports the need for an independent

system of appeals against unfair exclusions. The system of independent review panels introduced by the Education Act 2011, where panels do not

have the ability to insist on reinstatement, does not offer sufficient safeguards against schools acting unreasonably or unlawfully.

This legislation should be amended to reinstate independent appeal panels as previously constituted.

Numerous witnesses told the Inquiry they had encountered excluded children whose families did not understand their rights. They were therefore unable to tell when a school was acting unreasonably or unlawfully.

To ensure young people and their parents become more aware of the legal framework for exclusions, the Government should make sure that:

DfE’s analysis of the data shows Jack is 168 times more likely than Jill to be permanently excluded from school before the age of 16, and 41 times more likely than Jill to be excluded for a fixed term.”

- Across the state-funded education system, a standard approach is taken to the administration of all permanent and fixed-term exclusions.
- The Government should lay statutory guidance which should specify the content of such communications and, with regard to the right of appeal, the wording to be used in a formal notice of exclusion. All state-funded schools should be required to follow this guidance, either through secondary legislation (for maintained schools) or through amendments to academy funding agreements.
- Schools should publish their discipline, behaviour and exclusion policies as part of their school prospectuses and on their websites. The same should apply to any home-school behaviour agreements schools enter into with parents.

Thresholds for exclusion

To ensure justice in the system, and to minimise the chance of discriminatory behaviour, the DfE should issue guidance which sets out clear principles for exclusion thresholds, while leaving schools free to interpret these principles in light of their circumstances.

The removal of a child from school premises by exclusion should only happen to:

- protect the health and safety of the individual;
- protect the health and safety of others; or
- prevent disruption to learning.

Exclusions, whether permanent or fixed-term, should only be used as a last resort. Exclusion should only be the first response to a child's behaviour in exceptional circumstances (for example, in cases of assault, supplying illegal drugs or threatening someone with a weapon).

It is never appropriate to exclude for minor infringements of school rules, such as breaches of uniform rules or the wearing of jewellery, especially where such rules are more likely to disadvantage one gender, or certain ethnic groups, faiths or cultures.

There should be a presumption against permanent exclusions from primary schools, reflected in revised statutory guidance. To ensure this presumption is upheld, every permanent exclusion of a primary school aged child should be reviewed independently, regardless of whether a review is requested by the child's parents or carers.

No primary school should permanently exclude a child in Reception or Key Stage 1.

A school should not act unilaterally to permanently exclude a child who has the school named as specified provision on a statement of special educational needs (SEN). Rather, the school should make a proposal that the child be excluded. This proposal should trigger a review of the child's statement. It would be for all professionals involved in the statementing process, including the school, to decide collectively whether a permanent exclusion was appropriate. As in any review of any statement, the child and family should also be involved.

Equality

Certain groups of pupils are significantly more likely than others to be excluded. These are:

- Boys;
- children from certain ethnic groups;
- children with SEN; and
- children eligible for free school meals.

In the course of the Inquiry, we have taken evidence from a large range of individuals and organisations, to try to identify why these differentials are so large, and what can be done to address them.

At our request, DfE analysed the available data in new ways, to demonstrate the relative importance of these characteristics, one against the other and in combination. These analyses show the individual effect on the

odds each characteristic has on the likelihood of a child being excluded. They show the compounded differences can be enormous.

To illustrate the impacts on individual children, it is useful to imagine two hypothetical young English people: Jack and Jill. They are the same age, and attend the same school. They have the same rights under the Human Rights Act, and the UNCRC.

- Jack has SEN, assessed at School Action Plus. He is of Black Caribbean background, and lives in a low-income household. He receives free school meals.
- Jill does not have SEN, is from a white British background, and lives in a more affluent household.

DfE's analysis of the data shows Jack is 168 times more likely than Jill to be permanently excluded from school before the age of 16, and 41 times more likely than Jill to be excluded for a fixed term.

Further, it appears these differential rates of exclusions are more pronounced in some schools than others. At the request of this Inquiry, DfE statisticians undertook an analysis of the correlation between the proportion of a school's population who come from those ethnic groups which have above-average exclusion rates in the national statistics, and the likelihood of those children to be excluded. It found that, children from the relevant ethnic groups were much more likely to be excluded when they were in a small minority in a school than when they were with larger numbers of children from the same ethnic group as themselves.

The best provision, whether offered by schools on their own sites or other providers elsewhere, offers high quality, cost-effective alternatives to both permanent and fixed-term exclusion.

These data are deeply concerning. So is the fact that these differentials have been known about and recorded for many years without any specific steps having been taken to address them, either in policy or practice.

Schools' work to implement their statutory duties concerning equality must include efforts to reduce these differences.

The evidence does not give us confidence that schools will carry out this necessary work without further insistence by Government. The DfE must work together with the Government Equalities Office and Equality and

Human Rights Commission to produce best practice guidance for schools and other public educational bodies in interpreting their Public Sector Equality Duties with regard to exclusions. As part of inspections, Ofsted should assess whether schools are complying with these duties.

Prevention of, and alternatives to, exclusion

There was considerable consensus in field work visits and among those who gave evidence about how best to create and maintain positive learning environments. Successful head teachers stated their focus was on the quality of teaching and learning, alongside clear, consistently applied approaches to behaviour and discipline. Their view was that in most cases, effective teaching is the key driver of good behaviour. If teaching is engaging, effective and tailored to the needs and abilities of the students, good behaviour usually follows.

School workforce development

The quality of school leadership is a key issue. Schools with strong leadership are demonstrably more able to agree, and implement, consistent policies and practice, including those concerning behaviour and discipline. Students know behaviour will be managed in the same way by all their teachers. In this context, leadership is a characteristic displayed by adults at all levels of a school's staff. Leadership is also shared appropriately with students.

The expertise of the school workforce with regard to SEN, cognitive and emotional development and cultural difference was identified as a key issue. Almost every school has a proportion of children with SEN, and practically every teacher will be required to teach children with some type of SEN in the course of their careers. A lack of understanding of how to identify and best teach these children, including managing their behaviour, can lead to confrontations between teachers and children. This increases the likelihood of specific groups of children meeting disciplinary problems, exceeding boundaries and thresholds, and ultimately being excluded.

All trainee teachers should be equipped to teach children with the full range of SEN they should expect to find in a mainstream state-funded school. They should also study child development and socio-psychological matters such as attachment theory. Serving teachers and non-teaching staff should be expected to train, and to refresh their knowledge, in similar fashion.

Alternatives to exclusion

The Inquiry examined various models being used as alternatives to exclusion across England. These included alternative provision both inside schools and in the wider community, and area-based alternatives to exclusion shared between groups of schools.

The best provision, whether offered by schools on their own sites or other

providers elsewhere, offers high quality, cost-effective alternatives to both permanent and fixed-term exclusion. Students value such high quality provision, often recognising that without it, they would have been excluded and faced bleak personal prospects outside the system.

There is currently no guidance for schools on good practice in managing or commissioning provision for pupils with challenging behaviour. As a result this provision differs markedly from place to place, and is of varying quality. Of the provision seen, the following characteristics sum up good practice:

- Students have curriculum continuity, allowing them to be more easily re-integrated into the mainstream when their issues have been addressed. In the very best provision, students are taught by, or have regular contact with, the teachers they would meet in class, and remain on the same examination courses as their peers.
- The child's underlying behavioural issues are dealt with, not simply "parked."
- Support is tailored to the individual, rather than a "one size fits all" approach being used.
- There are strong links to mainstream provision. For students still in school, this is often the opportunity to mix with their peers at break or lunchtime, and to engage in extra-curricular activities. For alternative providers, links with the "home" school are strong and visible.
- The provision is well equipped and is an attractive learning environment. This is not "second best".

Managed moves

Many parts of England operate "managed move" systems as an alternative to formal exclusions. Under these systems, when a school is no longer able to continue to educate and support a child as a result of the child's behaviour or in the case of an irretrievable breakdown in relationships for other reasons, the "home" school makes an agreement with another school or an alternative educational setting for the child to move without a formal exclusion appearing on the child's record.

In the best practice, clusters of schools, often involving the local authority or academy sponsors as broker and critical friend, agree fair access and managed moves protocols. Together these govern how moves are managed, and ensure no single school is always the receiver of others' problems, and by the same token no school walks away from the area's children.

In the course of the Inquiry, a number of elements emerged that characterise good practice in managing moves between schools. Where practice was good:

- There was a formalised system (usually through fair access and managed moves protocols) which set out clearly the responsibilities of all concerned.
- Relationships between head teachers were strong and based on mutual respect. Head teachers therefore supported and, when necessary, challenged each other.
- Children, young people and their parents were involved in the necessary decision making.
- Decisions were made collaboratively, in the best interests of the child.
- Both “excluding” and “receiving” schools shared responsibility for the child who was moving, until the point where they were settled in the new environment, at which point they were formally and fully transferred.

Managed properly, these systems are to be encouraged. It is unfortunate that they are often labelled alongside, and confused with, illegal exclusions, both being presented as examples of “sharp practice”. This is unfair on those schools which operate such systems with care, integrity and professionalism.

DfE pilots

In autumn 2011, the DfE announced a series of pilots in six local authorities across England. Within the pilot areas, funding to manage provision for excluded children is devolved to schools. If a school elects to exclude, it remains responsible for the excluded child’s continued education, commissioning alternative education from the sixth day of the exclusion. The child’s attendance and academic performance will be recorded by the ‘home’ school, and both count towards the school’s performance data.

The principle behind the Government’s approach to dealing with exclusions, as demonstrated in these pilots, is sound. It builds on existing good practice seen in several localities in the course of this Inquiry. These changes should provide a better deal for many young people who would otherwise have been either permanently excluded, or placed in poor quality alternative provision. The model of funding delegation and school accountability used in the pilots encourages schools to act in ways associated with the good practice evident in local authorities which already have low exclusion rates.

Next steps

Public bodies were required to respond to the Inquiry’s recommendations by the end of May 2012. In the light of these responses, the Children’s Commissioner will take forward further work on elements of these findings for the remainder of 2012/13.

A crisis in Welsh Education?

New approaches in harsh times

Gareth Rees

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***Abstract:** Since 1999 it was the view that parliamentary devolution had enabled Welsh Governments to pursue a wide range of imaginative policies across the whole gamut of educational provision. More recently, however, the focus of political discourse has shifted to the perceived failures of Welsh schools. This 'crisis of Welsh education' has provided the basis for the introduction of new policy approaches. However, in this article, Gareth Rees argues that a more nuanced analysis of Welsh educational attainment suggests that policies aimed at addressing educational inequality may be more appropriate.*

Something peculiar seems to have happened to education in Wales. Not long ago, there was widespread consensus, at least within Wales, that parliamentary devolution since 1999 had allowed successive Welsh Governments¹ to develop imaginative policies across the whole range of educational provision, from early years to the universities. Certainly, it is true that Welsh Governments have pursued distinctive priorities, building on the national educational strategy set out in 2001 (National Assembly for Wales, 2001). Only some aspects of this system have been widely remarked upon outside, such as the abolition of 'league tables' and subsequently key stage testing (Davies, 2011).

¹ Until 2011, the executive within the Welsh system of governance was known as the Welsh Assembly Government. It has now been re-designated the Welsh Government. For simplicity's sake, I shall use 'Welsh Government' throughout.

However, in reality, it is reflected across all the phases of education: from Flying Start and the Foundation Phase for early years; to a commitment to non-selective, 'community-based' comprehensive schools at the secondary level; new curriculum provision for 14-19-year-olds through the Learning Pathways and the Welsh Baccalaureate; and, most recently, innovative provision for the organisation and funding of higher education (for example, Rees, 2007). Moreover, these policies have been celebrated not merely because they were distinctive from those in other parts of the UK, but rather because they were seen to be tailored specifically to the needs and aspirations of Welsh citizens.

More recently, however, popular perception has shifted dramatically. Now, the emphasis is on the 'failure' of Welsh schools – and increasingly other educational institutions – to provide adequate educational opportunities for Welsh children and young people. Political discourse – supported by the views of some academic commentators – has come to be dominated by the argument that educational attainment in Wales is not reaching appropriate

Political discourse – supported by the views of some academic commentators – has come to be dominated by the argument that educational attainment in Wales is not reaching appropriate standards.

standards, to the detriment of individuals' prospects, as well as those of the Welsh economy more widely. This perceived 'crisis in Welsh education' has been further amplified in media reports, which have been very ready to highlight what are seen as the shortcomings of educational provision in Wales.

It seems unlikely that this change in the terms of the public debate reflects actual changes in educational provision or even in educational attainment. Indeed, levels of attainment have been rising year-on-year. What has happened is that political priorities in relation to education have shifted. The emphasis now – and rightly so – is on what the post-devolution education system is actually delivering to Wales. Perhaps the key to this shift has been the appointment of a new Minister for Education and Skills (as he now is), Leighton Andrews. Since assuming office in 2009 and being re-appointed following the 2011 Welsh Assembly Election, he has focused attention on what he sees to be the relatively poor levels of educational attainment in Welsh schools and the need to bring about improvements

across the school system as a whole. Most notably, in a much quoted speech in February 2011, he set out a 20 point programme of policy change; and has returned to this subsequently to provide reports on progress towards achieving his 20 points (Andrews, 2011a and 2011b).

In what follows, I attempt to assess the nature and likely impact of these new policy directions in Wales. I shall argue that their effects may well be less significant than is hoped. Perhaps more fundamentally, it will be shown that a more nuanced analysis of the character of Welsh educational performance suggests alternative policy approaches may be more appropriate.

