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# education review

All change:  
Teaching in the Future



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volume 16 • number 2  
summer 2003

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*Education Review* is produced by the Education and Equal Opportunities Department of the National Union of Teachers.

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# EDUCATION JOURNAL

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# Preface

## “All Change – Teaching in the Future”

**W**hen planned, the theme of this edition of *Education Review* was the “hot topic”, given the Government’s remodeling agenda, the workload proposals and a new contract for teachers. What a difference a few months makes. The *Review* is published at a time of crisis in school funding which threatens to engulf the flagship slogan, “Education, education, education”. *Education Review*, however, continues its tradition of taking the longer view and examines its chosen theme through an outstanding range of articles which get to the heart of the issues facing teachers.

The article by David Miliband, Minister for School Standards, gives an upbeat and optimistic Government view on how school staffing should look post-workload agreement. He urges NUT members to contribute to the consultations on the workload proposals, which is curious given the fact that he and his colleague, Charles Clarke, have sought to exclude the NUT not only from further meetings on workload but from other areas of contact.

The debates about whether unqualified staff can take whole classes on their own are well rehearsed as is the NUT’s opposition. It is sufficient for the purposes of the *Review* that readers will have to wait for an educational justification for the Government’s proposals in this area.

David Miliband’s article emphasises also the importance of continuing professional development, which is one of the main common threads of this edition. The innovative approaches of the teaching of thinking skills in the NUT’s own professional development programme is outlined in the article by Richard Stainton and John Bangs, while Philippa Cordingley, who acts as a consultant to the NUT programme, describes the importance of using CPD which is research-based. Leadership issues, particularly on the collegiate model, are explored by Heather Du Quesnay, Alma Harris and Daniel Muijs and Gloriana Morehead, while Jane Phillips uses her professional experience as a business psychologist to inform a governor’s perspective on the teaching profession.

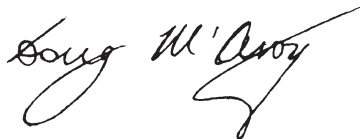
Teaching in the future is inextricably linked with the school curriculum. A number of articles examine what changes need to be made in the curriculum for it to be relevant and motivating for pupils. Brian Edwards returns to a theme explored in a recent edition of *Education Review*, that of creativity, right across the curriculum not just in “the arts”. Alan Wells and Sue Palmer voice their commitment to the acquisition of high standards of the basic skills of

literacy and numeracy, but their observations of practice in many schools has lead them to conclude that these skills need to be taught flexibly and imaginatively rather than “to the test”.

For teachers, the constraints of the assessment regime and its influence on the curriculum is another of the issues of the moment. The Government’s recent adjustment of policy on testing is far too timid. Sean Neill’s analysis of the Union’s recent survey of the effects of testing on pupils and teachers reveals support and confidence in teacher assessment and evidence of the effects of the current testing regime on pupils.

Will Straw makes a powerful case on what needs to be done to widen access to higher education and challenges the Government’s policy of loans and top-up fees for students. Alan McFadden’s long experience at the chalkface calls for a return to a culture of trust in teachers to allow them to treat their pupils as individuals. Martin Allen voices fears about the emergence of a two-tier curriculum with the consequences for equality. Important gender equality issues are explored by Christine Skelton. A disturbing glimpse of how world-wide forces, such as the GATS Agreement, can impact on national education policies is outlined by Sheena Hanley and Ulf Fredriksson.

Kathryn Riley’s article poses the question of whether teaching is a trade or a profession. If there were any doubt, this edition of *Education Review* demonstrates the engagement of the profession with its own future and its commitment to pupils’ learning and development. The article by John Atkins, for example, on the impact of class size on pupil achievement illustrates how any teacher time “saved” by smaller class size is re-invested in supporting individual pupils. Given this commitment, it would be a tragedy if Government policy had the effect of making “All Change” a change for the worse, not for the better.



**Doug McAvoy**

**General Secretary, National Union of Teachers**



# The Government's plans for a modern profession

**Abstract:** *Whilst there are many ways in which the Government is working with teachers the overriding focus of effort and investment is the quality of teaching and the promotion of teaching as a modern, vital, thinking profession. This article examines the key issues that affect the development of modern professionalism and argues that it is only by embracing reform that we can create the teaching profession we need.*

**B**ELIEVE this is a unique time for English education. OFSTED say we have the best generation of teachers ever. International studies applaud our progress. Whatever the difficulties, there is agreement that Government investment since 1997 has delivered real increases in revenue. And there is growing consensus on what matters in the use of that money: leadership, specialism and collaboration, workforce reform, and partnerships beyond the classroom, with parents, businesses and universities.

There are many ways in which Government is working with teachers: promoting creativity in the curriculum, tackling poor behaviour, reforming 14-19 education, transforming the quality of buildings. But the overriding focus of effort and investment is the quality of teaching and the promotion of teaching as a modern, vital, thinking profession. In this article I want to highlight five key parts of this modern professionalism.

The school team, of teachers and support staff, is our focus for every school to give its pupils the support they need. Signatories to the Workforce Agreement worked hard to help us produce a set of changes to teachers' contracts which will tackle the issue of workload, training for teachers and career development opportunities. These proposals are now being consulted upon. I urge you, as the NUT's membership, to give us the benefit of your experience and expertise, to contribute to the consultation and eventually join with us in taking this chance to make once in a lifetime reforms that will be good for you and your pupils.

**David Miliband**

David Miliband is  
Minister for School  
Standards.

All of you want to offer the children in your care an education which promotes creativity, and is vibrant and interesting. But to succeed, you need to have the pressure taken off. The consuming administrative tasks need to be delegated to other members of the team, freeing you to concentrate on teaching.

To work effectively, a team needs to be at full strength. That is why we have recruited 25,000 more teachers since 1997. There are currently 423,000 teachers, more than at any time for 20 years. The teacher vacancy rate is falling - from 1.4 per cent in 2001 to under 1 per cent in 2003 - and falling most in London and the south east. On average, about two thirds of teachers stay for more than 10 years, and about 70 per cent for more than five. Hidden in the January GTC survey was the fact that only 6 per cent of teachers expect to be pursuing a career unrelated to teaching or education in five years' time.

While I recognise that this is good news, there is still a great deal to be done. There are significant challenges in specific subjects such as mathematics, English and science. There are particular problems, sometimes acute, in London. Golden Hellos of £4,000 and the writing-off of student loans in shortage subjects are important steps forward. Housing is also important, and the strategy for London is considering how to address this issue.

## **Pay**

We know we need to compete for the best and we will do so. To make sure teaching is the profession of power, respect and quality that it should be, we must have an appropriate pay system.

Since 1997, there have been some significant improvements. Spending on teachers' pay in maintained schools has increased by over £4bn since 1997.

This enables, among other things, a good honours graduate who joined on point 2 in 1997 (£14,280 pa) to, by normal salary progression, be on over £26,000 pa on 1 September 2003, a real increase of almost 70 per cent. An experienced teacher on the maximum (point 9) in 1997 will have seen their basic pay increase by 13 per cent in real terms since 1997 and by 22 per cent if they have passed the performance threshold.

But a teachers' pay system needs to be flexible and responsive. We do not want to just boost basic pay, but to reward proven performance - which is why the threshold system is important. We need to reflect what life is like in different parts of the country, so we allow for London weighting and encourage schools to offer recruitment and retention allowances where local circumstances require. And finally, the pay system needs to recognise excellence, through advanced skill teachers and the upper pay spine above the threshold. Our solid foundation allows for an adaptable pay system to reflect the different contributions of teachers at all levels.

## Workload

One of the most important areas of reform is in workload. Teachers are too burdened by other tasks to spend enough time on teaching. On average, teachers spend around 18 hours a week on teaching - about one third of their average working week. A further third is spent on marking, preparing lessons and professional development. A final third is devoted to other administrative and pastoral tasks.

This is why the National Agreement has set limits on how long teachers are required to cover for absent colleagues and an overall reduction in hours. It has taken out of teachers' hands 25 tasks, such as chasing absentees, bulk photocopyings, record keeping and filing and ordering supplies which could better be done by support staff. And it will guarantee teachers time for preparation, planning and assessment so that they have time in class to get the best out of students.

But these changes cannot be achieved without greater numbers of support staff. Teachers must become leaders of a team dedicated to higher standards. They should have the support that they need to be leaders, and the responsibility of leaders to organise learning to serve pupils. A team of adults, some in the classroom and others outside, is at their disposal, to respond to individual needs, especially of the most demanding young people, whether they have behavioural difficulties, English as a second language, or gifts and talents to be developed.

I want to emphasise that teachers are the leaders in the classroom, and they are not interchangeable with support staff. But teachers, when they are not doing everything themselves, will be able to lead far more effectively. That is why the draft regulations specify that support staff will work to support a qualified teacher, under the direction of that teacher, and subject to the confidence of the headteacher that they have the right skills.

Teaching assistants are a vital resource if we are to give teachers the freedom they need. We are proposing that higher level teaching assistants (HLTAs), properly trained, take on teaching activities under the direction of a qualified teacher. HLTA posts could be a stepping stone for those who want to go on to achieve qualified teacher status. Already there are some 350,000 people working in a wide range of support staff roles in schools. We are committed to increasing their numbers and expanding their roles in four key areas: administrative, for example secretarial support; pastoral, for example learning mentors; managerial, for example bursars; and pedagogical, with HLTAs actively engaged in the teaching process.

## Performance management

If we increase spending on pay as we have done, and are doing, we must secure the most effective contribution from each teacher, and be capable of recognising and celebrating excellence.