Current approaches to schools policy in Wales

It is clear from the Minister's public pronouncements, as well as the academics whose influence he acknowledges, that these new approaches in Wales are based much more strongly than hitherto on the conventional wisdom of 'school effectiveness' and 'school improvement'. Hence, the Minister's 20 point policy programme is focused around a number of key themes, which have become familiar over some considerable time through the relevant literatures and the practices that have been developed from this research and analysis (for an interesting take on this see Reynolds, 2008).

There is thus a strong emphasis on ensuring that all schools share the 'best practice' that is currently undertaken only by some, with 'professional learning communities' and 'families of schools' providing important mechanisms through which such practice can be transmitted and monitored. Moreover, there is to be a statutory basis for guidance on school improvement, emphasising 'high reliability teaching practices'. Teachers themselves are seen to be central to enhancing educational attainment, with new approaches planned for initial teacher training, teacher induction and CPD. There is to be more systematic monitoring of pupil progress, through the more effective collection and utilisation of data; and the implementation of data strategies by schools is to be evaluated through Estyn inspections. The key responsibilities of governors in ensuring that their schools are effectively led and managed are to be highlighted. And there is to be a renewed emphasis on the centrality of children's literacy and numeracy to their wider educational development, with national plans for these basic skills, including the adoption of standard testing procedures.

Put in these somewhat abstract and general terms, it may well be that for most observers there is little to object to here. However, translating these rather high-level principles into the everyday practices of schools may prove more challenging than is being suggested. Arousing greater controversy, however, are some of the other key themes within the Minister's programme.

First, and most controversial, is the introduction of a grading system for schools' performance, with each school to be allocated annually to one of five

bands, on the basis of its attainment levels in the context of the socio-economic characteristics of its pupils (Welsh Government, 2011). Not surprisingly, a frequently expressed concern has been that this amounts to the re-introduction of 'league tables', thereby undermining a central element of the distinctive Welsh system of educational provision that has been developed since 1999. Again not surprisingly, the Minister himself has been at pains to argue that this is not the case; the banding system is not intended to provide the basis for the 'naming and shaming' of individual schools, he argues. Rather, it is intended to provide local authorities and consortia of local authorities with the sorts of information that will permit – in conjunction with the School Standards Unit – the identification of where and how support can best be channelled to improve performance.

Exactly how this will work out remains to be seen. However, it does seem extremely unlikely that there will be any marked shift to more 'marketised' forms of allocating pupils to schools in Wales. Although Welsh schools do operate 'open enrolment' systems, there remains a deeply embedded commitment to 'community-based' primary and comprehensive schools, which are seen to serve the interests primarily of their local catchment areas; and this is especially the case outside of the major urban areas and Cardiff, in particular.

Second, there is the question of how far the new policy approaches imply a strengthening of the power of central government control, at the expense of local authorities and of schools themselves. A Schools Standards Unit has been established within the Ministry for Education and Skills, to oversee and to monitor the implementation of essential aspects of the 20-point programme. Considerable significance has also been attached to Estyn's new Common Inspection Framework, whose adoption has coincided with the identification of more problems in schools and, indeed, in local authorities than was the case hitherto. However, it is instructive that the local authorities are seen to have a central role in the implementation of the new banding system. This suggests that there are seen to be clear limits on the extent to which control over the new policy initiatives are to be concentrated in the hands of central government (in sharp contrast to the situation in other parts of the UK and England especially).

In fact, much more pertinent to understanding the likely future role of local authorities in Wales is the question of finance. The coming period will pose especially acute problems of implementation that arise from the wider economic stringencies that the Welsh Government will face. At root, this extremely difficult financial situation reflects the policies adopted by the Coalition Government in Westminster. However, within the parameters set by the overall allocation of funds through the Block Grant, the Welsh Government will also face extremely difficult choices. Even before the Assembly Election, the Minister had acknowledged the importance of this

issue in his emphasis on shifting funding from administrative functions to the 'front-line' of teaching and learning. Nevertheless, despite this extremely astute 'pre-emptive strike', funding is set to be a continuing source of conflict and dispute over the coming years, as the full effects of the Westminster Government's policies bite. Moreover, the impacts of intensifying competition for increasingly scarce resources will be felt not only in schools (and their local authorities), but also in further education colleges and universities.

In summary, therefore, the new approaches to schools' policy that the Minister, Leighton Andrews, is introducing will necessarily operate in extremely difficult financial circumstances. And it may well be that it will be the effects of the latter that will be felt most acutely in Welsh schools.

Understanding educational attainment in Wales

There are also important questions to be posed about the characterisation of Welsh educational performance on which the new policy approaches are based. In this context, it is instructive that the benchmarks against which Welsh educational performance have been judged are *external* ones, in particular the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), measuring 15-year-olds' performance on tests in reading, mathematics and science.

Wales's results in the 2009 round of PISA have not only been roundly criticised in the British media, but have also been highlighted by the Minister. Indeed, in his speech in February 2011, it was PISA results which he held to demonstrate the need for a major overhaul of Welsh schools in particular (Andrews, 2011a). As in many other countries, the PISA results for Wales are argued to provide incontrovertible proof of educational failure and the need for fundamental change, irrespective of any local opposition.

It is undoubtedly the case that the PISA scores do tell an important story about the state of Welsh education. However, as with any measurement of educational attainment, the PISA scores have to be *interpreted* carefully. Certainly, the public debate in Wales gives no indication that there is a very substantial technical literature which is *critical* of the analytical approach on which PISA is based (for example, Hopmann and Brinek, 2007). This is not to argue that all the criticisms are correct, but rather to suggest that PISA results should not be seen as unambiguously definitive.

PISA's strength is in providing a *snap-shot* of educational attainment and its correlations with selected aspects of a national educational system. It can tell you that you probably have a problem, but – simply because of the kind of survey that it is – not what the causes are and, hence, not how to solve it. To address the latter requires exploring other sources of data and analysis. As Harvey Goldstein, one of the UK's most eminent statisticians of education, argues, rather than using PISA results to construct what are in

reality dubious league tables of educational performance, they should be seen “as a way of exploring country differences in terms of cultures, curricula and school organization.” (Goldstein, 2008: 7)

In the Welsh context, then, there can be no debate that educational performance could – and should – be much improved. However, the much remarked decline in PISA scores between 2006, when Wales first entered the Programme, and 2009 should not be taken to indicate an actual deterioration in the performance of Welsh schools. Given that each round of PISA assessment involves different groups of 15-year-olds, at least part of the rather small difference between the two measurement dates is attributable to differences between the two groups of pupils, especially as a larger number of schools and a wider cross-section of pupils agreed to participate in 2009.

Moreover, the PISA results need to be interpreted in the light of Wales’s very recent entry into the Programme. Unlike in most other countries, schools and their teachers have had little incentive to learn how to approach the PISA tests and, hence, to instruct their pupils how to do so. This will almost certainly change now that schools are being required to incorporate PISA into the assessment regime of Welsh secondary schools. But what will this really mean in terms of young people’s attainment and future prospects?

Public concern about Wales’s education system is entirely legitimate. However presently, the danger is that simplistic readings of PISA and other external bench-marking of Welsh educational performance are serving to close off debate, rather than to open up new avenues for educational development.

The crucial issue here is the extent of the ‘fit’ between what PISA requires and the GCSE curriculum. PISA seeks to measure qualities in pupils, especially capacities to interpret and apply information, which are different from those that are emphasised in GCSEs, where demonstrating the acquisition of knowledge is prioritised. And it is important to remember that it is on GCSE performance that schools have hitherto been judged and for which pupils actually acquire qualifications. Clearly, what this highlights is the need for serious debate about what the school curriculum in Wales *ought* to be aiming for; but this is a debate that is in danger of being pre-

empted because of the preoccupation with PISA. However, it is interesting that, more recently, Mr. Andrews has adopted a more nuanced position on Wales's performance in the PISA 'league tables' (see Evans, 2012).

The critics of Welsh education will, of course, point out that schools in Wales do not fare much better if GCSE performance is taken as the basis of comparison with other parts of the UK and, in particular, England. This sort of 'home international' analysis is useful, as it not only avoids many of the technical difficulties associated with PISA, but also depends on qualifications which schools, teachers and pupils undoubtedly take seriously. Indeed, this sort of evidence has been used to question the quality of Welsh schools and to criticise particular policies, such as the abolition of 'league tables' (Burgess *et al.*, 2010).

As in other parts of the UK, there has been a year-on-year improvement in Welsh GCSE attainment levels over the past decade (and more). However,

since the early part of the present decade, there has been a progressive widening of the shortfall between Wales and England in terms of the standard measure of attainment at the minimum school-leaving age, the Level 2 Threshold. The latter is frequently described as the achievement of five A* to C grade GCSEs. In fact, its full definition is five A* to C grade GCSEs or equivalents; that is, the measure includes not only GCSEs, but also a wide range of vocational qualifications, the best known of which are BTECs. This detail is significant because if GCSEs *alone* are considered, then (on the basis of the Welsh Government's data) the proportion of young people in Wales achieving the Level 2 Threshold is almost exactly equivalent to that in England; 56 per cent in Wales compared with 56.3 per cent in England

in 2009/2010. The overall shortfall between Wales and England of some 12 percentage points, is wholly accounted for by the fact that more young people in England attain the Level 2 Threshold through vocational qualifications (cf. Wolf, 2010).

In the context of these data, the Welsh 'crisis of attainment' appears in a somewhat different light. On this evidence, it would appear that there is a problem of educational attainment in Wales. But it is a problem which relates very specifically to the provision of opportunities to pursue vocational qualifications. That this should be so is not entirely surprising. Historically – right back to the Intermediate Schools established in the 1890s – as access to secondary education has been widened, Welsh schools have been far more

If GCSEs alone are considered, then ... the proportion of young people in Wales achieving the Level 2 Threshold is almost exactly equivalent to that in England.

effective in providing an academic curriculum than they have in making available opportunities to pursue vocational options (Rees and Istance, 1994). Currently, it may well be that the lower levels of funding that go to Welsh schools compared with those in England are accentuating difficulties here, as vocational provision is more expensive than the academic equivalent (Wolf, 2011).

This relative failure of vocational provision is likely to have the greatest impact on pupils from more educationally disadvantaged backgrounds, who are far less likely to be motivated by the academic curriculum. Indeed, it may be that this goes some way towards explaining the significant under-performance in Wales's PISA scores at the lower end of the attainment range that was recorded in 2006 and again in 2009. And, in this context, improving motivation through the imaginative development of vocational options may contribute significantly to the Welsh Government's objective of improving the basic reading and mathematical literacy of young people.

Conclusion

Public concern about Wales's education system is entirely legitimate. However presently, the danger is that simplistic readings of PISA and other external bench-marking of Welsh educational performance are serving to close off debate, rather than to open up new avenues for educational development.

As befits the broadly social democratic tenor of successive Welsh Governments, achieving a more equitable distribution of educational opportunities has consistently been emphasised as a means of creating a fairer distribution of life chances more widely. There have been persistent efforts to reduce the gaps in attainment between schools, where their catchment areas are broadly similar in social terms. Nevertheless, substantial challenges remain. Research by the Wales Institute for Social and Economic Research, Data and Methods (Davies, *et al.*, 2011) suggests that educational inequalities between social groups have probably been increasing in recent years. This is the greatest challenge that the Welsh Government faces. It indicates that, in addition to bench-marking levels of educational attainment, we should also be measuring the extent to which the Welsh education system is contributing to a more equitable and just society.

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Misconceptions about teaching reading: Is it only about phonics?

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Abstract: *This article critiques the Coalition Government's policy developments regarding the teaching of early reading and the phonics check imposed upon all schools in June 2012. It argues that the policies are narrow, contradict international research as well as best practice identified by Ofsted, and should be reconsidered as a matter of urgency.*

What does it mean to become an independent and committed reader? And what implications does that have for primary school teachers as they plan and deliver a reading curriculum? These two questions have been keenly contested for years but we are, yet again, in the middle of a ferocious policy debate about the teaching of reading. On the one hand there is informed and researched professional knowledge about how reading is best promoted, and on the other there are the pronouncements of Government Ministers. In September 2010 Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Education said:

"To help ensure money is spent wisely right at the beginning of schooling we will take radical action to get reading right. We know that, whatever else may work, teaching children to read using the tried and tested method of systematic synthetic

phonics can dramatically reduce illiteracy.”

In a speech in July 2010, Nick Gibb, Schools Minister, said:

“We still have nearly one in five 11-year-olds leaving primary school still struggling with reading. Again, the ideologically-driven, child-centred approach to education has led to the belief that the mere exposure to books and text, and the repetition of high frequency words, will lead to a child learning to read – as if by osmosis.

“... that Look and Say, or whole language approach to reading ignores the importance of teaching children the 44 sounds of the alphabetic code, and how to blend those sounds into words.”

More recently in a DfE press release he asserted:

“Phonics is the proven method that will drive up reading standards.

“A solid grounding in phonics will help many children who are weak readers to improve. It will also see more pupils achieve a high Level 2 or a Level 3 score at the end of Key Stage 1.”

(Gibb, December 2011).

While inspectors, who regularly visit schools, are aware of what genuinely promotes interest and commitment in reading – and, just as importantly, what can hinder a love of reading – messrs Gove and Gibb are wedded to a thin diet of synthetic phonics and testing.

In order to drive this message home the “radical action” the Government has taken is to impose a phonics check for six year olds on all state schools, including academies and free schools, from June 2012 following a pilot in 2011. I will discuss this test later in this article. It has also offered matched funding of up to £3,000 for schools to buy approved synthetic phonics programmes and associated training – a rare example of extra resources being made available to schools in these times of austerity.

Alongside these developments the new Ofsted inspection framework of

January 2012 places great emphasis on the teaching of reading and inspectors are explicitly told that they must take into account the results of the phonics check when inspecting primary schools.

However, there seem to be some mixed messages. The Ofsted Report of March 2012, seems to have a more informed approach, with the following comments:

“... too few schools gave enough thought to ways of encouraging the love of reading”
(Ofsted, 2012: 6)

and

“Learning was also constrained in schools where teachers concentrated too much or too early on a narrow range of test or examination skills.”
(Ofsted, 2012: 5-6)

It seems that ministers have chosen to ignore recommendations by their own inspectorate – or at least to be highly selective in using Ofsted’s own research. While inspectors, who regularly visit schools, are aware of what genuinely promotes interest and commitment in reading – and, just as importantly, what can hinder a love of reading – messrs Gove and Gibb are wedded to a thin diet of synthetic phonics and testing.

Despite strong evidence to the contrary, this administration sees learning to read, up to the age of seven or so, as being solely about decoding, and believes that there is only one way of teaching decoding: systematic synthetic phonics.

Nick Gibb’s statements imply that teachers do not teach phonics at the moment but rely on ‘look and say’ or simply ‘expose’ children to books, or, if they do teach phonics, they don’t do it very well. This ignores that fact that for many years, and emphatically in the last five years or so, teachers have been teaching phonics rigorously and systematically, often within the context of reading for meaning. Ministers claim that the underachievement of 11-year-olds in reading in English schools is directly related to poor phonic knowledge and therefore poor teaching. It hardly needs to be said that there is no evidence at all for this claim.

Becoming a reader: What does the evidence say?

UKLA’s booklet *Teaching Reading: What the Evidence Says* (2010) challenges this narrow and ultimately dangerous view of the development and teaching of early reading. Supported by clear and comprehensive evidence, it asserts that reading is more than simply saying the words on the page and further, that saying the words on the page needs more than phonic decoding if it is to be accurate and meaningful:

“is not just pronouncing written words. Children who become avid and accomplished readers focus on making sense from the start: they develop a habit of mind that expects the words they decode to make sense. This allows them to monitor their own performance from an early stage, and to make corrections when they misread.”

(Dombey *et al.*, 2010: 4)

If the early teaching of reading does not include reference to why we read: for pleasure, for interest, for purpose, for meaning, it ignores the very essence of reading itself. Schools and teachers know this and research confirms it.

There have been a number of studies which have investigated what happens in schools that are really successful in the teaching of reading. Internationally, successful schools are those that:

- Use a balance of phonics and meaning-focused approaches to teach children to read;
- give children plenty of experience of putting texts to use;
- attend to individual children’s literacy skills, experiences and interests; and
- create high levels of engagement and pleasure in reading.

(Taylor and Pearson, 2002; Pressley *et al.*, 2001; Guthrie *et al.*, 1996)

Ofsted’s report *Excellence in English: What we can learn from 12 outstanding schools* (2011) confirms these findings in the context of English schools. The report states that in each of the schools:

- The quality of the curriculum was the strongest indicator of outstanding provision in English;
- each school developed its own distinct and original vision for English; and
- the curriculum in each of these schools gave a high profile to reading for pleasure.

(Ofsted, 2011: 7)

The report contains detailed and useful case studies of outstanding schools for the teaching of reading. For example, Clifton Green primary school in York does more than teach phonics to a high standard:

“Key to pupils’ good progress and enjoyment is the substantial reading programme. The head teacher describes this as a menu from which teachers select according to their pupils’ needs. The school invests significantly in books and adult time to support reading. The programme includes:

- Phonics ‘taught fast and first’ each day in the Reception class, Key Stage 1, and selectively in Key Stage 2;
 - a balance of shared, guided, and independent reading;
 - a low ratio of pupils to adults, including trained volunteers, to maximise opportunities to listen to pupils read and talk about their reading;
 - home reading and additional support for those who make slower progress;
 - book borrowing from the library for Early Years Foundation Stage children upwards;
 - shared class reading of whole novels chosen to capture pupils’ interest;
 - reading of different kinds of text, including digital texts;
 - reading events such as a ‘magic and make-believe’ day of story telling, class authors, book and film clubs, and book weeks with parental involvement; and
 - reading targets for pupils.”
- (Ofsted, 2011:12)

Shouldn’t ministers be worried about a test where 72 per cent of the pilot schools state it causes confusion to some or most pupils?

This case study shows that while phonics teaching is an important *component* of the teaching of reading, it is only a part of a much wider provision. Ministers seem to be under the misconception that increased phonics teaching will raise standards of reading overall. However, the evidence shows that more phonics *on its own* will not lead to fluent and engaged readers who make sense of what

they read. Carole Torgerson, Greg Brooks and Jill Hall (2006) confirm that the evidence from a meta-analysis of relevant research makes clear that the teaching of phonics does not improve comprehension but only word reading accuracy (Dombey, 2010: 10).

If we are to ensure that every child in every school has the best chance of becoming a reader in the fullest sense then we must learn from the schools that are very good at it rather than focusing on a small – albeit important – part of successful approaches to teaching reading. All the evidence shows that schools should not only pay close attention to word reading skills, including phonics, but also to:

- “a balanced approach in which attention to word recognition skills is matched by attention to comprehension with the consistent message that understanding and effective communication – not just word recognition – are what literacy is about;

- attention to individual children's literacy skills, experiences and interests through high quality interaction and close monitoring of individual progress; and
 - high levels of engagement in reading.”
- (Dombey *et al.*, 2010: 5)

Ministers are ignoring not only professional expertise and research evidence, but also the advice of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Education (APPGE) in its report of the Inquiry into *Overcoming the Barriers to Literacy* (July 2011) which cautioned that:

“Ministers need to make clearer statements about the value of all aspects of literacy and communication, not just phonics. There needs to be recognition in the community and in schools that writing, speaking, and listening are all vital in communicating. As well as this, there needs to be an acknowledgement of the growing value of digital literacy.”

(APPGE, 2011: 5)

Word reading skills

The second significant misconception on the part of ministers is that word reading is solely about decoding using phonics. But more than phonics is needed to read all words accurately in English. Phonics is essential but not sufficient. As ministers denigrate and demonise ‘look and say’ they forget that for many very common words in English such as *come, once, was, the*, the best method for accuracy is to read them as ‘sight’ words. i.e. using the strategy of look and say. In addition, in order to be accurate in our word reading we have to use meaning in many cases. If we take the word ‘sow’ we have to use the context of the meaning of the sentence to pronounce it correctly (*A female pig is a sow. The farmer planned to sow the seeds in a few weeks.*). Another example would be the word ‘close’ (*They were too close to the door to close it.*).

There is also a lack of research evidence that the synthetic phonic approach (as contrasted with analytic phonics or a balance of both) is the most effective teaching method:

“No statistically significant difference in effectiveness was found between synthetic phonics instruction and analytic phonics instruction in the very small number of random control studies that had been carried out.”

(Torgerson, Brooks, and Hall, 2006: 8)

Torgerson *et al.*, argue that there is not enough evidence to make a definitive statement one way or the other. They urged further research and called upon the Government to fund a large scale investigation into this question. Needless to say this has not happened.

The phonics check for six year olds in England

So convinced are ministers that teachers must teach reading through a synthetic phonics approach that a new accountability lever is needed to ensure that primary teachers do so. From June 2012, all schools in England (including primary academies and free schools) will have to administer a phonics test to all children in Year 1. The test will consist of 20 phonically regular words and 20 pseudo words like *mip*, *glimp* and *brunk*. The results of the test have to be reported to the Government and collated and reported publically through RAISEonline and local authority tables. The results will also be used by Ofsted when they inspect schools under the new framework for inspection which was introduced in January 2012.

There are considerable concerns about the imposition of this additional test. Evidence from Key Stage 2 shows that high stakes tests can have a pronounced negative impact on the curriculum (see for example the final report of the Cambridge Primary Review) and in this case is likely to have a detrimental effect on areas such as enjoyment, comprehension and wider reading, directly undermining the effective practice outlined above, not only in Year 1 but also in the early years foundation stage.

Further concerns became evident when the independent report of the pilot of the test undertaken in June 2011 was published. Ministers stated that the pilot, involving 300 schools, was very successful. Nick Gibb, Schools Minister stated: *"This study finds that the check will be of real benefit to pupils but takes just a few minutes to carry out and is a positive experience for most children."* (Gibb, 2011.) However close reading of the report shows this statement is at variance with many of its findings.

The claim that the test will only take a few minutes is flatly contradicted by the report which states that the average time for preparation and administration was 15.5 hours and even longer in large schools. This is equivalent to three days' teaching. How will six-year-olds benefit if their teacher is otherwise engaged with the check and may also be out of class for this time or more?

The report states that less than half of respondents agreed that the check accurately assessed the decoding ability of pupils with EAL (46 per cent), with speech difficulties (35 per cent), with SEN (33 per cent) and with language difficulties (28 per cent). These categories of children are the very ones who are most in need of identification. Thus the test fails in its main purpose; those most at need of reading support will not be accurately identified by the test.

The report also found that the majority (60 per cent) of schools surveyed felt that pseudo words caused confusion for at least some pupils, with an additional 12 per cent feeling that they caused confusion for most pupils. In case study schools where pupils were less familiar with pseudo words, confusion was also noted by both teachers and pupils. Shouldn't ministers

be worried about a test where 72 per cent of the pilot schools state it causes confusion to some or most pupils? Some able readers in the pilot found reading the nonsense words difficult and teachers in the pilot said that those most at need of reading support were not being accurately identified by the test and able readers mistakenly identified as needing further teaching of phonics and being held back as a result.

Most damaging of all to the credibility of the test was a fact contained in the DfE press release of 9 December 2011. It reported that only 32 per cent of pupils in the 300 schools that took part in the pilot reached the “expected level” of 80 per cent correctly pronounced words. This finding effectively undermines the phonics check as an indicator of children’s capacity to develop into competent readers. There seems to be no relationship between the results of the check and young children’s reading development as measured at the ends of Key Stages 1 and 2. It will potentially label nearly 70 per cent of children failures when they are not, leading to an adverse effect on their confidence and motivation and hence their progress in reading itself.

In addition, the same press release claimed that “a solid grounding in phonics will also see more pupils achieve a high Level 2 or Level 3 score at the end of Key Stage 1”. This is unsupported. There is no research evidence to support the claim that phonics teaching *on its own* will raise measured standards of reading.

The Government’s own inspectorate is clear in the recommendations in the 2012 report that schools should:

- *“develop policies to promote reading for enjoyment throughout the school; and*
- *ensure that preparation for national tests and examinations is appropriate, does not begin too early, and does not limit the range of the curriculum or pupils’ opportunities for creativity in English.”*

(Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills, 2012: 7).

In the light of these recommendations and the research evidence, the question must be asked about why the Government is willing to allocate considerable sums of public money to this test when there are perfectly good assessments of reading, including phonics, at the end of the foundation stage and Year 2 as well as regular teaching assessment. This, at a time when all sectors are feeling the pinch, seems like a flagrant attack on teacher autonomy – at any cost.

The campaign

The United Kingdom Literacy Association (UKLA) has not stood idly by whilst this damaging policy is being implemented. UKLA has coordinated a wide range of organisations (including the Association for the Professional Development of Early Years Educators, The Cambridge Primary Review

National Network, the Committee for Linguistics in Education, National Association of Advisers for Computers in Education (UK), the National Association of Advisers in English, the National Association of Primary Education, the National Association for Special Educational Needs the National Association for the Teaching of English, the National Literacy Association) and teacher associations (NUT, NAHT, VOICE, NASUWT, and ATL and The College of Teachers) and made our concerns clear. We have written three letters to ministers outlining our concerns on educational and practical grounds and expressing opposition to the imposition as undermining both pupil progress and teacher professionalism.

We have twice met with DfE officials to express detailed concerns about the test and the findings of the review of the pilot.

Although we have shown ministers that the test is flawed and there is almost universal opposition from the profession, it has not been withdrawn or amended in any way. The government will be spending millions of pounds of public money every year on a test which will increase workload, eat into teaching time, fail in its core purpose of accurately identifying children's needs in reading and which is unnecessary since the current approaches to teaching phonics are substantial.

The campaign will continue to make representations to the Government to withdraw and rethink this test and continue to press for a broader approach to the teaching of reading, based solidly on research evidence and the experience of thousands of primary teachers. We will monitor implementation in 2012 and gather evidence regarding the impact it has on the reading curriculum, children's engagement with reading, teacher workload and ultimately reading standards. As constant dripping of water can wear away stone, perhaps this sustained campaign will eventually convince ministers of their misplaced zeal. If the campaign does not change any minds, then we have to assume that the imposition of teaching only synthetic phonics and the use of a seriously flawed test are the result of a deliberate attempt to undermine and displace professional expertise – to the detriment of a generation of young readers.

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Making the CASE for good local schools

Abstract: *Schools are rapidly becoming the instruments of Government ideology rather than places where children can enjoy learning and where teachers can provide an exciting and stimulating curriculum. The extensive powers now available to the Secretary of State for Education mean that he has strengthened his control over schools, teachers, parents and children. In this article the author describes the kind of school she would like to see and argues that we all need to work towards achieving an education system that represents the wishes of the wider community, not just the Secretary of State.*

The Secretary for State for Education, Michael Gove, claims that the only way to secure school improvement is by schools becoming academies. This idea has no evidential basis. Schools improve in many different ways and there are numerous examples of excellent schools which are not academies.