As a step towards this, the performance management system was introduced in September 2000. The majority of schools now have systems in place and performance management is helping heads and teachers discuss how to help every pupil learn, and every teacher improve. It helps to create clear connections between pupil progress and teachers' objectives. And it enables a wider professional dialogue about what is expected, and what support can be expected in return.

In every profession, performance management is about culture not just structure. Done properly, it is a right. Done wrong, it is a drain. I see performance management as something for teachers, and by teachers, recognising excellence, promoting achievement.

## **Training and CPD**

Training and continuing professional development follow on naturally from performance management as we give teachers the tools they need to keep improving.

Initial teacher training is benefiting from shared good practice and innovation. From September 2003, 80 more schools will be awarded training school status, bringing the total to 166. These schools will receive up to £55,000 per year (£45,000 in primaries) to develop and broaden a range of training practices including: ICT use; mentoring; school collaboration; and the training of teaching assistants.

Beyond ITT, training is a vital ingredient for a modern professionalism that delivers for pupils. This year, £600m is targeted on activities where the training and development of existing teachers is central - Standards Fund, CPD strategy, literacy and numeracy strategies, the Key Stage 3 strategy.

Professional development is not a one off. It is the group of teachers discussing how to motivate boys disengaged from learning. It is lesson observation. It is cooperation with the neighbouring physics department which is achieving outstanding results with similar pupils. It is the target-setting for individual pupils, and the clear programmes to help students meet them.

CPD can motivate teachers and support retention as well as directly improve pupil performance. It will be boosted by our workforce reforms as it should include time for planning, collaboration and peer coaching. It should use student performance data as the starting point for class planning. But most importantly it should be underpinned by a whole school culture and commitment to teacher development, with CPD central to school improvement planning.

To make sure that CPD remains at the top of the agenda, this autumn will see the launch of national on-line CPD. This will include focussed training initiatives on literacy, numeracy and Key Stage 3 - an important aid to pupil performance. Also by September, the National College for School Leadership

will provide “Leading from the Middle”, a training programme for teachers with subject or specialist leadership responsibilities. This will develop leadership skills and peer supported learning.

By 2005/6, we want every new teacher to have early professional development. This will provide five years of structured training based on individual needs.

## Leadership

Leadership is a vital part of our reforms, and good leadership will instil high expectations and encourage innovation. When I say leadership, I do not only mean headteachers. Half the teaching force gets management allowances. Deputies, assistants, year heads and subject heads all have a role to play.

Leadership is about communicating a clear vision; motivating and inspiring staff; building teams and team skills; understanding and practicing pedagogic leadership; developing the whole school as a learning community; and brokering partnerships with parents and the wider community.

In 1,400 secondary schools, dedicated money is available through the Leadership Incentive Grant to raise the quality of leadership. For every school, the NCSL is a new resource. Now is our chance to make a difference.

Of course there remain big challenges. For example, despite rising spending, schools face difficult choices about how to match extra spending with extra demands. Let me address this directly:

First, there are special circumstances this year. Pension increases, the devolution of ringfenced grants into the mainstream funding system, and a simpler funding formula are right in themselves but can combine to put pressure on budgets. We have tried to build in proper transitional protection, and will study carefully returns from LEAs to learn any lessons.

Second, it is vital that schools compare like with like. So before making any decisions schools should ensure that all funding streams, including the Standards Fund distributed via LEAs, are included in comparisons of year-on-year changes in resources. It is also important that Schools Forums address themselves to that part of the schools budget that is not devolved to schools.

Third, it is important to look at how we fund schools across three years. Just as we have reviewed the funding formula and moved to a three year funding base, so it is important at local level that LEA funding formulae are helpful, and support schools in thinking about their funding position over three years.

I believe that it is only by embracing reform that we can create the profession we need - a modern profession capable of fulfilling the potential of all young people; not more initiatives but the coherence and confidence to plan change and see it through. That is our pledge to you. I look forward to working with you to see it through. ■

# Getting the right literacy and numeracy skills for the 21st century

## Alan Wells

A relative school failure, Alan Wells was a late entrant to teaching and taught in mainstream and special schools in East London. He has been the Director of the Basic Skills Agency since 1980 and has a strong commitment to the state education system.

**Abstract:** *Despite improvements in literacy and numeracy standards, children continue to leave primary school with inadequate basic skills. Moreover, standards of literacy and numeracy in secondary schools are proving more difficult to shift. In this article Alan Wells draws on his visits to more than 1,000 schools to suggest how teachers might raise standards further. He argues that we need to adopt a reform agenda that builds on the best aspects of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and gets rid of the worst.*

**T**HIS article is not based on substantial research so don't look for long lists of references to academic journals and papers. It is based on my visits to more than 1,000 schools in the last three years. I hope that this means that my suggestions about how teachers might continue to raise standards of literacy and numeracy in the next decades are well grounded in school and classroom reality. Most of my visits to schools have been to present our Quality Mark so the schools I have visited are not necessarily a representative sample. However, I have been to small schools, village schools, schools where children are well-fed and well-clothed, schools where children are not so fortunate and schools with lots of different language groups among the pupils. I have been to schools in the most appalling buildings and schools where the building "works" for the staff and pupils. I have been to nursery schools, infant schools, junior schools, primary schools, secondary schools and special schools. I have been to schools in Northumberland and schools in Cornwall. What I suggest is my interpretation of the views teachers have expressed to me. I also happen to support them.

I believe, as do most teachers, that standards are improving. Even just using SATs results as a measure of literacy and numeracy standards, it is clear that standards have risen in recent years. Children in primary schools are doing better and learning skills earlier than their predecessors. That is not to say that standards are good enough and certainly a minority of children continue to leave primary schools with basic skills that do not equip them for the more demanding secondary curriculum. Moreover, standards of literacy and numeracy in secondary schools are proving more difficult to shift.

The improvement in literacy and numeracy standards in primary schools has been due largely to the efforts of teachers and others who work in school. Of course, the framework provided by the National Literacy and the National Numeracy Strategies has helped, particularly the training provided for teachers. However, it is the daily skilled teaching in classrooms up and down the country that has improved standards. If it were the National Strategies alone, it would be difficult to explain why standards at Key Stage 2 in literacy have risen from a lower base to a higher point in Wales than in England. Wales does not have the National Strategies used in England and does not have the almost compulsory “literacy hour”. However, I think that the future will need a different approach; no less rigorous but different.

## **...the first reform I would suggest is to abolish league tables of schools based on SATs results.**

Despite the progress that has been made in the last few years, we know that more will need to be achieved in the future. If only 1 in 5 children leave primary schools with inadequate basic skills, it is almost certain that the number of adults with poor literacy and numeracy will remain at best static and at worst increase. Reducing this 20 per cent of children who struggle will be very difficult. They will include children with very real emotional problems; children who have done extremely well to have got from Level 2 to Level 3; children who have been through every “catch up” additional strategy going and yet have failed to acquire the literacy and numeracy skills most take for granted.

Exhortation from government alone will not make the difference that will need to be made. So we need to adopt a reform agenda that builds on the best of the past but admits that we did not get everything right in our attempt to raise standards. I am not suggesting a return to the past - anyone suggesting the need for reform is usually accused of wanting to return to the past - but an approach that builds on the best aspects of the national strategies and gets rid of the worst.

## Seeing teachers as part of the solution not part of the problem

The first and, in my view, most important aspect of this reform agenda is to make teachers feel part of the solution, not part of the problem. In my experience too many teachers in England feel resigned to being blamed when targets are not reached and praised when an election is coming up. They feel cynical about the motives of those of us working nationally and think that few of us understand the pressures they face, the lack of time they have for reflection and the reality of daily life in a school. They find it difficult to know what is the truth and what is merely “spin”.

Teachers are often cynical but rarely lacking in dedication to do the best for the children they teach. However, many feel that the National Strategies were “done to them”. They feel little attachment to imposed targets that did not involve their knowledge of the realities for their school and their children. They also struggle to understand how narrow literacy and numeracy targets can be used in league tables to assess the worth or otherwise of their school. A teacher I met recently compared assessing the value of a school by SATs results as the equivalent of assessing restaurants by the quality of one of the “starters”!

## Abolish league tables

So the first reform I would suggest is to abolish league tables of schools based on SATs results. Some teachers would suggest reforming league tables, perhaps by using wider criteria but most I’ve met think it would be better if we abolished league tables completely and admitted that we were wrong to use league tables to judge the value of schools.

I believe that it would be better to move to a system of minimum standards for all schools to meet. Minimum standards that were not only about simplistic outputs but also included work with parents, the wider school curriculum and the social and emotional skills of children developed by schools. There is no reason why some schools should not be exemplars for others because they far exceed these minimum standards. However, what is of greater importance is for all parents to know that their child’s school meets a minimum standard not that the school they cannot get their child into is “top of a league table”.

## Re-fashion targets

I know it is becoming almost fashionable to suggest that targets should be abandoned entirely. I don’t go along with this and I haven’t found many teachers intrinsically against targets. After all teachers have used targets with individual children and groups of children for many years. What would be welcome is a better way of developing and using targets. Targets need to be rather more “bottom up” rather than “top down” so good targets should be devised from the knowledge and experience of teachers. Of course, targets



need to be challenging and teachers need to be able to justify how they have reached a particular target. However, that is what good LEA advisers do all of the time.

Targets need to be demanding and stretching; however, the fear of being seen as a failing teacher for not meeting targets encourages the setting of undemanding targets. So reform needs to remove the “fear factor”. We also need targets that “include” not targets that “exclude”. At present if a child works really hard, is taught exceptionally well and progresses from Level 2 to Level 3 at Key Stage 2, they don’t count. This can’t be right. “Profile” or “points score” targets would be far better and would make it clear that all children count not just those that get to the magical Level 4.

## **Poverty is not an excuse for poor teaching but it is a reason why good teaching doesn’t always get reflected in good learning.**

Target “bands” would also be a real improvement on single figure targets. Poverty isn’t an excuse for poor teaching but it is a reason why good teaching doesn’t always get reflected in good learning. Every teacher knows that cohorts make a difference and that circumstances outside of the influence of the school have an impact on attainment. At present if a school gets 80 per cent Level 4 at Key Stage 2 one year and this slips to say 75 per cent the next year the only conclusion can be that the quality of teaching has deteriorated. Target “bands” would acknowledge the influence of cohorts without reducing the ambition to meet targets.

### **Link inspection and advice**

Most teachers have a mixed view of OFSTED inspection. Some of this comes down to the quality of the individual inspection team they have experienced. Some negative feelings come down to “grapevine” horror stories about inspection. However, I’ve heard more positive stories about inspection teams than negative, particularly in the last year or two. Many teachers, although fearful of the process, have found inspection teams supportive and encouraging. Just as importantly inspection has often encouraged poor headteachers and teachers to improve or, where this is not possible, to move out of teaching.

However, I think that there needs to be a closer link between inspection and advice. This happens in other countries and there is no reason why inspection should be separated from advice and help to improve. This means a more formal link between inspection teams and LEA advisers, perhaps through “seconding” LEA advisers to inspection teams so that they can provide the support and advice a school needs to improve when the inspection is over.

## **Improve the coherence of early years education**

I have two other areas where action is needed. First, almost every headteacher I have met thinks that more and more young children are starting school with poor speaking and listening skills and that this delays their acquisition of other basic skills. Most think more work needs to be done with parents and that early years education has to be more coherent than at present. Despite intervention in the form of targeted programmes and initiatives in the early years, opportunity for early education is still unevenly spread and limited. Although some private childcare provision is excellent, too much is of relatively poor quality with childminding taking precedence over learning and developing.

## **Reduce the number of new initiatives**

Headteachers are also tired of endless new initiatives. Frankly it is difficult to keep up with the acronyms let alone what the aims of the different initiatives are. Even worse are the constant short-term funding streams for this initiative or that. Many started as innovatory programmes but have turned into “core” programmes funded through uncertainty. We need a radical reduction in new initiatives and short-term funding streams in the next few years.

Finally, we need to encourage creativity and release the energies of teachers to help to solve problems. I’m not suggesting a “laissez-faire” approach with little accountability or “experimenting on our children”. However, teaching is about creativity; about helping children and young people to solve problems rather than to be defeated by them. Too much has been done to turn teachers into mere technicians and we need to restore the balance. Teachers need time because the intensity of teaching means little time for reflection and study. The Government is introducing measures to provide more “release” time for teachers and this is long over-due.

My visits to schools have shown me why centralist solutions to complex problems can only achieve so much. We need to release the energy and creativity of teachers and others working in schools to make further progress in raising standards. If we do not we will have neglected the single best resource we have, the skills, talent and commitment of our educators. ■

# Class sizes and teacher workload: teachers' views

**Abstract:** *Whilst much research has drawn on teachers' perceptions of how variations in class size affect their pupils' attainment and achievement, there has been less investigation of how teachers' own workloads vary with the sizes of the classes they teach. This article examines the complex relationship between the amount of time teachers spend on planning, preparation and assessment and the sizes of the classes they teach. It concludes that smaller class sizes bring more direct benefits to pupils rather than to teachers.*

**T**here has long been interest in the relationship between the size of classes in primary and secondary schools and the progress children make in them. Many of us were taught in primary classes of 40 or more, but taught (or observed in) classes nearer 30 when we entered the teaching profession only a few years later. I for one was not aware at the time of the massive extra investment in primary education that this change represented. Nor did the debate stop then: research has continued into the effects of class size on pupils' progress, and does so to this day.<sup>1</sup>

Much of this research has drawn on teachers' perceptions of how variations in class size affect their pupils' attainment and achievement (though objective measures have been used as well). But there has been less investigation of how teachers' own workloads vary with the sizes of the classes they teach.

The opportunity to carry out just such an investigation occurred in late 2002. Jointly with two colleagues - David Carter and Mike Nichol - I had spent much of 2002 researching teacher workload issues as part of the National Union of Teachers' (NUT) ongoing support for an entitlement to guaranteed preparation time for classroom teachers. It became clear to the NUT, and to us, that work on the relationship between the amount of time

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teachers spent on planning, preparation and assessment (“PPA”) and the sizes of the classes they taught would further support the NUT’s - and the teachers’ - case for this guaranteed time.

Accordingly, during the autumn of 2002 my two colleagues and I visited a sample of 30 primary, secondary and special schools throughout the UK to talk to teachers, individually and in groups, about what impact their class sizes had on their workload, and in particular on their PPA time.<sup>2</sup> Their answers have shed some new light on class size issues, and add to the corpus of work on the subject.

### **Class sizes**

First of all, it was interesting that - with the possible exception of the London schools in our sample - class sizes no longer vary very much, either between phases (primary, secondary) or by subject.

In primary schools, the Key Stage 1 limit of 30, coupled with general pressure on resources, means that almost all classes are in the 28 to 30 range. Few schools reorganise their classes for Key Stage 2. Indeed, most primary schools (except the smallest) “model” their budgets around classes of exactly 30 and run into financial difficulties when they undershoot this figure.

## **Teachers argue that the amount they “should” do is infinite, and they spend all the time they can on it before family tasks, other responsibilities or just plain tiredness take over.**

It is worth noting that this double constraint (class size limits on the one hand, and financial limits on the other) poses particular difficulties for one group of primary schools - those of around 300-400 pupils. These schools are too big to qualify for “small school” support, so have to be organised around teaching groups of 30. As a result, they hover uneasily between one and a half and two forms of entry. At one and a half forms of entry, the 30 limit is difficult to meet - and mixed age classes of 30 or more (even in Key Stage 2) are not the easiest. At two forms of entry, there are not enough pupils per class and the budget does not balance. As a result, the classroom and financial organisation of these schools tends to be “lean”, and tends to change from year to year. This puts particular pressure on teachers, and this pressure shows up in increased PPA loading (and no doubt in many other factors too). The organisation of primary schools of 300 or so has not, as far as we are aware, been the subject of any specific national research to date. Perhaps it should be.

In secondary schools, again, the most usual class size target was around 30. In contrast to primary schools, variations from this target were deliberate

rather than forced by pupil demographics. Small classes are found in practical subjects (for health and safety reasons), and where groups of less able pupils are taught together. In both cases, teachers acknowledged that these small classes were a “cost” that had to be met from elsewhere. But teachers we interviewed were generally happy to pay this cost if it meant that their more difficult classes, or those requiring more supervision in practical subjects, could be kept small.

### **Class size and workload generally**

Despite these tendencies for class sizes in both primary and secondary schools to move towards 30, there were sufficient (small) differences in individual class sizes for us to be able to investigate teachers’ perceptions of their effects. The immediate - and perhaps surprising - outcome of our investigation is that teachers do not believe their PPA time varies much by class size. The general explanation seems to be that the work required is limitless, and that teachers spend as much time on PPA as they can afford to. Teachers argue that the amount they “should” do is infinite, and they spend all the time they can on it before family tasks, other responsibilities or just plain tiredness take over.

However, we pushed our interviewees to consider planning, preparation, and assessment separately - even though by their own admission they did not always think of the “out of class work” they did in this way. The links that emerged between class size and each of these three components of PPA were neither simple nor straightforward.

### **Planning**

Prima facie, it might appear that planning is a “whole class” activity, independent of the number of participants in the class. Sometimes it is, but matters are not always that simple.

Teachers commented that the time taken to plan a lesson (or set of lessons) varied considerably, but not according to the number of pupils in a class. Rather, it varied by the diversity of pupil ability and attainment in the class, and therefore the degree of differentiation needed. This can produce a counter-intuitive effect. Where schools have the resources to do so, they arrange for the most diverse pupils - usually the less able - to be taught in smaller classes. This means that empirically it can take longer to plan for smaller classes than for larger, more homogeneous ones.

### **Preparation**

By no means all the teachers we interviewed were able to draw a clear distinction between planning and preparation. In fact, we as interviewers were usually asked what definition we ourselves would use. To the extent that as we and our interviewees were able jointly to draw up a distinction; planning

seems to refer to the overall purposes and objectives of a series of lessons while preparation involves getting together the actual physical resources needed to deliver the next lesson in the series.

For most areas of study, and for most age groups, preparing the resources for a lesson was not believed to vary particularly by class size. Choosing from the resources available, and making them ready for pupils to use, was a task that had to be done and it did not much matter how many pupils had to be prepared for.

There were however some exceptions. Where practical lessons required the preparation of “experimental” equipment for pupil or group use, then having a smaller class could significantly reduce the time needed for preparation. For these practical lessons, “getting the equipment ready” was often the single largest PPA task, so this was a highly significant effect. (More experienced teachers said that it was noticeable how the health and safety driven reductions in class size for practical subjects had reduced set-up time.)

Primary teachers also pointed out that for younger pupils many more lessons are “practical” in this sense, and require “hand-preparation” of materials for individual pupils. Although you can photocopy 30 worksheets in the same time as it takes to photocopy 20, laminating them on card is not nearly such an automatic process. The preparation time for these materials does then indeed vary by class size - especially when the curriculum has changed since last year and you cannot use last year’s again.

Finally, where classes were differentiated into groups with differential learning objectives then different materials might need to be prepared for different groups. Just as before, this can imply more preparation time for smaller classes of pupils. (There was also the suggestion that preparation needs to be “tighter” where the pupils are likely to be more disruptive - again this can be associated with smaller classes.)