Academies are the route to privatising the state education system by handing over schools, which are part of the public realm, to sponsors who see them as an opportunity to profit. Taxpayers' money is allocated to sponsors to run the schools and, because they are expected to comply with the funding agreement they have signed with the Department for Education (DfE), they are controlled centrally (despite the propaganda that academies are autonomous institutions).

Since local management of schools was introduced in 1988, schools have been able to spend their money on services from providers other than the local authority. Who is monitoring how academies spend their money?

A report by the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee found that:

"Many academies have inadequate financial controls and governance to assure the

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proper use of public money, and the Department and Agency have not been sufficiently rigorous in requiring compliance with guidance ... As the Programme expands, there are increased risks to value for money and proper use of public money.” (House of Commons. Committee of Public Accounts, 2011: 5)

School inspections and forced academies

It now appears that Ofsted – instead of being an independent inspection body – is being used to put schools into a category which will enable the Education Secretary to force them to become academies. More schools have been put into the Ofsted category of special measures since January 2012 than in any previous period.

Why is this happening? It could be argued that an insufficient number of schools chose to become converter academies following the enabling legislation in the Academies Act 2010 so the Education Secretary, having obtained further powers of intervention through the Education Act 2011, is now forcing schools into academy status.

Confident schools, led by confident leaders, will ensure that a wide range of learning opportunities are available to all students and will not limit what is on offer to political whims.

These powers include the dismissal of locally accountable and democratically-elected governing bodies – the statutory bodies responsible for schools – and their replacement by unaccountable and undemocratic interim executive boards (IEBs). In the London

Borough of Haringey this aggressive act occurred twice in under a month – at Nightingale Primary School in February 2012 and at Downhills Primary School just one month later. IEBs consist of three to six people who are not from, or accountable to, the local community. They are unlikely to understand the complexities of the school or to spend time developing good relationships and are answerable only to the Secretary of State.

Instead of this punitive and high stakes approach to school inspection what we desperately need is an inspection system which identifies areas of development for schools and then provides the support needed to carry this through.

School self evaluation is equally important and all members of the school community need to be involved. Self evaluation should identify areas for improvement as well as strengths that can be celebrated. Everything needs to be considered particularly from the viewpoint of young people themselves. The quality of relationships, discriminatory practices, attitudes to parents, school meals, the curriculum offer, availability of drinks, the condition of the toilets and the quality of the playground experience are all important issues

for children and all can impact on their learning.

The role of governing bodies

In sponsored academies the sponsor *appoints* the majority of governors and also has the power to dismiss governors. There is no automatic place set aside for a staff governor or a representative of the local authority. Just two places are guaranteed for elected parent governors.

The governing bodies of maintained community schools, in contrast, follow a 'stakeholder' model in which the whole school community is represented. They comprise the *elected* representatives of school staff and parents, local authority appointees and people co-opted from the local community. In most cases parents make up around a third of the governing body.

This stakeholder model is democratic, representative, accountable and transparent and should be valued and preserved.

In the majority of schools, governors are committed, hard working volunteers who want to do the best for their school. Most have a wide range of skills absolutely relevant to the work of the governing body. This includes responsibility for all aspects of the school and its development – the allocation of the budget, priorities in the school development plan, its staffing and the support given to staff, premises, the welfare and behaviour of children. They are also responsible for ensuring that all children achieve and get the best educational experience.

Governors must also ensure the school follows the law in respect of health and safety, child protection and employment practices and procedures. They establish a review panel to set targets for the head teacher who is accountable to the governing body and who, in most cases, is also a governor.

Ensuring the effective use of resources is a central role for governors – overseeing how school funds are being spent and what difference they are making for children and their achievements. Approximately half of schools end the financial year in deficit and the other half with a credible surplus. Why is this? It should be possible for all schools to spend most of their income with some left over for emergencies and to show what a difference it is making. This financial accountability is an important feature of maintained schools which must be audited externally and pass the new Schools' Financial Value Standard (SFVS).

The school's aims, which need to be reviewed annually by the governing body, should be displayed in the school and central to policies and development plans. School policies – there may be as many as 30 or more – ought to be clear statements of principle and provide an explanation of how the school intends to achieve those aims. Generally they are better if short and simple. They should be used and understood, not become documents

which sit on a shelf.

Governing bodies should oversee these policies and make sure they are fully implemented. It is useful for governing bodies to have the school's aims at the top of their meeting agendas – and for there to be a question at the bottom asking to what extent discussions at the meeting have furthered the aims and policies. Policies should be accessible in terms of the languages used and they should be available on the school website and to parents and others who ask for them.

Promoting equality and countering discrimination should be what all schools do and should be a key priority in all school development plans. By December 2007 every school had to produce a Single Equality Scheme with action plans for promoting equality and countering discrimination in six key areas – race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, faith and age. Monitoring these plans is another role for the governing body as well as the local authority.

Sadly, too few head teachers or teachers attend training to understand the role and responsibilities of governors which are very different from those required for the day-to-day running of a school or for classroom teaching. This often results in governors not getting the information they require – the problems as well as the good news – or the opportunity to resolve situations which they may well have come across in their own sphere of work. Asking the right questions is also an important aspect of the governors' role as well as opportunities to visit the school, speak to staff, parents and young people and observe teaching and learning. For some governing bodies this is made very easy – governors are always welcome in the school and their questions are answered; they are invited to INSET days and other events; they are visible to parents, children and staff. For others it is not so straightforward.

Accessible schools

A good school requires good relationships between all parties. In good schools everyone's view is respected and listened to and ideas for improvement are welcomed from all stakeholders – governors, staff, parents and students. Positive working relationships between teachers and families have been shown to improve both learning and behaviour and yet sadly in some schools developing such relationships is not regarded as a priority. Governors often say that communication between the different stakeholders is the area in their school which needs most work. This can be difficult to achieve if those who are in leadership positions do not agree. Governing bodies need to work with the school to ensure that parents do get the information they need and understand the ways they can communicate regularly and effectively with teachers

Parental voice is in danger of being lost and ignored in new school structures like academies and free schools if families cannot resolve concerns

or complaints at school level. In the absence of local authority involvement in the school, their only recourse is to complain the Secretary of State for Education.

Every child has the right to a good education whatever their background. Schools should be non-selective and open to all local children regardless of their circumstances. They should have high expectations of every child. All children are capable of succeeding given the right environment and support and all teachers need to believe this.

Too often children's potential is pre-determined by prejudice about their 'ability'. Too many children experience failure at an early stage and never recover. Setting and streaming can seriously affect children's self-confidence and lead to them doing less well at school. Schools need to be flexible and differentiate provision to meet the needs of every child. The curriculum should be broad and balanced – not narrowed as it has been as a result of league tables – or, as it is likely to become in secondary schools, reduced to the EBacc.

Active learning

Currently there is too much emphasis on tests, with many teachers feeling that they have to teach to the test. Where schools provide a more creative curriculum, truly meeting the needs of the children, the results are better and Ofsted is more likely to be satisfied.

Confident schools, led by confident leaders, will ensure that a wide range of learning opportunities are available to all students and will not limit what is on offer to political whims. Education should not be about passing tests; instead children should enjoy learning for its own sake, being curious, questioning and active learners instead of being told what to do and how to do it. Children and young people need to be critical thinkers, developing their own ideas and challenging everything. This will make their lives more fulfilling and ensure that they are not dependent on others.

Children are naturally creative but too often their creativity and curiosity is buried by demands to do things which they do not find interesting. Bored children who spend much of their time practising for tests are not learning effectively and often lose out because there is no breadth or depth in what they are taught.

Successful schools find out and develop each child's ideas, interests and talents. They see the school as a whole community in which everyone is learning together, as a place where adults and children are confident, positive and caring. Different learning styles are understood and teachers respond accordingly. Success is the order of the day, not failure; enjoyment of learning and not pressure to achieve what others want. It has never been a statutory requirement to do an hour of literacy and numeracy each day although this is what many teachers believe and do.

Many of the attitudes and dispositions towards learning come from experiences in the early years and governments need to commit to a much greater investment in excellent early-years provision. Most countries already do this and do not start formal teaching before children reach the age of six or seven. At these ages children learn to read and write quickly and so experience success fast. Before this they need to develop their physical and social skills, their spoken language and enjoyment of books through being read to, not trying to read.

Play – both indoors and outdoors – is an essential part of children's learning and is central to good early years' provision. There is little learning without action and all action results in learning. Sitting still or being 'on the carpet' is not the best way for children to learn. Children concentrate most

effectively when fully engaged in an activity. Observation of children is the way early years' practitioners assess progress and development and identify children's interests. They build on these observations to support children and help further development. Child-initiated activities are among the best – children develop their imagination and curiosity to see how things work and encourage a desire to go on learning. Guidance and support, without excessive direction, is what adults need to offer.

The Government needs to listen to those whose opinions are grounded in practice and the daily reality of schools and to read widely from the research – not just that which supports their particular view.

Teacher training and CPD

Initial teacher education needs to give sufficient time to training on the range of special needs and disabilities that teachers are likely to encounter among their pupils and how best to support them. Currently ITT offers too few hours' training on this important area. Teachers are likely to have an average of six children in any class with a special need of some kind. There also needs to be at least one INSET day a year devoted to special needs to develop every teacher's expertise. This would also benefit the teaching of all children and allow for the development of different strategies and teaching styles.

In addition, understanding child development should be an essential part of teacher training and education, as it once was. Working with parents is also essential for all schools and teachers to do well.

Local collaboration and support

No schools have the answer to everything but many schools have identified the elements of successful practice. It is therefore important that there is collaboration between schools in a local community and a sharing of ideas and facilities. In this way everyone benefits. Parents and governors have a huge amount to offer but their ideas and skills are often not sufficiently valued and frequently nor are those of the staff outside those in leadership positions.

Local authorities have a vital role to play in a fair and democratic local schools' system but are having their finances stripped away from them by both cuts and the increase in the number of academies. This puts the vital support and services they provide to schools at grave risk and, in some areas, they are no longer able to support schools in the way they need to.

The role for government

What is the role for government in the sort of education system that we want to see develop? Government ministers ought not to be determining all aspects of education policy – training, the curriculum, what is inspected, how subjects are taught – or constantly changing school structures. Instead they should be finding ways to better resource schools and education at all levels, from the early years through to further and higher education.

The Government needs to listen to those whose opinions are grounded in practice and the daily reality of schools and to read widely from the research – not just that which supports their particular view. Sadly, children and young people have become the guinea pigs of governments. The Coalition Government, in particular, is destroying state education and threatening the life chances of the majority of children.

All of us should be standing up and arguing for a fair and democratic system of education in which schools are open to all local children. At the moment this seems a long way off. Many schools are now being run by private interests who are not accountable to parents or the local community, who pay leaders highly while undermining the salaries and conditions of teachers and other staff and who exclude pupils who may be unable to 'make the grade'. Is this the kind of education system we want? If not we all have a responsibility to stand up for our schools and speak up for the changes that we want to see made to the current system.

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Speaking up for state nursery school education

Ben Hasan

Ben Hasan is Head Teacher of an outstanding inner city maintained nursery school in London. He has been a teacher for 18 years, mainly within the foundation stage. He is also the Chair of the National Campaign for Real Nursery Education.

Abstract: *Based on the findings of the Head Teacher of an inner city nursery school, this paper reflects on the importance of nursery schools, their characteristics, future and the steps needed to ensure they continue to have a positive impact on children's lives.*

What are the key factors in providing high quality nursery education for three-four year olds, and what do we need to think about in order to guarantee that nurseries can continue to provide a good education for this age group? In considering this question, this paper will address the following areas:

- The importance of nursery schools and their characteristics;
- what does quality early years education look like?;
- the future of nursery schools; and
- the importance of organisations such as the National Campaign for Real Nursery Education.

Nursery Schools

Nursery schools have unequivocally made a substantive impact on young children's learning as evidenced in a variety of research projects. Most notably these include longitudinal research conducted by the Institute of Education (London University): The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education Project

(Sylva *et al.*, 2004) and The Effective Provision of Pre-School, Primary and Secondary Project (Siraj-Blatchford *et al.*, 2011). The impact of nursery schools is additionally cited in the high proportion of nursery schools judged 'outstanding' by Ofsted. For example, of all Ofsted inspections between September 2010 and July 2011, 46 per cent of nursery schools were judged to be outstanding in comparison to eight per cent of all primaries and 14 per cent of all secondary schools (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, 2012)

Within this context of quality it is equally important to note that state maintained nursery schools provide a *universal service*. Consider for example that 62 per cent of all nursery schools are in the 30 per cent most disadvantaged areas of England.

Nursery Schools employ qualified teachers and other specialist practitioners who have a clear in-depth knowledge on both the curriculum and pedagogy; and it is this understanding that contributes directly to the substantive progress made by children who attend nursery schools.

The impact nursery schools have on young children's learning is determined by the key characteristics outlined below.

Highly trained and qualified staff

Research shows a strong relationship between the outcomes for young children and the provision of qualified teachers alongside highly qualified nursery practitioners (Sylva *et al.*, 2004; Siraj-Blatchford *et al.*, 2011). Nursery Schools employ qualified teachers and other specialist practitioners who have a clear in-depth knowledge on both the curriculum and pedagogy; and it is this understanding that contributes directly to the substantive progress made by children who attend nursery schools. More specifically, it is teachers who are trained and experienced in the 'early years' that are better placed to skilfully enable children to reach their full potential. Working within the foundation stage is a complex process, which requires paradoxically a specific pedagogical framework that is crucial for the early years yet relevant to all children. It is therefore crucial that all providers of nursery education have qualified teachers who are able to lead the learning.