## **Assessment**

One might think that with assessment one was on more straightforward ground. Surely the time spent on assessment (“marking and recording”, as it was previously called) must be proportionate to the size of the class?

There is clearly an effect, and teachers commented on the psychological difference between picking up a set of 24 books (say) to take home and mark, compared to one of 30. Teachers of Key Stage 2, and secondary teachers, particularly referred to this. In addition, in a smaller class it is more likely that some of the informal marking required can take place in the classroom, further lightening the load of out-of-class work.

But think back to the “infinite task” argument made earlier. Commonly, teachers said that one of the advantages of a smaller group was that they could spend longer marking each book. The saving of assessment time linked with

smaller classes is therefore not obvious. In addition where smaller classes were made up of less able pupils the time spent “marking” each pupil’s work - in practice, helping the pupil get the most out of it - could extend significantly.

Secondary teachers were, as might be expected, adamant that the greatest factor impacting on assessment time was the subject they taught, and within this the age range taught too. Here - for example in the marking of Key Stage 4 English assignments - class size could have a real effect. Some of our interviewees argued (not, incidentally, without opposition from colleagues) that certain subjects in secondary schools should qualify for smaller classes on “marking load” grounds just as some qualified through health and safety concerns over practical experiments.<sup>3</sup>

## Other tasks

Although discussions with our interviewees were focussed on PPA, the teachers we spoke to pointed to other, less frequent but still demanding, tasks that took their time, and that related to the numbers of pupils they taught.

Firstly, the amount of time spent on reporting to parents varied according to the number of pupils taught. For primary colleagues, this was largely a function of class size; for secondary colleagues, however, the number of classes taught was also a critical factor. Some teachers come into contact with far more pupils than others: although they may see any particular pupil for less time in the week, the reports they are expected to give are often just as detailed.

Secondly, the aftermath of disruptive behaviour by pupils increasingly involves record keeping, consultation with colleagues, and other out-of-class activity. Again, the amount of time teachers spend on this activity will vary according to the number of pupils with whom they come into contact during a typical week.

Finally, teachers pointed out that they were becoming increasingly involved in the out-of-class life of their pupils. Having more pupils means having more to do in this area. Even on parents’ evenings, seeing 30 sets of parents seems to take significantly longer than seeing 26. Similarly involvement with other agencies on pupil welfare or child protection can come round more often if one has more pupils in one’s class.

## Conclusion

Our research did indeed identify relationships between teachers’ PPA time and the sizes of the classes they teach. The strongest relationships were, as might be expected, to do with marking loads. These particularly impacted on those who taught pupils in the later years of primary education, and on secondary teachers of the traditional “heavy marking” subjects. Some teachers of these subjects do (as we have seen) argue that perhaps class sizes should be reduced to compensate for the marking load.

However, beyond this broad (and not unexpected) conclusion, matters become more complex. Many teachers' experience of small classes is related either to mixed age classes in primary schools or to classes in secondary schools that are small for a purpose - usually to reflect the additional educational needs of their pupils. Often these small classes can require more PPA time than a more "standard" class of 30.

So the more general conclusion reached by teachers - and strongly endorsed by our interview sample - is that small classes are of most direct benefit to pupils, and not necessarily to them. This is a conclusion that teachers shared with the recent report of the PISA project commissioned by the OECD, which states that:

"Differences in student-teaching staff ratios ranging from 10 to 25 are associated with relatively small effects [on the quality of learning]. However, as the student-teaching staff ratio rises above 25 there is a continuous decline in school performance..."<sup>4</sup>

Teachers' support for small classes - which was consistent throughout our interview sample - was not aimed at reducing their own workload. Instead, it was aimed at securing the improvements that small classes bring about for pupils. Any reductions in PPA time that smaller classes do bring are, as we have seen, most likely to be reinvested in further supporting pupils' learning in any case. ■

*John Atkins would like to acknowledge the support and collaboration of David Carter, Mike Nichol and the NUT Education and Equal Opportunities Department in the research projects on which this article is based. All opinions expressed here are his own.*

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# Redefining the profession - teachers with attitude

**Abstract:** *“Is teaching a trade or is it a profession?” This is a question which governments ask around the globe. Drawing on a broad-based GTC study, “What does it take to be a good teacher in the 21st century?” this article examines views about the skills and attributes needed to meet the challenges of the 21st century and asks whether the current policy climate is conducive to their development.*

## **Introduction: teaching today - a trade or a profession?**

Towards the end of the 1939-45 war, Arnold McNair was given the task by the Churchill Government of looking at the supply, recruitment and training of teachers. The McNair Report argued that if the country was to create a “wise democracy” in the post-Hitler world, then people of the highest calibre need to be recruited to teaching. Teachers would have to be able to interpret the meaning of complex changes and enable young people to be able to discriminate and not be “an easy prey to sensations and cheap appeals.”<sup>1,2</sup> The Report concluded that the teaching profession had a strong social purpose and needed to be at the heart of the post-war reconstruction of society: a conclusion which has a strong contemporary relevance.

The major challenge facing teachers today is how to prepare our young people - the citizens of tomorrow - for an increasingly uncertain and technologically orientated world. But what does that mean in practice, in a context in which teachers work alongside a number of other paraprofessionals, and children - and their parents - are more questioning of their rights than in the past?<sup>3</sup> Is teaching today a trade (a skilled technical occupation) or a

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profession (requiring high standards and ongoing professional development)?

Professions probably have a number of characteristics which include a concept of social purpose and social obligation, underpinned by an ethical foundation. They have a degree of autonomy, regulate themselves and discipline their members. They also have strong connections with a body of academic knowledge which links theory to practice, and a notion of professional practice characterised by the ability to draw on that knowledge base to make decisions. Exercising judgment and upholding agreed standards are at the centre of what it means to be a professional and implies an ability to deal with complexity and uncertainty.<sup>4,2</sup>

Teaching today has a clear social purpose. It has strong academic links and theoretical underpinnings. Aspiring teachers are expected to demonstrate deep understanding of their specialist subject areas. However, the extent to which teachers are trusted to make decisions has been challenged over recent years. But is today's Government learning to trust teachers again, or are they still seen as left-wing villains of the piece, à la William Tyndale School? <sup>2</sup> What skills and attributes will teachers need to meet the challenges of the 21st century? Are they up to those challenges? These were some of the questions which I had in mind when I began the study for the General Teaching Council, What does it take to be a good teacher in the 21st century?

## How do teachers view the change agenda?

The study involved over 150 teachers, support staff, parents (many also governors), pupils and headteachers from different parts of the country. I wanted to find out how teachers saw themselves and where they thought the profession was going. Education reforms have always come in waves but for teachers today, the reform carousel seems to spin ever faster. To a large degree, the reforms which teachers in England have experienced over recent decades have been centrally directed, requiring uniform responses to improvement. The opportunities for practitioners to engage with the reform agenda or to develop their own responses to contemporary education challenges have been limited, creating frustration amongst many teachers and no doubt contributing to the current teacher recruitment crisis.

In carrying out the study, I tried to take some contemporary snapshots of those on the carousel. Looking back, teachers saw a “blame and shame” culture, elements of which were still in place. While today's climate was still seen as restrictive and overly competitive in ways that discourage cooperation, the picture was far from bleak.

Teachers who participated in the workshops in the study said that they had agreed to do so because they wanted to contribute to the debate about the future of the teaching profession. Most, even the newer teachers, had felt demotivated at some point, “I was a mature student and had had a life

previously, but after my first year I felt demoralised and locked in”, a new teacher commented. “I am concerned that teachers are losing their autonomy and creativity”, one experienced special needs teacher wrote. “National initiatives need to be evaluated in terms of their impact on the profession”.

Broadly speaking, the teachers I met fell into two distinctive groups which I called “glow-worms” and “skylarks”.

## The glow-worms

### ***Locked into the painting by numbers approach to teaching***

Many of the “glow-worms” are disheartened, weighed down by their concerns about what the next reform might be, and the impact it will have on them, and the children they teach. The glow-worms tend to find it difficult to think beyond the confines of their classroom to what teachers might need to be, and do, in the future.

Nevertheless, the “glow” of teaching is still there, however dimly lit and however intermittent. Even the most discouraged can identify developments which have motivated and energised them. By and large these are innovatory practices, such as new interactive approaches to teaching and learning (and the technological tools which support this eg white board technology). All of these help change the locus of power within the classroom and enable children to communicate more effectively.

The glow-worms are caught up in what was described as, “the painting by numbers approach to teaching”. Locked into a dependency culture by prescriptive reforms, they are cautious and lack spontaneity, finding it difficult to see how they can take responsibility for their own professionalism. To “glow” again, this group will need to be fanned and nurtured.

## The skylarks

### ***How do you get teachers to fly when their wings have been clipped?***

The “skylarks” recognise some of the difficulties created by the centralised reform process. However, they seem less constrained, and less likely to see themselves as prisoners of the Government’s agenda than the “glow-worms”.

“skylarks” talk about the need to put the “sparkle” back into teaching by - amongst other things - having opportunities to undertake sabbaticals and secondments; participating in international and professional exchange programmes; sharing good practice with colleagues in other schools. This culture of “professional learning” seems distinctively different from the “CPD through courses” model typically available to teachers.

The “skylarks” already know how to sing on their own and the language they use is one of “pleasure” and fun. Reclaiming the “pleasure” of teaching is strongly linked to a sense of their own professionalism. It is about creativity and radicalism. To release them for the future, the “skylarks” need time and space to develop their professionalism, then they will soar.

## What do teachers think make a good teacher?

Both the “glow-worms” and “skylarks” were keener to talk about how things could be different, than about the wearisome constraints which held them back. They were keen to talk about what motivated them and what enabled them to develop their skills as professionals. Many, particularly the “skylarks”, saw themselves as reclaiming their professionalism by:

- Exercising their professional autonomy, by using “the tools for liberation”;
- Finding creative ways to develop their professional learning through collaboration, networks, development and research;
- Taking ownership of policies, by understanding their origins and roots; and
- Being resourceful and “teaching beyond the script”.

## Exercising professional autonomy

Many of the teachers felt liberated when they could exercise their professional autonomy and take more control over the teaching and learning environment in ways they thought could make a difference to children’s lives. They were concerned about the limitations of the national examination system, “Pupils are overwhelmed by hoops (i.e. testing) - they are learning bits of the syllabus but don’t see the whole picture”. However, where teachers could use assessment data as part of a formative process, it became a tool for liberation, and an activity in which support staff could play a key role (see Box A).

Teachers were also excited by finding ways of dealing with underachieving pupils and by finding innovative ways of managing their time more effectively, so that they do not become swamped by day to day pressures. Opportunities to draw on recent developments in learning theories, particularly around “Accelerated Learning” also generated much enthusiasm and energy. They enabled both teachers and pupils to see the big picture and to engage in challenging and critical reflection.

## Creative ways of professional learning

Many teachers feel isolated. Opportunities to learn from others (both nationally and internationally) help reduce that isolation and open new

### Box A Examples of what excites teachers

- As a Subject Leader of Science, I am involved in the use of targets to raise standards in both Key Stages 3 and 4. I am very interested in seeing how we can use prior attainment to set challenging targets for our pupils. How that prior attainment is measured is not that important. What is important is that having set these targets in discussion with pupils, we then decide how we (the pupil and teacher) go about achieving (them). This should then have a direct effect on the teaching and learning.
- Over the last two years I have been working towards a whole school approach to catering for the needs of the more able children in the school. However, by its very nature, my work has entailed raising expectations of all of the children in the school. Using “Excellence in the Cities” and advice from NACE as a basis, we now have a system of identification for able children that is broad in its horizons and so is able to “catch” those with abilities that are hidden by, for example: peer pressure, underachievement, learning/behaviour difficulties or home background. One positive benefit to the whole school has been the use of learning scripts and TASC (Thinking Actively in a Social Context – Belle Wallace) across the whole ability range in order to encourage all children to take a much more active role in their own learning.

## **Education reforms have always come in waves but for teachers today, the reform carousel seems to spin ever faster.**

horizons. Sabbaticals, Best Practice Research Scholarships, study tours, post-graduate courses, access to programmes which provide the skills for school self-evaluation and peer observation and review are, in the views of the teachers I met, important ways of “recapturing jaded teachers”. “Visiting other schools could bring back the sparkle” and enable teachers to look at issues in fresh ways. “Much more could be done to encourage cross-phase learning”.

Teachers were also enthusiastic about time and opportunities for professional learning gained through:

- Using research to explore issues which were of central relevance to the children they taught, for example about inclusion;
- Access to focused seminars, websites, structured formal and informal networking (“Within the working day and not always evenings please!”) and opportunities to share ideas, research and training in staff meetings (“I think we could use staff training days much better”); and
- Bringing children and teachers together from other countries and contexts (by school exchanges, use of language assistants).

Teachers needed to be able to develop their own research and investigative skills, in order to develop these in children. International exchanges helped create rich and invigorating opportunities for the interchange of ideas and friendships across the globe for pupils and teachers alike: an important means of widening international understanding.

### **Taking ownership of policies**

There was much discussion around confidence, risk-taking and professional learning. This was connected to the pace of change, the roll-out of initiatives, and consultation and engagement with the profession about the theories, ideologies and research-based evidence which underpin national strategies and initiatives. For example, one teacher explained that she had had confidence in herself to innovate and take risks within the literacy strategy because she had studied it. Having understood its underlying principles, she had felt able to defend her own innovative and creative practices within the structure of the national strategy. However, she had not had the same opportunities to think and reflect about the numeracy strategy, and as a consequence, did not have the confidence to be flexible.

The bedrock of successful innovation is time, flexibility and the ability to take risks. Understanding the foundations of policies can unlock dependency and unleash creativity, creating the freedom of manoeuvre and confidence to take risks which will be needed even more in the future. Teachers want to be involved in developing policies, not just in delivering them.

### **Being resourceful and “teaching beyond the script”**

A number of teachers suggested that passivity has become a characteristic feature of many classrooms and that teachers have become good at delivering the “script”. This was reflected in a growing tendency for teachers to say to their senior colleagues, “Tell me what you want me to do” without necessarily examining an issue in any depth and was mirrored in the classroom when pupils said, “Tell me what I need to know”. Teachers in the study were concerned about this closed approach and thought it important to develop pupils’ critical thinking skills - the scaffolding for which needed to be put in place in the early/primary years.

Being resourceful and “teaching beyond the script” was about relationships. It was also about mutual respect, recognition and encouragement which enabled teachers to “gain their self-assurance back” and be “confident to be flexible”. Teachers sought to “find the space between the cracks”, to do things differently at particular times in the school year (before SATs), and at particular stages in their journey through school (such as year 6). The “space between the cracks” was also to be found in post-examination periods, or in foundation subjects, where there was more freedom to enjoy the subject. It was in “Golden Hours” on a Friday afternoon, where, unfettered by the National Curriculum and SATs, teachers could “talk to children and let them chose what they wanted”.

### **Skills for the 21st century**

Looking to the future, the teachers, headteachers, pupils, parents and support staff who took part in the study emphasised the skills and attitudes required rather than the knowledge of subject matter. Teachers needed to be:

- Enthusiastic and energetic;
- Flexible and adaptable;
- Open and encouraging in their approach;
- Confident and firm;
- Creative, imaginative and divergent in their thinking; and
- Resilient, flexible and innovative.

They also needed to have:

- A sense of humour;

- Emotional intelligence (i.e. the ability to review relationships and to “self-evaluate”);
- An excitement for teaching; and
- A willingness to recognise the role of other adults in developing children as learners.

The teachers in this study aspired to be “teachers with attitude”. This is a particular kind of attitude which is challenging and enquiring and based on relationships of mutual respect and trust. It has its roots in strong ethical and moral foundations and relies on professional learning. The attitude, focus and approach of “teachers with attitude” are shown in Diagram 1.

**Diagram 1: Redefining Professionalism - Teachers with Attitude!**

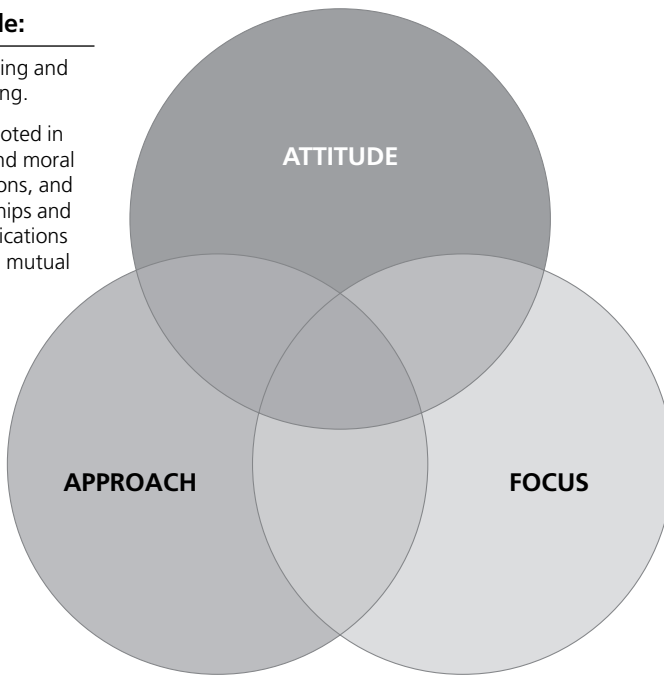
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**Attitude:**

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Questioning and challenging.

Values rooted in ethical and moral foundations, and relationships and communications based on mutual trust and respect



**Approach:**

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Takes responsibility for own professional learning and is creative, resilient and resourceful, open to new ideas and willing to teach ‘beyond the script’

**Focus:**

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Centres on the child and self as learners, and draws on a range of learning styles and approaches, and divergent thinking, to maximize learning

## Concluding thoughts

Being a “teacher with attitude” is about working to equip young people to face the challenges of modern society. Our young people will need to be able to assess the relevance of a vast array of facts and information; discriminate between competing ideologies; and relate to each other in an increasingly fragmented, although globalised world.<sup>5</sup>

But to return to some of the earlier questions at the core of the study - Are teachers up to those challenges? And is the policy climate conducive to helping them meet those challenges? For both “glow-worms” and “skylarks”, their future development is not just about individual motivation, or innate qualities. The national and local policy environments, as well as the local school context, make a considerable difference to their ability as a teacher to be good and fully effective. This is to do with the ways in which changes are introduced, as well as the extent to which reforms are mandated, or prescribed. Government attitudes to teachers and teaching will continue to shape the climate, the supply of teachers and the quality of those teachers.

English education is at a cross-roads. Over many years, teachers have experienced a range of reforms and initiatives; some have been more successful than others. In general, practitioners have had limited opportunities to engage with the reform agenda, or to identify the challenges ahead. This has created frustration amongst many teachers and contributed to the teacher recruitment crisis. However, something new is emerging. As this study has demonstrated, when teachers have the opportunity to engage in the debate, they have much to say. When they can find “the space between the cracks,” ideas and innovations are bubbling up. Something too appears to be happening at Government level where there is more receptiveness to teachers’ views about how to reform professional development.