Head teachers

Head teachers are key to the success of a school; this is evident in research carried out for The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education 3-11 Project (Sammons *et al.*, 2008). Head teachers of nursery schools must be qualified teachers who have an in-depth knowledge about young children's learning coupled with substantial experience as a nursery teacher. Research shows that it is 'leadership for learning' that is necessary to achieve good outcomes for children. Nursery head teachers are in the best position to model effective leadership. The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education 3-11 Project data found that the qualities and characteristics of effective leadership were 'strongly represented' in the 'effective settings' studied (predominately nursery schools and nursery school based integrated centres). Furthermore, it found that early years leaders with the highest qualifications were located

predominately in the 'education' rather than 'care' sector; and that the quality of the learning environment increases with the leader's qualifications. It is perhaps not surprising that the quality of the head teacher is just as significant as having qualified nursery teachers; this is particularly highlighted when noting the comparatively high number of outstanding judgements by Ofsted for Leadership and Management in Nursery Schools compared with those in primary and secondary settings.

Nursery schools in particular recognise the value of a learning environment that is organised, accessible and challenging to children both indoors and outdoors. There is a clear recognition of the value of young children's play as well as a balance of both adult directed and child initiated experiences.

Specialist provision

Nursery schools are equally significant to young children's learning as they are also providers of *specialist provision*. Nursery schools in particular recognise the value of a learning environment that is organised, accessible and challenging to children both indoors and outdoors. There is a clear recognition of the value of young children's play as well as a balance of both adult directed and child initiated experiences.

Unlike private and voluntary independent (PVI) settings, nursery schools provide universal free education. Families have access to high quality education irrespective of their ability to pay while practitioners themselves learn within a socially diverse environment. The value of nursery schools therefore also lies in the fact that they are the predominant context in which

good practice is shared and training is developed. It is vitally important that nursery schools are able to continue because they are the 'key instrument' for developing high quality practitioners and leaders for the future.

What does quality early years education look like?

Within the early years it is recognised that the following principles are key to enhancing young children's learning:

- Incorporating *children's interests* in their learning;
- children *involved in their learning journey*;
- provision of *hands on, relevant and challenging* experiences;
- experiences which are *sustained and developed over a period of time*;
- *assessments of learning through observations, and active participation of the parents/carers*;
- balance of provision of both *child-initiated and adult-directed learning*; and
- a learning environment that is challenging and promotes both *independence and choice for both the inside and outside*.

Below is an example of what I would define as a high quality learning experience which arguably illustrates many of the principles cited above.

Children from an inner city nursery school were involved in planting from seeds a number of pumpkins. From spring right through to the autumn children were involved in observing and tending the pumpkins. By going through this process children developed a *clear sense of ownership* to their learning.



Once the pumpkin was ready the children explored ways of moving it. Lots of problem

solving ensued as children were involved in exploring concepts of leverage, developing skills in working collaboratively and thinking through strategies.

Children were then involved in lifting and feeling its weight; this provided a *meaningful opportunity* for the children to explore the concept of weight and in particular something being 'heavy'.

Children were then involved in relevant and challenging

experiences of cutting and cooking the pumpkin using appropriate tools including knives. The provision of knives was achieved through a clear focus on practitioners imparting knowledge of how to use the knives and children developing their skill through practice supported by the practitioners.

The children then built a fire, further developing a range of skills and knowledge and impacting on their personal social and emotional development. For example not only did children begin to understand such terms as 'flickering' and 'crackling' but also their concentration and enthusiasm for learning was enhanced. During this process the children were told about the issues of safety and that fires are only made when adults are present.

After this initial experience the children were involved in re-telling the story *Pumpkin Soup* by Helen Cooper, as well as creating their own stories and poems (see below).

The following aspects of learning were developed:

- Fostering curiosity;
- developing skills in working collaboratively;
- enhancing children's understanding about the importance of *persevering*, for example children were exposed to using real tools over a period of time, which provided scope for 'mastery';
- children displaying *high outcomes*, based on both high expectations which in part included the importance of *risk taking*;
- ability to listen and re-tell familiar stories; the making of the fire and cooking of the 'pumpkin soup' provided *real and relevant* experiences to the children, which consequently accelerated their learning;
- enhancing language acquisition through *meaningful and first hand experiences*;
- understanding concepts such as big and heavy; and
- developing vocabulary, for example use of language such as 'fires', 'flicker'/'crackling', 'kindling'.

From this experience the following observations were noted of our children:

- A significant number of children wanted to hear the story 'Pumpkin Soup' over and over again!
- Children were enthusiastic and excited about re-telling the story of Pumpkin Soup; and
- children frequently asked for another fire.

Pumpkin Soup

"In the forest, there are some animals; a squirrel, a cat and a duck. The duck wanted to mix pumpkin soup. There was a fight, a squabble and an enormous mess. The duck went to the forest. The cat and the squirrel missed the duck. The duck went back home. The cat and the squirrel were happy and cuddled the duck."

Authors: Aneeqa, Arshiya, Azizur, Courtney, Ilana, Isra, Micayla, Naim, Niyaaaz, Ruby, Sahil and Tasnia.

Pumpkin Poem

Pumpkin, lunkin dunkin

Shunkin, sunkin wonkin.

Pumpkins enormous.

Pumpkins soft

And pumpkin hard

Pumpkin squeazy

Pumpkins very big and

Very giant.

Poets: Aneeqa, Azizur, Illana and Nabihah.

National Campaign for Real Nursery Education

The National Campaign for Real Nursery Education is an independent charity that campaigns for high quality, free nursery education for three and four year olds. It has been doing so since the 1960s. Unfortunately, the last decade has seen the closure of many nursery schools; irrespective that the majority of nursery schools have been consistent providers of quality.

What do we need to be doing now?

It is evident that nursery schools make a substantial impact on the outcomes of young children; however, in order for nursery schools to be maintained the following actions are key:

- State nursery schools must be involved in the training of teachers and other practitioners such as Early Years Educators (Nursery Nurses);
- they must work with other settings to raise standards including the private and voluntary sector;
- there must be courses relevant to the early years;
- nurseries must be at the forefront of research and engaged in research in collaboration with universities; and
- Government ministers, councillors and other influential people must be invited to nursery schools to understand the enormous impact they make on young children's learning.

In conclusion I have attempted to illustrate my observations of the value

and characteristics of nursery schools. I have lastly identified some important steps arguably nursery schools need to take in order to grow and develop and in so doing, continue to make the very important impact they have on young children's learning.

For more information about the National Campaign for Real Nursery Education please access our website: www.NCNE.co.uk

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Advocating for active citizenship learning in schools

Abstract: *The current global atmosphere of grass roots activism and challenges to entrenched assumptions is a gift to schools when seen through the lens of active citizenship learning.*

Encouraging an informed, enabled and politically literate younger generation should be at the heart of a school's ambition for its students and a political imperative of any government. If 'The Activist' is Time magazine's 'Person of the Year' then genuine active citizenship should be this country's flagship educational endeavour.

I have been asked to write for the *Education Review* because of my involvement in the Occupy Citizenship wing of the Occupy London Stock Exchange movement. I have been a supporter of this global movement since 15 October 2011, when hundreds of camps were set up in cities and towns across the world. They were a reaction to a call out for economic justice, following in the footsteps of the Occupy Wall Street camp and the Spanish Indignados. As I have been a teacher for 23 years and am an author of a citizenship textbook, I saw the opportunity to bring the Occupy processes into schools without young people necessarily having to embrace the Occupy principles.

Bringing the Occupy processes into schools

When the small Occupy Citizenship working group began this project, meeting in tents and cafés around St Paul's, the *Daily Mail*, *Evening Standard*, *TES* and BBC Education contacted us immediately. Many of them were keen for a headline suggesting that anti-capitalist protesters were going into

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schools to indoctrinate and recruit young people. With the *Mail* and the *Standard* in particular, their frustration was palpable that our team included qualified, safety checked and experienced teachers, that we were adhering to the citizenship curriculum and that we were not indoctrinating or recruiting in any way.

If you do not allow young people to tackle controversial issues, those controversial issues will eventually tackle them.

The first school that Occupy Citizenship visited was Bishops' Stortford High School in Hertfordshire. It was clear in their press release that by inviting us, they were not endorsing Occupy but were adding Occupy to a long and very varied list of guest speakers which have included the Mayor of London, a holocaust survivor and George Galloway: "We are not here to 'corrupt the young' – we host all respectable and appropriate political parties" (Exeley, 2012). This is at the heart of citizenship, allowing young people to consider the whole gamut of political positions and trusting young

people to use critical thinking and enquiry to challenge and evaluate for themselves.

The head teacher, Andrew Goulding stated:

"These debates help to develop analytical and critically thinking citizens who want to engage with the issues of the day. Occupy have raised some fundamental questions for debate and our students are amongst the very best to engage with this debate."

Chris McGovern, chairman for the Campaign for Real Education, said to the *TES*: "I think schools should be open to all opinions but, in this particular case, I think it is something that is too controversial" (Exeley, 2012). Mr McGovern's statement could be seen to reflect a view of young people as being unable to think for themselves, an attitude which in turn results in young people feeling completely disengaged from politics. It is a mistake that has been made by governments for a long time. It is also a reason why Simon Etheridge, the teacher at Bishops' Stortford who invited Occupy, and the hundreds of dedicated citizenship teachers like him across the UK, are a credit to their school.

If you do not allow young people to tackle controversial issues, those controversial issues will eventually tackle them. Failing to provide young people with these skills is engendering the politics of despair, a situation made vivid already through the riots in summer 2011 and through the

violence on 26 March which followed the student demonstrations in London, where police clashed with hundreds of teenagers in Trafalgar Square.

As the severity of the austerity measures cut in across the UK and the huge inequalities in British society become more apparent, disempowered young people will continue to react in the same ways since they have been provided with no other means of articulating their understandable rage. In the introduction to the statutory citizenship curriculum, it is made clear that controversial issues should make up part of the learning programme: "Citizenship encourages them to take an interest in topical and controversial issues and to engage in discussion and debate" (Department for Education, 2011).

The three core skills in the citizenship curriculum are:

- Critical thinking and enquiry;
- advocacy and representation; and
- taking informed and responsible action.

These skills are exactly the same as the process by which the global Occupy movement has been operating and are the key skills in any grassroots movement. That is: to understand the issue you are most concerned about; to speak up for that issue and your proposed solutions; and ultimately, to take responsible action to bring about the changes you want to see. The need for knowledge regarding the banking and financial industries brought about an extraordinary situation at the Occupy LSX camp where people gathered in their hundreds underneath the canvas of the 'Tent City University' and heard from an impressive array of thought leaders on issues connected to economic justice. I remember listening to the camper who was in charge of recycling and a visiting motorcycle courier having a heated debate about credit default swaps after they had attended one of these lectures.

Empowering young people

When taking Occupy into schools and other youth facilities, we started each process with an exercise in which young people decided which issues were most important to them. We proceeded with exercises where the young people devised ways of understanding these issues, speaking up for what they believed in and running their own campaigns. I ran workshops like this for two years before Occupy, with young people across the country and on a regular basis with the Kids Company organisation in London

The issues that concern young people vary greatly, but what remains consistent is that they feel they are not being listened to on the issues that are most important to them; and that when they are 'heard' the process is condescending and a means for an authority to tick a box saying that young people have been consulted. However, they feel their views are not taken

seriously and are never acted upon. On top of this, many young people are genuinely frightened of the future they see approaching them.

The only comparable situation I can see from my own youth is the threat of 'mutually assured destruction'; the possibility that at any moment a world leader might 'press the button'. For young people today, climate change is not a possibility but a certainty, as is perpetual war over remaining planetary resources, global economic instability and unaffordable further education (that no longer guarantees a job but only guarantees enormous debt). Furthermore, youth unemployment is at a record high (Smith, 2011) and there is a complete disconnection from the political process. These are amongst the most common concerns that young people voice, as are the cut backs on youth facilities, the loss of the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA), continuing legislation to curtail the freedom of the internet, the pressure the media puts upon them as consumers, and the crushing impact of ephiphobia (the fear of youth). In my experience the latter has been the most prominent concern amongst young people. All young people that I have worked with are disturbed at how the stereotyping of teenagers as violent criminals in the mainstream media continually goes unchallenged.

In February 2012, Occupy engaged in an event called 'School of Rockupy'. We gathered 30 young people from across London providing them with a four-tiered skill share in which the young people were to spend one day writing, recording, packaging and releasing a song about the issue which they decided was most important to them. Well known recording artist Kate Nash acted as the workshop facilitator, helping the first group to write their song, while another pop star – Sam Duckworth/Get Cape, Wear Cape, Fly – used a mobile studio to work with the second group on sound engineering. A journalist from NME and Occupy's press officer helped the third group with the press release and a well known artist worked with the fourth group to design and make the cover for the single. The young people unanimously chose to produce a song called Ephiphobia (School Of Rockupy: A Project of Occupation Records and Occupy London, 2012). They not only relished the opportunity to work creatively around an issue that they cared about but, more tellingly, many of them commented that the simple opportunity to speak about issues in this way was something that they rarely experienced in their schools.

Crediting young people with the ability to understand complex controversial issues opens up a vibrant discourse that allows them to suggest solutions and perceptions that are unique, erudite and inspiring. After all, their urgency in addressing some issues comes from the fact that it is their future that is being shaped, not ours.