What is needed now is a leap of faith: on the part of Government that the teaching profession is to be trusted, and on the part of teachers that they need to take responsibility for their own professionalism. It is this leap of faith which will help create a robust model of the teaching profession which is also capable of evolving to meet new challenges. Implicit within this are a number of critical elements: how to construct a model which emphasises the role of teachers as members of a professional community in which they - as well as their pupils - are learners, constantly reflecting and developing; how to build a good and effective teaching force able to function in a range of settings and contexts; and how to create a profession which can respond to the moral ambiguities and ethical tensions of a globalised world, as well as the needs of the Knowledge Society. ■



### *Acknowledgements and contact information*

*I would like to thank Dr Jim Docking, David Rowles, Ron Letch and GTC staff for their support for this study.*

*If you have any comments and reflections about the project, please do get in contact with me as follows: London Leadership Centre, Institute of Education, 10 Woburn Square, WC1H 0NS. Email [k.riley@ioe.ac.uk](mailto:k.riley@ioe.ac.uk)*

### *How to find out more about the study*

*You can read more about findings from the study in the Summer 2003 edition of Leading Edge (Journal of the London Leadership Centre) and by visiting the GTC web-site at [www.gtce.org.uk/TeachersWithAttitude](http://www.gtce.org.uk/TeachersWithAttitude)*

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# From pioneers to champions

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## John Bangs

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**Abstract:** *This is a teachers' success story, which provides important lessons about how changes in teaching and learning can be promoted and supported effectively. It also shows how the "hallmarks" agreed at the start of the NUT's pilot professional development programme have proved themselves suitable to remain the guiding principles to underpin the long-term CPD Programme now offered by the NUT to all teachers.*

**T**HE NUT chose "teaching thinking skills" to launch its pilot programme in January 2000. An invitation went to members in its Northern Region for pairs of teachers to apply for scholarships to investigate the effects of teaching thinking skills in their classrooms.

To focus on thinking skills was a risk. Teachers were already facing excessive workloads. There could be no certainty they would have the willingness and energy to focus on thinking skills which were given little status by the target and league table driven curriculum. Although thinking skills were referred to in the National Curriculum documentation, the tick-box approach to teaching and learning encouraged during the 1990s, allowed few classroom opportunities for talking, let alone thinking.

Twelve pioneering pairs of teachers took up the invitation to apply for NUT "thinking skills" scholarships and went on to carry out and write up investigations in their classrooms. At the start of 2003, their reports provided the basis for a major NUT publication, "Investigating Thinking Skills". The teachers themselves were then hailed as "champions of innovation" at a national event hosted by the newly-established DfES Innovation Unit.

What follows is the story of how those teachers developed from pioneers to champions.

## Calculated risk

In 2000, the NUT knew that teachers were weary of "clipboard training" as a substitute for meaningful professional development. In addition, the NUT wished to develop its own professional development programme, which

placed teachers at the centre of both using and providing professional development.

Coincidentally, the Government had launched its Professional Development Strategy which, for a brief period, has made teachers' own professional judgements about relevant professional development the focus of defining new form of CPD. As a result, the initiation of Best Practice Research Scholarships, by the DfES, worked well alongside the NUT's own development of its scholarship programme.

The NUT has benefited also from Philippa Cordingley's advice, through CUREE, as consultant. Her advocacy of peer coaching has led to the development of the NUT's innovative Teacher2Teacher Programme.

There could be no certainty that teachers would welcome any additional teaching and learning expectations; especially teaching thinking skills which did not have priority, as defined then by being "core" curriculum or the focus of tests. Furthermore, Chris Woodhead, then OFSTED Chief Inspector, had dismissed teaching thinking skills as "progressivism"; his word for anything that might be associated with child-centred learning.

In focusing on thinking skills, however, the NUT was taking only a calculated risk. The Union believed that teaching thinking skills could provide a catalyst to loosen the straitjacket on the curriculum in terms of its breadth and creativity, which teachers recognised was limiting the achievements of their pupils. Thinking skills offered a means by which teachers could escape the role they had increasingly been given as technicians passing on a curriculum prescribed by others. They could use their full toolkit of professional skills.

It was helpful that "thinking skills" was an aspect of teaching which had not already been defined by others; unlike many other aspects of teaching, teachers had not been portrayed either overtly or by implication as being in deficit with regard to thinking. Teachers could, therefore, grasp the opportunity provided by this little charted aspect of teaching and learning and feel free to exercise their professional judgement.

For pupils, a focus on thinking skills would be an acknowledgement of the importance of their cognitive abilities. They would no longer be empty vessels needing to be filled with knowledge - a false yet convenient model of learners that had been implied by much education policy since the Education Reform Act of 1987.

In short, teaching thinking skills offered a route by which:

- pupils would become active learners and also ask and answer questions about how they learned;
- the curriculum would be less closed, predictable and pre-packaged;

- teachers would no longer be mere “deliverers” of the curriculum but could adopt a dynamic role in which their professional judgement took its proper prominence; and
- most importantly, an opportunity would be provided for teacher-led, bottom-up change.

When the best interests of pupils and teachers coincide in such a way, the momentum for change is almost unstoppable. Especially when no sensible person could argue that thinking should not be a fundamental part of education. The important question became whether teaching thinking skills would actually make a difference to pupils’ learning and achievement. The NUT’s scholarships, encouraging as they did teachers to try out teaching strategies and gather evidence of their effects, provided the perfect means to answer that.

## **Essential ingredients**

The teachers supported by scholarships were not simply left to carry out their investigations driven by their pioneering spirit and enthusiasm.

It had been a very deliberate decision to award scholarships to pairs of teachers. This meant that the investigating teachers had at least one day-to-day colleague who knew exactly what they were trying to do. Having a partner gave them confidence. Having a critical friend also encouraged them to articulate their experiences, develop a common language about carrying out small scale research, and provided regular opportunities to talk about the pedagogy of thinking skills.

The teachers also participated in a professional development programme led by an “expert” - Vivienne Baumfield from the Centre for Thinking Skills at Newcastle University. As well as giving them greater understanding of the theory and practice of teaching thinking skills, the programme taught the scholarship teachers about research methodology, data collection and analysis and, in the latter stages, report writing for a teacher audience.

The 12 pairs of scholarship teachers attended seminars on three occasions in the school year during which their investigations were completed. These allowed them to review their progress and subject their findings to the scrutiny of informed peers. The seminars also encouraged the teachers to recognise that their work was part of a greater project - an investigation on behalf of the profession.

These ingredients - learning with and from another teacher, expert input about issues with which they were not necessarily familiar, and being part of a community of enquiry - were vital to creating a sense of informed professional autonomy within a common framework.

## What were the outcomes?

“Investigating Thinking Skills”, the NUT’s publication which is based on the teachers’ written reports of their investigations tells this part of the story in more detail.

The participating teachers were unanimous in reporting increases in pupil attainment, whilst recognising that their evidence of such improvement must be considered as tentative given the small sample sizes and the characteristics of research using a case study approach. The overwhelmingly positive consensus which emerged in favour of using thinking skills in the classroom was based on the findings that pupils’ enjoyment, confidence, motivation, and active engagement all increased.

More specifically, teachers noted improvements in pupils’:

- reasoning skills and comprehension including understanding of text and questions;
- listening skills and ability to express themselves in peer discussion;
- vocabulary and standards of written work; and
- creative and critical thinking.

Such gains would, in themselves, have been sufficient to satisfy teachers. In addition, however, teachers noted considerable benefits for themselves. Typical comments were:

“We feel the greatest gain has been our own”; “(This) has changed our own perceptions of children’s capabilities and raised our expectations about what children can think and learn”; “There has been a great impact on our own professional development... we feel we are as motivated as the pupils”; “This small-scale investigation has proved to be of enormous benefit.... We gained insight into ourselves as well as the methodology and techniques linked to the thinking activities we trialed”.

More specifically, the teachers concluded that:

- thinking strategies were possible to implement within the curriculum and provided simple but effective tools for diagnostic and formative assessment;
- the activities were beneficial to boys and girls of all ability levels; and
- having a partner/working as a pair led to a more focused, motivated and exploratory approach to teaching.

All of the participating teachers expressed a desire to continue using thinking skills approaches. A majority believed that, having completed their

investigation, they would be able to develop further the strategies they had used and adapt them for use across the curriculum.

### **Changing climate**

At the start of 2003, when the NUT was ready to publish “Investigating Thinking Skills”, there was growing acknowledgement amongst education policy makers that top-down, prescribed change had serious limitations. Belatedly, it was being recognised that teachers had to be engaged in change, not merely expected or required to implement it. Teachers were being encouraged to adapt and interpret changes to meet effectively the varying learning needs of their pupils. Professional judgement was coming back into fashion!

## **The teaching of thinking skills had spread like a virus - one that teachers wanted to catch.**

The most significant manifestation of this change in climate was the establishment by the DFES of its Innovation Unit. To their credit, the newly-appointed directors of the Unit, demonstrated their commitment to supporting teacher-led change by providing sufficient financial support to allow the print-run of “Investigating Thinking Skills” to be increased and the booklet to be made available, on request, to all teachers. Furthermore, the Unit invited the teachers who had carried out the NUT scholarship-funded investigations - plus 130 other teachers who were linked to the thinking skills network built up by the Union during the two years following the initial project - to attend an Innovation Exchange.

Introducing the Exchange, the lead director of the Innovation Unit, Mike Gibbons, defined innovation as “the successful exploitation of new ideas”. If innovation was to be deep-seated and profound, he said, teachers must be “the agents not the objects of change”; there had to be a “radical advancement in teacher learning” and teachers needed to be allowed a “sense of ownership” of change. The thinking skills work by those teachers present at the Exchange satisfied these criteria and provided a successful example of innovation.