Ben Drew – AKA recording artist and actor Plan B – was a key speaker in a recent TEDx event held at Sadler's Wells in London. He used the platform to talk about ways of addressing the demonisation of youth: "Creative

endeavour as a route out of frustration and social alienation was not just an appealing idea,” Drew suggested, but also “a growing political imperative” (Thorpe, 2012). Drew is absolutely correct in that, without making it a *political imperative* to enable young people to articulate what makes them feel frustrated and alienated, this process of alienation will continue and the UK will remain bottom amongst OECD countries in studies on youth wellbeing and mental health (see for example the alarming research released by UNICEF – Unicef. Innocenti Research Centre, 2007)

However, creativity alone is not a solution in itself. Yes, young people benefit hugely from being able to articulate their feelings creatively but they also need to know that they are being listened to; that their creative projects have genuine impact and don't just end up as a poster on a wall in a classroom for a term, or a YouTube film that is passed around their friends on Facebook.

When practised confidently – by educationalists with specific Citizenship training in a school that has genuine support for the subject, or within a youth facilitation organisation that has the vision to recognise the value of authentic active citizenship – the core skills in citizenship learning can deliver that outlet that is otherwise absent in young peoples' lives. It engenders a high level of passionate discourse when young people are given a genuine opportunity to make a difference to something they care about. But young people need to be able to see the impact of what they are doing, as opposed to receiving a session that is all theory with a few posters at the end of it; they need to experience the practical application of these skills.

Active citizenship workshops

In 2010, I ran a series of active citizenship workshops in Great Yarmouth. After an introductory session, we turned to address the issues that the young people were most concerned about. The one that was most important to them

At a time when the country (and the world) is in social, economic and environmental crisis, a subject that teaches political, economic and legal understanding should be central to preparing young people for their adult lives.

was the impending closure of a local youth club, due to the fact that there were only two trained adults willing to volunteer to run it and no extra funding was available. We called in five local councillors, without letting the young people know what their jobs were. A series of exercises allowed the adults and the young people to get to know each other on a more personal

level before we began to address what the adults actually did and to understand exactly what the role of a councillor is within the wider spectrum of local governance. This gave the young people the opportunity to understand the realities of local authority management and specifically, the difficulties of maintaining services in the face of severe cuts. Once the young people had a full understanding of the issues relating to decisions about how to maintain a facility, we went on to address media skills: how to write a press release, how to create a media 'stunt', how to conduct an interview and how to utilise the media in order to put your point across in a cohesive and compelling way. Within three days, the group of young people had managed to have a major spread in their local paper, 15 trained local people had applied to volunteer and the youth club was saved.

This kind of practice – which enables young people to understand an issue from different points of view, put a face to the world of local authorities, get to grips with how politics relates to their own reality and use what may be called 'activist' skills in a competent way to achieve their aims – can be transformative. In this way, schools are able to produce work that is not only a route to getting great grades (as this form of active citizenship project tallies closely with the assessment criteria of Ofsted reports on Citizenship teaching) but is also a method by which young people can see their work having meaning and impact in the 'real world'. They can see the direct link between their school community and the local community and they can become confident that what they say and do matters to the world at large, and that they can shape that world.

I would suggest that projects like this have a positive impact on all other subjects because young people grow in confidence as they recognise that their views, when formed through critical thinking and enquiry and articulated well, are deeply valuable.

The National Citizenship Service or active citizenship?

In 2011 I had an informal meeting in the Cabinet Office regarding the National Citizenship Service (NCS). Many citizenship learning advocates anticipate that the Coalition Government is about to remove the statutory status of citizenship in schools and replace it, instead, with the NCS. I found that the cabinet minister was genuinely passionate about the NCS but, equally, seemed genuinely ignorant of the already existing active citizenship curriculum and the potential it has as a transformative form of learning. The Conservative Party was promoting the concept of the "Big Society" peopled by "active citizens" but had neglected to utilise an existing programme to achieve these lofty aims amongst our youth. It was disappointing that the people behind the NCS were going along with a government initiative without stopping to take heed of lessons learned from ten years of citizenship teaching, a subject that was introduced with cross party approval.

Rather than inventing a new programme that acts as a one-off provision for a limited number of 16-year-olds, it would have been far more effective to bolster something that already addresses this provision but throughout the school experience. More disappointing is the fact that these one-off experiences for 16-year-olds do not include in any satisfactory way the core content aspect of the citizenship curriculum – that is: *rights and responsibilities, democracy and justice and identity and diversity*.

At a time when the country (and the world) is in social, economic and environmental crisis, a subject that teaches political, economic and legal understanding should be central to preparing young people for their adult lives. Not only does the subject have a very clear emphasis on learning about politics, it also focuses on *doing* politics. A subject that helps young people on a journey from political literacy to political agency is far more valuable than a short experience at 16 that encourages young people to provide “thirty hours volunteering” to a local community project (Hurd, 2012). This will not encourage young people to engage politically with their world, instead it will leave them as politically disengaged as they already are.

There are aspects of the NCS that are admirable, particularly a two-week residential where young people from different backgrounds live and work together. However, the cost of this, I would suspect, is going to be astronomical. That money could have been spent far more wisely rather than being used to prop up what is, yet again, a political vanity project at the cost of losing the best chance schools have for preparing young people for genuine political agency.

Empowering young people to shape their own future

The end of the first decade of the 21st-century has introduced us all to a world in continual spiralling social and political unrest. In the UK of 2012, whatever power that was in the hands of young people is being taken away from them and they are being punished for the mismanagement and misdemeanours of their immediately preceding generations. Young people are being presented with a bleak future, but one which they had no responsibility for creating. The alternative to despair, whether you are a young person or an adult, is to do something about it and, clearly, putting a cross next to a candidate’s name once every five years no longer suffices. Even though Occupy may disappear from the public eye or transform into another movement, it currently offers people a way out of political disempowerment and frustration with a failing system by allowing them the opportunity to start a dialogue about seeking a fairer and more sustainable future. Citizenship learning offers a parallel, much needed provision for school students.

The current climate of protest and activism is clearly going to accelerate globally over 2012. The main source of oxygen for this rapid growth is the

fact that the movement is wired. This is something that digital natives are acutely aware of. This natural home for young people has become the new forum for sharing political thought and challenging assumptions on a global scale. This may be called 'the Napster of politics', a time where people are able to rapidly assimilate a wide range of political ideas through the web.

Although this is greatly empowering for the activist world, it would be more accessible to young people if they were to receive as firm a grounding in active citizenship learning as they currently receive in maths, English and science. Political, legal and economic literacy along with the ability to challenge assumptions and understand controversial issues are skills that are going to be the key to survival in anyone's adult life. Citizenship delivers this in a transformative fashion; it not only enables a young person to develop their own ideas about the issues that concern them, it also teaches them the skills to *do something about it*. Schools have always been a place to prepare young people for making the best of the adult world to come but now, more than ever, schools can be a place where young people take part in shaping their world now.

For details of the RAX Active Citizenship Toolkit go to www.raxcitizenship.org.

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Championing services for deaf children

Jo Campion

Jo Campion is Deputy Director of Policy and Campaigns at the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) where she leads NDCS's campaigning work to break down the barriers to achievement for deaf children.

***Abstract:** In May 2011 National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) investigations revealed that almost one in five English local authorities were cutting vital specialist education services for vulnerable deaf children, despite the education budget being protected by the Government. This article looks in detail at why specialist education support for deaf children is so important, at the cuts that have been made and the impact they are having on deaf children and their teachers across the country.*

With nearly 90 per cent of deaf children now being taught in mainstream schools, teachers need to know what specialist support will be available to them if a deaf child arrives in their classroom. Mainstream teachers are likely to have had no previous experience of deafness, so will obviously want to know how to communicate with a deaf child, how to use any specialist equipment they need and how they can ensure the child is following their lessons. This specialist help, advice and equipment should be available from the local authority but with councils making cuts across England, many deaf children and their teachers have been left struggling to cope without the help they need.

Deafness is a complex disability and not one that most teachers can expect to encounter frequently. Each deaf child's needs are different. The National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) do not think it fair for teachers and head teachers to be expected to become experts on deafness or the wide range of other, rarer specialist educational needs they may encounter. For that reason we believe it is essential for a structure or organisation to be responsible regionally for funding and providing highly specialist services

such as Teachers of the Deaf and technology for deaf pupils. This does not have to be the council, but it must be a structure that creates economies of scale and which has a team of experts providing a shared resource for an area.

At the moment, only councils provide this service and with one in five of them making cuts, teachers are being left without access to specialist support when they have a deaf child in their classroom.

At NDCS we believe that all 45,000 deaf children across the UK should have equal access to specialist support, so that they have a fair chance to achieve good results, no matter where they live. This specialist education support is vital for deaf children's achievement and must be protected from cuts. Deafness is not a learning disability, and with the right support in place, deaf children should be achieving in line with their classmates. Yet 60 per cent are failing to get five good GCSEs including English and maths. The consequences of leaving school without good qualifications in today's extremely tough job market are severe and deaf young people are not getting the grades they need to compete.

Beneath this failure lies a postcode lottery of support for deaf children and their teachers. With one in five councils across the country making cuts to specialist services for deaf children, the situation is getting worse. NDCS is very concerned that local authorities are sabotaging the hard work of teachers and the future achievement of deaf children by making these cuts.

Teachers know all too well that every child they teach is different and that support must be tailored to their individual needs. But with a whole class of children, it isn't always easy to keep up with the latest developments and to know what you need to do with a child whose needs are very specialist.

Deafness is not a learning disability, and with the right support in place, deaf children should be achieving in line with their classmates.

This is why it is so important that deaf children and their teachers get specialist support when they need it. The support being taken away by council cuts is not an optional extra, it is absolutely crucial for deaf children's learning and development. NDCS is so alarmed about the long-term impact of these cuts that we have been supporting families across the country to challenge councils and even to take legal action against them if unlawful reductions to staffing are made.

Specialist education support for deaf children

Specialist support for deaf children begins at diagnosis and then should

continue throughout their education. Some 90 per cent of deaf children are born to hearing parents who may have no previous experience of deafness, so the support of specialist Teachers of the Deaf is vital for them to learn to communicate with their child and to understand their deafness. This early support is crucial in explaining to families that, with the right support, deaf children can achieve anything.

When it is time for the child to start school, these same specialist Teachers of the Deaf can then assist the child's classroom teachers to understand their new deaf pupil's needs. This assistance varies but can include:

- Direct teaching from the Teacher of the Deaf or more regular support from a specialist assistant;
- providing the deaf child and the teacher with specialist equipment so the teacher can input directly into a child's hearing aids if they use them;
- giving advice and help to the school on how to make changes to the noisy classroom environment so that the acoustics can be improved and the teacher can be heard more easily; and
- advice on parts of the curriculum that may be particularly difficult for deaf children, such as phonics, and how to carry out the new phonics screening with deaf children.

Without this support, teachers are left struggling to research this specialist knowledge in their own time whilst deaf children are at risk of falling further behind in the classroom.

Uncovering the cuts

NDCS asked local authorities for information about their budget plans in November 2010. Some local authorities responded to our letters, however many did not. This lack of transparency was a major concern. It is unacceptable that it has fallen on charities and parents to find out about cuts to vital services at the very last minute when the Government has repeatedly stated that frontline services, particularly for the most vulnerable like deaf children, should be protected. Where local authorities failed to respond to our letters, NDCS issued Freedom of Information Act (FoI) requests.

The results of our investigations were shocking: almost one in five councils were making cuts to specialist support for deaf children, and almost all were doing so without consulting with parents.

The details of the swingeing cuts we uncovered were then published using an interactive map on the NDCS website (www.ndcs.org.uk/save). The campaign map shows the extent of losses to Specialist Teachers of the Deaf across the country. In some local authorities specialist frontline teaching staff have seen their teams slashed in half. Our map also gives details of the

many councils now considered to be at a high risk of making cuts because of the numerous reviews and restructures taking place. The map has allowed parents and professionals a place to anonymously speak out about cuts in their area, and at the time of writing, new information about cuts in 2012 and 2013 was being posted.

The impact of cuts on schools

Many local authorities have not discussed changes or warned schools in advance about the cuts they were making, leaving teachers to find out for themselves that the number of visits from specialists would be reduced and, in some areas, cut altogether.

Reducing the support deaf children receive is denying them the opportunity to reach their potential and jeopardising their futures. It also makes teachers' jobs more difficult. An unsupported deaf child can develop behavioural problems which can impact on other children in the class and make it more difficult for a teacher to teach.

In Warwickshire, the council made the decision to charge schools for specialist services for deaf children at School Action and School Action Plus over the summer holidays. This meant that schools, which had previously received the service for free, were left footing the bill for specialist support without having received any warning to enable them to budget for it. Such drastic and sudden changes are unfair on schools and unfair on the deaf children who in Warwickshire have been left without the help they need.

The *Save Services for Deaf Children* campaign

Since the beginning of the *Save Services for Deaf Children* campaign in November 2010 NDCS has been challenging these cuts wherever they occur. We have overturned some key decisions through the actions of parents and teachers

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across England. There follows some examples of areas that the *Save Services for Deaf Children* campaign has been active in, the tools the campaign and local parents have used and the results achieved.

Petition power in Salford

In Salford, NDCS worked with parents to mobilise and gathered 4,000 signatures for a petition demanding the council halted its plans to halve the number of specialist Teachers of the Deaf. NDCS were deeply concerned that the council was rushing through a decision, which would have a huge impact on deaf children in the area, without consulting families. Just four weeks after parents first uncovered the plans, the Leader of the Council intervened to announce a halt to the cuts.