The teaching of thinking skills had spread like a virus - one that teachers wanted to catch. Those pioneers of thinking skills had become champions of innovation.

For the teachers involved, their work had been given national status and recognition. They had provided a model for innovation that could be encouraged in other aspects of teaching and learning.

For the NUT, the success of its first example of a professional development project focussing on teachers working in pairs and being part of a wider

community of enquiry justified the aims - hallmarks - it had set for itself at the start of its pilot CPD programme for teachers.

Further justification has since been provided by the very positive evaluations given by participating teachers to the unique Teacher2Teacher approach to teachers' learning - where pairs of teachers try out new teaching strategies supported by peer coaching - which the NUT has developed.

And so it is with confidence that on completion of the three-year pilot the NUT has been able to adopt the same guiding principles to underpin the long-term CPD programme which it now provides for teachers.

The NUT will continue to offer learning opportunities which:

- are aimed at enhancing teachers' professional judgement in a "no threat, no blame" learning environment;
- use the skills and knowledge of teachers themselves;
- take full account of evidence from research and examples of successful practice;
- build on teachers' own identification of their professional and career development needs and have direct relevance to their classroom and school experiences;
- are supported by partnerships with experts in pedagogy; and
- lead to the formation of networks which encourage participants to sustain their learning beyond specific courses or experiences and to recognise that their learning is part of a wider programme which is supporting the growth of knowledge about teaching and learning across the profession.

There have been many recent examples of changes being imposed on teachers and teachers being told what they ought to do. The NUT's thinking skills project, far more effectively, supported teachers doing it for themselves. ■

*Copies of "Investigating Thinking Skills" can be requested by e-mail: nutcpd@nut.org.uk; by telephone: 020 7380 4719; or by post: CPD Programme, NUT, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London, WC1H 9BD*

# Education for all - widening access to higher education

## Will Straw

Will Straw is President of Oxford University Student Union

**Abstract:** *This article examines the Government's efforts to widen access to higher education. It argues that, whilst the proposal to widen participation is to be welcomed, the Government's interpretation of what needs doing is mistaken. It details the outreach work carried out by universities to target state schools and argues that it is the erosion of maintenance grants and the principle of free education, rather than university admission policies, which is contributing to the failure of a shift in the social make up of universities.*

**W**IDENING access to higher education is the Holy Grail to which all those involved in the sector claim to be committed. Forty years of differing higher education policies by successive Governments has failed to result in any serious shift in the social make-up of those attending our universities. Indeed, the experiment of the last decade with the gradual erosion of the maintenance grant, followed quickly on its heels by the erosion of the principle of free education, has resulted in a decrease in attendance by the poorest in society. Research by Steve Machin<sup>1</sup> of University College London, published in February 2003 showed that from 13 per cent in the early 1990s, there was now only a seven per cent take-up amongst those from the lowest socio-economic group. The record is even worse at the best universities. When less fortunate students do decide to pursue education beyond 18, they disproportionately attend local, new universities and not the big research-based Russell Group universities, which undoubtedly offer a better quality of tuition.

Credit is owed to the Government for finally and explicitly recognising that access is a scar on the face of Britain which entrenches the class system and leads to many of society's other ills. In the recent White Paper on the future of higher education<sup>2</sup> it stated that: "All those who have the potential to benefit from higher education should have the opportunity to do so." While the



sentiment is to be applauded the problem is that their interpretation of what needs doing is mistaken.

The Government identify four ways in which they hope to achieve their goal of widening participation. These are: outreach work; the raising of aspirations for children at school; the introduction of an access regulator and “an effective and fair system of student support”. They are right about the first two, flawed in their thinking on the third, and attempting to pull the wool over our eyes with the fourth. They also miss a crucial piece of the jigsaw: the elimination of the deterrent of debt.

### Targeting schools

Outreach work involves universities co-ordinating programmes in order to show potential applicants of ages 14 to 18 what it would be like to be a student. The Government’s plans in this area are to be commended and Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) grants are provided for much of the work that takes place. At the Oxford University Student Union, where I am President, we co-ordinate the Target Schools programme which forms links with every state school in the country. Run entirely by students we encourage our peers to visit schools in their area, host open days for potential applicants and organise regional tours. Applications from the state sector have risen every single year since the scheme was put in place. The University is equally committed. Its Admissions Office provides information for all applicants and gives advice to teachers, parents and hopefuls on the admissions system. There is also an Access Scheme which challenges the problem by concentrating on inner city comprehensives, particularly those with high numbers of students from ethnic minorities. Similar programmes are in place at other universities up and down the country.

Linked with outreach work is the raising of aspirations. A great example of how to do this is the Sutton Trust. Founded in 1997 it has the aim of providing educational opportunities, such as its summer schools, for able young people from non-privileged backgrounds. By giving young people a taste of what university is like it is hoped that many more people will apply to study once they have left school. The Government’s own Excellence Challenge and the Aim Higher initiative are also excellent ventures which are to be encouraged. However, it is crucial that students of the right age are targeted.

Outreach work tends to be aimed at students in the Sixth Form. But 85 per cent of those doing A Levels go on to take a degree. The difference is made in persuading students in Years 9 and 10 to think about education and university in the long term in order that they study hard for their GCSEs and stay in post-16 education. Here university students have another crucial role, as they are closer in age and outlook to those whose futures could take a radically different path by moving into higher education. However, teachers

also have a responsibility not to be taken in by the media perceptions of the top universities. They should encourage their pupils to realise their potential rather than reinforcing the stereotype that the best prefer the poshest. More can, and must, be done in this area. The most recent Government initiative is, though, not such a solution.

## **Social engineering**

The now infamous Access Regulator is a half-baked idea that tackles the problem the wrong way around. The logic is inherent in “new” Labour’s make-up and relates to a misconceived fear. In 2000 the Laura Spence case blew up in Oxford’s face. The Chancellor exclaimed that the affair was “an absolute scandal”. The truth was that Spence had applied for a particularly difficult course with very few spaces. Tutors at Magdalen College had interviewed over 40 applicants for five places all with similarly outstanding predicted A Level grades. According to the College Principal, Anthony Smith, she had come tenth. But three state school students and two from ethnic minorities had been accepted indicating that there was no prejudice in the procedure. The Government had become obsessed with “elitism” at the best Universities and especially of Oxbridge. The sad thing is that they fail to differentiate the concepts of “academic elitism”, a thoroughly positive idea that forms the backbone of the meritocratic higher education system in this country, and “social elitism” which outreach work and aspiration raising attempt to conquer. Not so the “Access Arrangements”.

These bureaucratic contracts will become the lynchpin of the Access Regulator once it is under way in 2006. The Government wants them to be “robust and competitive” which appears to be a term more useful in describing a rugby player than that of a binding legal agreement. The Government favours the use of benchmarks and it is suggested that these will become rigid quotas to ensure that state school students get into the best universities. Already Bristol University has taken these steps. Public school headteachers have said that this is positive discrimination against their pupils. Fair enough say others, state school pupils deserve a break. The problem is that this form of social engineering can only harm those students who fill up the quotas by stigmatising them as second rate. It would also be tragic if some of those drafted in simply could not cope and had to drop out with huge amounts of debt but no degree certificate.

The truth is that at many of the best universities state school applicants have an equal chance of getting in. In 2001 figures showed that 42.2 per cent of state school applicants successfully took up a place at Oxford, compared with 41.7 per cent of independent school pupils. The problem was that the make-up of those who did get in was 50-50 between state and private schools. Simply not enough applicants are being made by able state school students.

This reinforces the importance of outreach work to encourage a greater number of people making applications.

Another problem with benchmarks is that they rarely take into account geographical constraints. Both Oxford and Cambridge are in largely wealthy areas while poorer students are far more likely to attend university close to their homes. Better student support is the only way to encourage more students to go further afield.

Sometimes used in defence of quotas is the research carried out by Warwick University in 2002, that found that state school students who gained good but not brilliant grades at A Level (eg ABB) were more likely to perform better at university than those from independent schools with identical grades. The research suggested that A Levels were not necessarily the best way to judge applicants. But this is not an argument for creating artificial quotas. Instead it is an argument for taking on imaginative new ways of assessing potential and concentrating less on achievement. The interview, as used at Oxford and Cambridge, is one of the best ways to do this.

## Eliminating debt

The Government's fourth means of widening participation is through "an effective and fair system of student support". It is quite clear that the new grant that the Government have proposed will not go far enough. According to the National Office of Statistics, only 7 per cent of all 16 to 18 year olds come from families with incomes low enough to qualify for the full grant of £1,000. Even so, with student costs averaging about £6,200 per year, it is unlikely to be anywhere near sufficient to pay for rent, books, food, clothes and bills. It is good that the Government has been forced to look again at the proposals in this area (qualification levels may be lowered), because at present it looks like nothing more than an empty gesture. Lord Dearing is absolute right to suggest that grants should never have been abolished in the first place and that £1,000 per year is far too low. Even Professor Barr of the LSE, dubbed the architect of the White Paper, admits that grants must be higher to have any real effect on access.

The missing piece of the jigsaw is the deterrent of debt. As much as the Government would like to deny it, even their own watchdog, the National Audit Office, has highlighted its impact. Secretary of State, Charles Clarke, seems finally to have got the message. The truth is that the target audience are also society's most risk-averse. Coming from a family with no history of participation in higher education, the language of investing in one's future sounds, and is, a very middle class value. It is hardly surprising that society's least fortunate are the least likely to want to get in debt. Under the Government's proposals students' debt will double to an average of £21,000. This scares even the most upwardly mobile and is an unacceptably high level.

It will undoubtedly deter poorer students and is fundamentally at odds with the stated aim of widening participation.