As a result of the petition, parents and NDCS are now represented on a commission set up by the council to involve families in future decisions about vital support for their deaf children.

Lisa Frankland, the mother of a profoundly deaf 14-year-old and a member of the campaign said:

“It is good news that the council has decided to put its plans on hold. It is absolutely imperative that these services are not cut. There would be no point in my son going to school without them. He is doing so well with this support in place, and I have sleepless nights worrying about what will happen if it is taken away.”

Speaking out in Southampton

Over the summer holidays in 2011, Southampton City Council confirmed it had cut a vital Teacher of the Deaf post, which left the equivalent of just one full-time teacher to support around 165 deaf children. NDCS worked with its local group, South Hampshire Deaf Children’s Society, to campaign to change this. The story was covered extensively in the local papers, radio and TV with journalists speaking to NDCS, parents and deaf children. This pressure led to a full council debate and the council agreeing to make extra specialist teaching hours available to Southampton’s deaf children.

Tracey Pettit, secretary of the South Hampshire Deaf Children’s Society, said:

“It is clear that the Council has taken our concerns on board, promising to increase the current level of provision. What parents of deaf children in Southampton want to see now is for the Council to keep its promise.”

Legal action in Stoke-on-Trent

In August 2011 NDCS took legal action as a last resort after Stoke-on-Trent City Council ignored the concerns of parents about the impact of cuts. The Council had neither conducted an assessment of the needs of Stoke’s deaf children, nor carried out a full assessment of the impact their cuts to deaf children’s support would have. The council conceded and we managed to prevent further cuts being made to support for deaf children.

This legal action sent a clear message to other councils that they must act

lawfully when making these important decisions and that they should think very carefully before making cuts which could jeopardise deaf children's futures.

What's next?

At the time of writing, the extent of the cuts planned for 2012 were still being uncovered with new information being posted on the *Save Services for Deaf Children* campaign map.

However, we also know that it is not just deaf children's specialist teachers that are being cut but other services that also support deaf children and their families. These cuts too will impact on deaf children's ability to learn and to get on in life. Speech and Language Therapists are needed to help deaf children communicate more clearly with other children and their teachers; audiologists give deaf children regular hearing tests and fit their hearing aids; and social services should be providing deaf children with adapted equipment for the home and giving emotional support to families. With health reforms, welfare reforms and NHS efficiency savings well underway, cuts to these services are also starting to impact on deaf children's ability to learn. NDCS is responding to this and widening the *Save Services* campaign to cover all cuts to vital services deaf children receive.

How can teachers get involved?

Getting early information about where cuts may be taking place has been key to the campaign successes we have had so far. We have managed to have the biggest impact in places like Salford where parents and professionals acted quickly and contacted the NDCS helpline when they heard rumours about possible cuts. It is much more difficult to reverse decisions once they have been made and specialist teachers have already been lost.

So we are encouraging teachers, other professionals and parents to post information or rumours about cuts in their area on the NDCS *Save Services for Deaf Children Campaign* map and join the campaign to protect services www.ndcs.org.uk/save. Posts can be made anonymously and all threats will be investigated confidentially by our Campaigns team.

Parents who are concerned about cuts to support for their deaf child, or teachers concerned about a deaf child in their class, can contact the NDCS freephone helpline on 0808 800 8880 (voice and text) or email helpline@ndcs.org.uk

For more information on the campaign, the cuts taking place or how you can help *Save Services for Deaf Children* visit www.ndcs.org.uk/save

Poverty and education in an age of hypocrisy

Terry Wrigley

Terry Wrigley is Visiting Professor at Leeds Metropolitan University, having recently retired as senior lecturer at the University of Edinburgh. He edits the international journal *Improving Schools*. His books include *The Power to Learn* (2000), *Schools of Hope* (2003), *Another World is Possible* (2006) and as co-editor *Changing Schools* (2012).

Abstract: *This article argues that government policies have failed young people growing up in poverty, and that teachers need greater freedom to develop a curriculum which will engage and motivate them towards achievement. The article includes an analysis of flawed theories which present deficit views of students and their teachers, and outlines some principles of socially just pedagogy.*

It is evidently part of an education minister's job description to hide the Government's responsibility for child poverty by scapegoating teachers. It came as no surprise, then, to hear Schools Minister, Nick Gibb's indignation at the low achievement of disadvantaged pupils. Commenting on statistics published by the Department for Education (26 January 2012), he highlighted the fact that pupils with free school meal (FSM) entitlement have about half as much chance as other pupils of achieving five A*-Cs with English and Maths.

On one level, of course, Gibb is right: this is a 'shocking waste of talent' and these young people will certainly find many opportunities closed to them. It is also indisputable that, in Gibb's words: "We should have high expectations for all children regardless of their circumstances."

But is it fair to blame teachers for the consequences of a desperately unequal society where nearly a third of children are growing up in poverty? And to lay a particular blame at the door of those teachers who work in schools hard hit by disadvantage? It is as if low achievement were simply the

result of 'low expectations' and completely unrelated to the deep divisions in British society. This is the height of cynicism from the representative of a government which has turned the screws of austerity and made their quality of life even worse.

Despite the dramatic advances in productivity brought about by computer technologies and a boom time for the super-rich, child poverty has grown massively in recent decades. It doubled during the Thatcher years, fell only slightly after 2000 following timid policy initiatives from Blair and Brown, and is now going up again. Nearly a third of children in the UK live below the poverty line, with particularly high concentrations in some major cities.

Damaging young lives

Poverty is not just inadequate food, worn out shoes or damp bedrooms. It still is all of these things, but it is also relative; young people become acutely aware that they cannot afford the things their friends take for granted. Tess Ridge's study *Childhood Poverty and Social Exclusion: from a child's perspective* (2006) showed that:

- Not being able to afford transport affects their opportunity to sustain friendships;
- not having the right clothing affects self-esteem and can lead to bullying;
- children have to reject friends' invitations to join them in weekend activities; and
- children self-exclude from school trips to avoid hurting their parents' feelings.

Poverty, then, affects young people materially but also has a symbolic impact. Young people are acutely aware that their parents are being vilified as 'benefit scroungers'. The abusive stereotypes highlighted in Owen Jones' book *Chavs* impact on their self-esteem; they can also seep into the conversations and social understanding of their teachers unless they are alert to the danger.

The stigma of poverty particularly affects young people's identity formation during adolescence. It has a complex and cumulative impact on school learning and aspirations.

Deficit perspectives – a short history

Explanations of how poverty and class relate to school achievement have changed significantly over time, though some of the older explanations continue to operate below the surface. What these explanations have in common is that they locate the reason for low achievement with students

and their families, as a supposed defect or deficiency; important questions go unasked about school organisation, curriculum or the education system, and the scale of injustice in the wider society disappears from view. Faulty explanations serve as justifications for education policies which only make the problem worse.

In the 19th-century the relationship between class and school achievement wasn't much of an issue. Policy makers explicitly stated that the children of industrial and agricultural workers should not be educated 'above their station in life'. Such explicit declarations became unusable early in the 20th-century with the growth of the labour movement, so a new argument was required.

The idea of *intelligence* as a unitary, fixed and inherited substance quickly filled the gap, and remained dominant for half a century. The founder of educational psychology in England, Cyril Burt, used an 'intelligence test' on two different groups of children in Oxford. Not surprisingly, the children of university academics scored higher than manual workers' children, but Burt saw no reason to question his assumption that he was measuring 'intelligence' inherited from their parents, rather than the product of different early experience and education. Even though IQ scores could be improved by practicing the tests, psychologists continued to argue that IQ tests reliably measured 'innate intelligence'. Poor performance in these tests of decontextualised abstract logic served as the justification for limiting the education of working class children until the 1960s, consigning the majority to under-funded secondary modern schools and less qualified teachers (see Rose *et al.* 1984; Chitty, 2007).

When the ideology of genetically inherited intelligence became discredited, it was soon replaced by the concept of a *language deficit*. In its crudest version, student teachers in the late 1960s were authoritatively informed that working class parents didn't talk to their children, they just smacked them, and that was why they didn't do well in school. (Ironically, at that time, the prime location for physical punishment of children was the school.) The more sophisticated version, promoted by Basil Bernstein, was that working class families only spoke about what was physically present, so their children acquired a 'restricted code' of language use. This served them well in simple manual tasks and everyday transactions but rendered them incapable of the reasoning needed for school success. Harold Rosen (1974) powerfully argued against this ideology, pointing out that working-class experience and class struggle inevitably involved people discussing the big issues, and that schools should build on and develop the language of working class children rather than denigrate it.

These ideologies have since been replaced by others such as a 'culture of poverty' or a 'lack of aspirations', but they still live on below the surface. For example, in schools where the dominant practice is to divide up five-year-

olds into 'ability groups', it becomes all too easy for teachers to assume that this is the result of some innate and relatively fixed mental power. The concept of 'low ability' sets children on a long-term career of low attainment, and important questions go unasked about their early experiences and how these might be complemented or enriched. Even though the dominant patterns of classroom interaction such as closed questions seriously restrict pupils' opportunities to make more extended or thoughtful contributions, it is easy to assume that minimalist contributions are all that working class pupils are capable of.

Government policies which are supposedly intended to tackle underachievement have failed to question these residual ideologies and have actually made matters worse. The previous government pressurised schools to divide up children by 'ability levels', sending those on the Tortoise Table

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or in Set D Maths a strong message of failure. The imposition of transmission-based teaching methods in literacy and other curriculum areas reinforced traditional patterns of classroom communication such as closed questions which rarely allowed pupils the chance to say more than three words at a time.

Probably the most difficult deficit account of all to challenge is the discourse of limited *aspirations*. Of course motivation matters, but this explanation places responsibility firmly in the attitudes of young people themselves. Aspirations do not form in the abstract; they develop in terms of what it appears possible to achieve. Young people growing up in poverty see their parents and friends experiencing unemployment, temporary low-paid jobs, and training courses which lead nowhere. They often learn that aspirations lead to disappointment.

Scapegoating the teachers

While deficit views of children in poverty continue to hold sway, the last two decades have also been marked by attempts to blame teachers for underachievement. Nick Gibb's press release (26.1.2012) clearly exemplifies this:

"There are great examples of schools achieving the best for their disadvantaged"

pupils. If they can get it right, then so can all schools."

Unfortunately, the 21 schools he cited where more than 80 per cent of disadvantaged pupils gained five A*-C grades including English and maths turned out to be a poor example. Half of them were grammar schools whose doors were firmly locked to disadvantaged pupils unless they were high-fliers at the age of ten. Five were successful comprehensives in affluent areas with very few disadvantaged pupils on roll. Three of the remaining six selected on grounds of religious practice. It begins to sound like Dickens' satirical sketch of the 'self-made' factory owners in *Hard Times*:

"This, again, was among the fictions of Coketown. Any capitalist there who had made sixty thousands pounds out of sixpence always professed to wonder why the sixty thousand nearest Hands didn't each make sixty thousand out of sixpence. . . . What I did, you can do. Why don't you go out and do it?"

Poverty is not just inadequate food, worn out shoes or damp bedrooms. It still is all of these things, but it is also relative; young people become acutely aware that they cannot afford the things their friends take for granted.

There are a few schools where disadvantaged young people appear to do unusually well. Out of the 350 maintained secondary schools where at least 30 per cent of pupils have a free meal entitlement, we find about 20 where these pupils do at least as well as the national average for non-disadvantaged pupils (i.e. 62 per cent 5 A*-C with English and maths 'or equivalent'). Since half of these schools rely heavily on 'equivalent' qualifications to GCSE to obtain their results, we are left with only one in 30 schools where disadvantaged pupils are particularly successful. These schools are worthy of study to see what

can be learned, but it is entirely unhelpful to use them as a stick with which to beat other schools.

Unfortunately government systems of competition and surveillance have made it difficult for schools to learn from each other. League tables produce anger, envy, defeatism and denial.

Pioneers of school improvement such as Michael Fullan and Andy Hargreaves have always emphasised the need for active and authentic participation of all staff in the school development process. Unfortunately, the top-down authoritarian agenda-setting in England in the past 20 years is constantly undermining that possibility. Teachers are coerced into phoney

processes of collaboration, going through the motions of democratic participation.

As the system has increasingly turned teachers into followers rather than genuine professionals, so the need has grown to produce 'leadership'. This too has constituted a further shift towards subservience, as 'leadership' so often became a thoughtless implementation of the latest government initiative, with little real sense of educational or social direction. Leadership, in its vernacular sense, generally implies helping others get out of a mess and onto better terrain. The new educational leadership has little idea of where it is going, little sense of educational aims or what might constitute a good society, so its vision is restricted to the *how* rather than the *where* or the *why*.

A much more creative kind of vision, part of a shared leadership among thoughtful professionals, is particularly important in meeting the challenge of poverty and its associated educational disadvantages. This is why so much of the vacuous government-directed school improvement or leadership talk of recent years has borne little fruit.

Teachers engaging with social justice

If it were possible for top-down surveillance and bullying, and derisory attitudes towards teachers, to transform education in the interest of disadvantaged young people, this would surely have happened by now. In fact, the extent of underachievement in England has changed little in recent years. The attainment gap between pupils eligible for free school meals and others was 27.9 percentage points in 2007 and 27.4 in 2011. It is surely time to look for different answers.

Because there are no simple answers to how to make a difference, teachers have to be central to the process of discovery and development. Classroom teachers need to be supported, and given time, to understand the lives of young people struggling to grow up in poverty, and the complex and often troubled interactions between teachers and learners in challenging schools. We need a sensitive process of teacher research, not haranguing with statistics about failure. Leadership, in these contexts, involves encouraging reflection about the meaning of education in a divided society, and a rejection of deficit-based stereotypes and generalisations.

When visiting successful inner-city schools to write my first book *The Power to Learn* (Wrigley, 2000), I was impressed by how many times I heard the students say they felt respected by teachers. These ten schools had an ethos of mutual respect and democratic inclusiveness. Conversely, when adults talk about their poor experience of schooling, they speak of how disciplinary processes and authoritarian attitudes are lacking in respect. In neighbourhoods affected by poverty, the limited knowledge which many teachers have of the lives of their students often derives from dramatic encounters with frustrated parents, so it is easy for teachers to generalise

about particular streets and housing estates. Teachers need opportunities to gain a more rounded view of their students' lives outside school, as well as the forms of support provided by family and friends. This takes us well beyond statistical generalisations about 'disadvantaged pupils', avoiding the assumption that every student with a free school meal entitlement is underachieving, disengaged, lacking family support and likely to go off the rails.

For all the hype about a 'pupil premium', the amount of time which crises take up in many schools requires a much stronger staffing provision. This might be in terms of more teachers, but could also be youth workers or social workers based at the school. We have much to learn from the community schools' movement.

In addition, we need to consider whether secondary schools, as they are currently structured, serve the needs of troubled young people. In the USA, large high schools have been compared with shopping malls or airports, with students wandering aimlessly between teachers who barely know them. One of the most interesting school reforms there, the Coalition of Essential Schools, involves teachers covering several subjects so that they spend more time with each class. Teaching no more than 80 or 90 students each year means they can relate to students and support them much better. Similar patterns are normal across various Scandinavian countries.

Above all, we need to think much harder about pedagogy: what are the patterns of teaching and learning in schools affected by poverty? US-based research points to the dominance of skills practice in the form of decontextualised exercises, or test-style questions requiring short factual answers. There is surprisingly no parallel research in England, but this is clearly an issue which teachers should reflect upon and investigate.

The development of basic skills, including literacy and numeracy, is clearly essential but it is highly questionable whether this can be motivating when pursued out of context, especially for those who are finding them difficult. Rico Gutstein's chapter in *Changing Schools* (Wrigley, Thomson, and Lingard, 2012) shows how maths can be related to real-life social concerns such as sub-prime mortgages and migration. Jim Cummins presents a powerful argument against the current political obsession with phonics:

"Nowhere in this anaemic instructional vision is there room for really connecting at a human level with culturally diverse students; consigned to irrelevance also is any notion of affirming students' identities, and challenging coercive power structures, by activating what they already know about the world and mobilising the intellectual and linguistic tools they use to make sense of their worlds. This kind of programming reduces instruction to a technical exercise. No role is envisaged for teachers or students to invest their identities (affect, intellect and imagination) in the teaching/learning process..."

“When we frame the universe of discourse only in terms of children’s deficits in English and in phonological awareness (or deficits in any other area), we expel culture, language, identity, intellect, and imagination from our image of the child... In contrast... an instructional focus on empowerment, understood as the collaborative creation of power, starts by acknowledging the cultural, linguistic, imaginative, and intellectual resources that children bring to school.”
(Cummins, 2003: 56–57)

Traditional patterns of school learning are a form of alienated labour, like much factory work:

- Teacher tells pupils what to produce and how long they must work at the task;
 - pupil hands it to teacher, who looks hastily at the product;
 - teacher hands it back defaced and with a small token of its worth;
 - the product is of no obvious worth to anyone.
- (Wrigley, 2006: 188)

This is demotivating for all young people, but for those who already feel disempowered, we need to develop more satisfying forms of learning. Thoughtful participation may require opportunities to co-design an activity or investigation, a worthwhile product and a sense of audience. Authentic learning might require the chance to pursue matters of real-world concern.

Unfortunately government systems of competition and surveillance have made it difficult for schools to learn from each other. League tables produce anger, envy, defeatism and denial.

Bridging the gulf between students’ life outside of school and academic subjects requires the opportunity to draw on students’ existing knowledge and experience, decide on issues worth investigating, and draw on academic disciplines to aid the enquiry. Some excellent examples can be found in the case studies of *Changing Schools* (Wrigley *et al.*, 2012), including methods such as place-based learning or storyline which are widespread internationally but almost unknown in England.

Much of the emphasis on curriculum change for less ‘academic’ pupils has focused on providing vocational courses in secondary school. These have a part to play, but alongside, rather than replacing, gaining an understanding of social issues (history, the environment, politics) and engagement in

expressive arts. Unfortunately many vocational modules offer young people the illusion of realism but without any sense of challenge or cognitive development – a tick-box approach to the world of work. These simplistic approaches do little to prepare young people for dealing with the problems they will encounter in adult life.

Schools also need the opportunity to experiment with forms of differentiation which do not entail hierarchy and segregation, and which does not reduce learning to a simple ladder of linear progression in which they are marked up as achievers or failures.

Some schools have managed to overcome the fear of inspection to pursue methods which genuinely connect with and support young people at risk of underachieving, but it is difficult to do this confidently in the present climate. We urgently need networks of teacher learning which are oriented towards social justice and concerned citizenship, so that teachers working in more challenging environments can develop a wider pedagogical repertoire with the confidence that comes from knowing you are not alone.

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Book reviews

Teaching Boys in Primary School

Mark McEvilly

Brilliant Publications, 2011, ISBN: 9781905780839

The author has gathered together over 100 activities designed to meet the needs of boys in the primary school. The introduction provides a readable overview of current research into theories of learning, particularly learning styles, and the broad differences in brain functioning between boys and girls. He goes on to cite the presence of testosterone which tends to make boys more aggressive and competitive than girls. Therefore teachers should consider presenting a range of activities which engage different parts of the brain. McEvilly recognises that it is not desirable to focus on one particular gender, but provide a varied range of activities to engage boys in their learning, leading to less disruptive behaviour and better learning opportunities for everyone, boys and girls.

The book is divided into sections outlining which style of learning the activity predominantly suits e.g. Visual, Auditory or Kinaesthetic (VAK) and then divides activities into subject areas. At the front a useful chart gives a quick overview of this approach enabling teachers to plan a balanced menu of activities.

Beginning teachers, supply teachers and anyone looking for fresh ideas will find this is a useful collection of activities for dipping into. Each task is clearly described with the resources needed, references to useful websites and subject links. There is a good range of challenging activities, particularly in the section related to higher order thinking skills, which can be adapted to be inclusive.

There is nothing radically new here but even experienced teachers may find inspiration and reminders of activities they can adapt to suit the needs of their classes. If you have ever been asked to “VAK” your lessons, this book will be helpful. Although the title suggests the activities are suitable for primary age children, it is clearly aimed at Key Stage 2 teachers.

With an opportunity to sample before purchasing, *Teaching Boys in Primary School* could be a useful addition to the staff room library or a book to keep in the supply teacher's bag of resources.

Anne Swift

Anne Swift is the Head Teacher of a large infant school in Scarborough. She is the NUT Executive member for North Yorkshire, York, Middlesbrough, Stockton, Hartlepool and Redcar and Cleveland, Vice Chair of the Union's Education and Equalities Committee and Chair of the Union's Heads and Deputies' Advisory Committee.

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How To Be An Outstanding Primary School Teacher

David Dunn

Continuum, 2011, ISBN: 9781441138415

Given the fear and demoralisation that Ofsted causes the teaching profession, one could forgive teachers for wincing at the title of this book. 'Outstanding' has become a tainted word that many teachers are apt to use with a strong tinge of sarcasm. As one might expect, this book does not engage in a critique of Ofsted's vision of education, but proffers suggestions on how to meet the high demands of those observing your lessons.

Nonetheless, David Dunn, himself a deputy head, is intent on giving primary teachers a range of activities and techniques which could improve their everyday practice to the level that these 'dreaded' inspectors will adjudge with their highest rating. Each chapter focuses on a different element of being an 'outstanding' teacher, covering all major aspects of classroom practice. Some are sensibly divided into things that could be implemented tomorrow, things which may require until next week, and things to consider for next term. Dunn's aim is to help the reader to become outstanding all of the time, not simply when an observation is looming or underway.

For newer teachers, reading through this book may feel overwhelming. Even though the book is written with a friendly (and sometimes chatty) tone, one might wonder how on earth they can incorporate all of these ideas into their daily working life. The incredibly high expectations currently made of teachers are reinforced by the sheer volume of components that an outstanding lesson must contain.

However, it is apparent that many of the strategies in the book could tighten up your practice without requiring any more time than you already put into your planning and resourcing. For example, sections on questioning, learning objectives and success criteria remind the reader how wording things carefully can make a tremendous impact on one's teaching without any extra expenditure of time or effort.

Many teachers will be familiar with quite a few ideas in the book, but all teachers are likely to find something which might add a nuance to their practice. The book will be useful to new teachers who are coming to terms with what 'outstanding' means within the context of a lesson observation and how they might achieve such a rating. More experienced teachers will also benefit from Dunn's reference point, from which they can review how their own work measures up. After reading the book, all teachers will have a good idea of what they are doing well and what they might do next.

On the whole it is apparent that, if one were to gradually assimilate Dunn's many useful suggestions into their teaching, they would be on the path to becoming an inspiring and excellent teacher. As a result, any primary teacher wishing to improve their own practice would be wise to consider this book.

How do we know it's working? ISBN 9781874709106

...are we nearly there? ISBN 9781874709107

Both published by the Reading International Solidarity Centre (RISC)

Any school that has £40 available and takes seriously its responsibility to prepare pupils for their future should buy these two publications. They have been tried and tested – by teachers participating in the 'Internationalising Learning' professional development courses organised over the past three years by the NUT – and have been judged to be very useful resources.

Children need to grow up 'global' if their life choices and wellbeing are to be maximised. Many schools and teachers recognise the importance of developing global citizenship; but progress is variable in terms of embedding it throughout the curriculum and school ethos. These publications, which are designed for use in primary and secondary schools, promote good practice and enable teachers and schools to evaluate their success in globalising teaching and learning. Both publications provide well-designed resources that can easily be photocopied and are backed up by a CD version.

How do we know it's working? is a toolkit for measuring attitudinal change in global citizenship from early years to KS5. Developed by Reading International Solidarity Centre (RISC), in collaboration with teachers, it provides activities and case studies which encourage an action research approach by teachers in their classrooms. If young people are to thrive then, in addition to appropriate knowledge, they need to learn good questioning and thinking skills and develop values and attitudes which allow them to embrace change and diversity successfully.

Meeting these needs is a challenge for teachers and they must be able to check how effective they are with regard to aspects of teaching and learning that are notoriously difficult to assess – such as the development of critical thinking skills and attitudinal change. This is where *How do we know it's working?* is very helpful. It provides practical ideas and activities which, as well as being engaging and thought-provoking, allow teachers to map the changes in understanding, values and attitudes that result from global learning opportunities they provide.

The toolkit is very adaptable for use with whole classes, groups or individuals. It aims to support substantive lessons but is also a great store of stimulating questions that teachers can dip into either when those 'five minute slots' occur during the teaching day or as a source of ideas for assemblies.

...are we nearly there? Is a self-evaluation framework for schools to use to get started or review their progress so far in embedding global citizenship. As the introduction states "a global dimension can be built into any part of the curriculum, but global citizenship goes further: it is about individuals, their understanding of the world and the actions they can take as global

Richard Stainton

Richard Stainton was a primary teacher and primary head teacher prior to being appointed as a Policy Officer for the NUT and, between 2000 and 2011, coordinating the NUT's CPD Programme.

citizens, locally and globally, to bring about change”.

As such, best practice in teaching global citizenship reaches into every subject area, as well as the ‘hidden curriculum’, and transcends the boundaries between them. The aim must be to get all teachers involved and, to the greatest extent possible, encourage cross-subject, cross-departmental collaborations.

...are we nearly there? provides key questions, backed up by case studies, that all schools teaching pupils in Key Stages 1-5 can use to self-evaluate where they currently stand on the continuum towards becoming a truly ‘global school’ and then plan how to move forward. The framework introduces a simple scoring system which can be applied to any aspect of a school’s work; and it encourages the systematic gathering of evidence and data to give rigour to the self-evaluation process and allow progress to be celebrated.

Teachers attending the aforementioned ‘Internationalising Learning – on the global stage’ NUT CPD courses frequently noticed an increase in enthusiasm and engagement when they introduced more ‘global’ teaching strategies, themes and resources. Their pupils quickly recognised that the knowledge, skills and understandings they were exploring had relevance to the complex world they live in – local to international, actual to virtual, now and into an uncertain future – and their potential to change and, hopefully, improve it. Many teachers remarked on how students’ aspirations and motivation to learn were raised.

No teacher or school should ignore such feedback. Furthermore, delaying the teaching of global citizenship until they are older is not an option. Recent research amongst adults has confirmed how reluctant people are to engage with facts that don’t support their world view. Once narrow perspectives, or prejudices, are established it is very hard to change them even by providing facts which contradict that view of the world.

Teachers and schools seeking to ensure their students are well equipped for their lives in the global 21st-century – not disadvantaged by a limited learning experience – might adopt the motto ‘Global citizenship, don’t leave school without it’. They are also advised to choose the Reading International Solidarity Centre (RISC) as one of their key partners and make regular use of the above and other excellent resources and support that it offers as a Development Education Centre (www.risc.org.uk).



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