Professor Barr says that people are simply thinking with the wrong part of their brain when they regard their student loans as a debt. He points out that no-one need pay back anything until they are earning £15,000 and then only at a rate of nine pence in the pound. This is all true, but do you really think that it will be that or the headlines about student “debt” that will filter through to urban kids, aged 15. For as well as being the most risk averse, the poorest are privy to the least good information about their future options. Not least because they do not have parents able to surf the net to do their research for them - a growing trend.

In any case, the personal benefit of a degree is also a matter of dispute, justifying concerns over taking out large sums of money. The Government claims that the average graduate will go on to earn £400,000 more over the course of their lifetime than the non-graduate. Not bad for an outlay only 5 per cent the size. Not so says the latest issue of *Labour Market Trends*<sup>3</sup>. This claims that the figure is nearer £220,000 but that some degrees are worth a lot more than others. Even so researchers at Warwick University found that graduates in history and English can expect to make between 2 per cent and 10 per cent less than those who quit education at 18. Professor Ian Walker, who led the study, states, “An average degree is still a very good investment. But, although on average the rates of return on this investment are high, the variance is enormous - some do extremely well, some don’t do well at all.”

These difficulties all point to one solution. A return to the system of higher education paid through taxes. With Britain’s progressive system, which makes higher earners pay proportionally more, the greatest beneficiaries of higher education will contribute extra. This would be much fairer than making assumptions about future earnings and asking all graduates to pay the same. It would also remove the deterrent of debt. With a proper system of student support and the continuation of good outreach and aspiration work, Britain might finally crack its access problem. ■

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# Teacher leadership and school improvement

**Abstract:** *The collaboration and collegiality fostered through teacher leadership has been shown to lead to an enhanced capacity for change and improvement at the school and classroom level. This article emphasises the importance of distributing leadership throughout the school and details the important role that teachers can play in sustaining school improvement.*

## The current context

The current educational context is one of rapid and unrelenting change. The pressures on schools to improve and to raise standards of achievement are unlikely to recede in the next few years. However, the real challenge facing most schools is no longer “how to improve” but more importantly, “how to sustain improvement”. Even in the cases of the most highly successful interventions or initiatives, there will be an inevitable reduction in momentum and impetus as after time, they disengage from the school. Consequently, sustainability will depend upon the school’s internal capacity to maintain and support developmental work.

Recent research has shown that, even in the most difficult circumstances, schools can sustain improvement through capacity building and equipping teachers to lead innovation and development.<sup>1,2</sup> Other work has similarly reinforced the importance of generating the capacity for development through distributing leadership throughout the organisation.<sup>3</sup> The clear message is that sustaining improvement requires the leadership capability of the many rather than the few. Improvements in learning are more likely to be achieved when leadership is instructionally focused and located closest to the classroom.

## What is teacher leadership?

Teacher leadership is primarily concerned with developing high quality learning and teaching in schools. It has at its core a focus upon improving

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learning and is a mode of leadership premised upon the principles of professional collaboration, development and growth. Teacher leadership is not a formal role, responsibility or set of tasks, it is more a form of agency where teachers are empowered to lead development work that impacts directly upon the quality of teaching and learning. Teacher leaders lead within and beyond the classroom, they identify with and contribute to a community of teachers and influence others towards improved educational practice.

In contrast to traditional notions of leadership, teacher leadership is characterised by a form of collective leadership in which teachers develop expertise by working collaboratively. So, for example, they may be teachers working together on a particular aspect of the Literacy Strategy or teachers who are jointly preparing new materials and resources for a new topic area. There are two key dimensions of teacher leadership: firstly, a focus on improved learning outcomes through the development work and secondly, a emphasis upon collaborative professional activity.

Teacher leadership incorporates three main areas of activity:

- the leadership of other teachers through coaching, mentoring, leading working groups;
- the leadership of developmental tasks that are central to improved learning and teaching; and
- the leadership of pedagogy through the development and modeling of effective forms of teaching.

Teacher leaders can be curriculum developers, bid writers, leaders of a school improvement team, mentors of new or less experienced staff and action researchers with a strong link to the classroom. The important point is that teacher leaders are, in the first place, expert teachers, who spend at the majority of their time in the classroom but take on leadership roles at times when development and innovation is needed. Their role is primarily one of assisting colleagues to explore and try out new ideas, then offering critical but constructive feedback to ensure improvements in teaching and learning are achieved.

### **Why teacher leadership?**

The collaboration and collegiality fostered through teacher leadership has been shown to lead to an enhanced capacity for change and improvement at the school and classroom level. A variety of studies have found clear evidence of the positive effect of teacher leadership on teachers' self-efficacy and levels of morale.<sup>4</sup> Research also shows that teachers who work together in a meaningful and purposeful way are more likely to remain in the profession because they feel valued and supported in their work.<sup>5,6</sup>

Research has consistently underlined the contribution of strong collegial relationships to school improvement and change. Collaboration is at the heart of teacher leadership, as it is premised upon change that is undertaken collectively. For teacher leadership to be most effective it has to encompass mutual trust, support and enquiry. Evidence suggests that it is difficult for teachers to create and sustain the conditions for improved pupil learning if those conditions do not exist for their own learning.<sup>7</sup> Where teachers share good practice and learn together the possibility of securing better quality teaching is increased.

### **How to foster teacher leadership?**

One of the main barriers to teacher leadership concerns the “top-down” leadership model that still dominates in many schools. The possibility of teacher leadership in any school will be dependent upon whether the head and the senior management team within the school relinquishes power to teachers. It will also be dependent upon the extent to which teachers accept the influence of colleagues who have been designated as leaders in a particular area. In order for teacher leadership to become embedded, heads will therefore need to become “leaders of leaders”, striving to develop a relationship of trust with staff, and encouraging leadership and autonomy throughout the school.

To generate and sustain teacher leadership will require:

- Empowerment and encouragement of teachers to become leaders and to provide opportunities for teachers to develop their leadership skills;
- Time to be set aside for teachers’ leadership work, including time for professional development and collaborative work, planning together, building teacher networks, and visiting classrooms; and
- Opportunities for continuous professional development that focuses not just on the development of teachers’ skills and knowledge but on aspects specific to their leadership role, such as leading groups and workshops, collaborative work, mentoring, teaching adults and action research.

### **What’s in it for schools and teachers?**

Teacher leadership offers schools a way of engaging teachers in a meaningful and timely debate about professionalism and issues of professional conduct. Essentially, the concept of teacher leadership endorses the principle that all teachers have the skills, abilities and aptitude to lead and should be trusted to do so. Furthermore, it reiterates how teacher leadership contributes to raising pupil performance, is pivotal in generating collaboration between teachers and in securing professional learning communities both within and between schools. Where this occurs teachers are more likely to engage in high level

collaborative activities in order to improve their teaching capability and performance.

The idea of teacher leadership is powerful because it is premised upon the creation of the collegial norms in schools that contribute directly to school effectiveness, improvement and development. Teacher leadership is also powerful because it gives teachers recognition for the diverse but important leadership tasks they undertake on a daily basis.

## **Evidence suggests that it is difficult for teachers to create and sustain the conditions for improved pupil learning if those conditions do not exist for their own learning**

It also reinforces how these leadership activities influence the quality of professional relationships and standards of teaching within the school. In short, teacher leaders make a significant difference to the learning experiences in classrooms. At a policy level, teacher leadership points towards a “new professionalism” based upon mutual trust, recognition, empowerment and support. At its most practical it suggests a way of teachers working together in order to improve the learning experiences of young people. ■

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# National Curriculum tests

**Abstract:** *Since the late 1980s governments have put a high priority on raising standards in education, and much of the policy effort in this direction has involved higher levels of inspection, testing, examination reform and the use of the results from these in league tables. As a result, currently children are being tested more frequently than was the case in the past. This article argues that the frequent changes in the assessment regime have made it more difficult for teachers to build up a coherent set of strategies to improve results and have distorted the educational experience of children.*

**A** MAJOR concern, across a range of subjects, countries and levels of education, is that assessment is conducted for managerial purposes (a concern going back in the UK to the Assessment of Performance Unit.)<sup>1</sup> Assessment places an over-emphasis on specific types of product and fails to engage with the assessed. It therefore has a negative impact on performance.<sup>2</sup> It is also essential that pupils understand the purposes of their learning, and grasp what they need to do to achieve. For this, training in self-assessment is necessary. Black and Wiliam<sup>2</sup> are concerned with pupil learning, but the imposition of league tables and testing has a similar potential impact on teachers.

The frequent changes in the assessment regime<sup>3</sup> have made it more difficult for teachers to build up a coherent set of strategies to improve results, as effort spent in meeting one set of criteria can be wasted when requirements change. For both pupils and teachers, this could correspond to the long-known psychological effect of “learned helplessness”, where an aversive but unavoidable experience leads to a lack of coherent response. Those who lack control over their conditions of work suffer damage to their health.<sup>4</sup> There may be a decreased ability to respond, as what has been learnt is that there is no point in learning. As Harlen and Crick’s review<sup>5</sup> of the research on the effect of assessment on motivation shows, the demotivating effect of testing is particularly a problem with lower achievers.

Black and Wiliam<sup>2</sup> point out that for pupils’ formative feedback needs to be

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carried out frequently, so that pupils can register points of difficulty in time to correct the inadequacies of their learning. Therefore, tests at the end of a block of teaching are useless in that the results, however potentially informative, are too late to assist with pupils' learning. In addition, they point out that external summative tests, especially when high-stakes, as confirmed by Brooks<sup>6</sup>, can lead to conflict between teachers' formative and accountability roles. Some policy initiatives have had the effect of reducing the importance of teachers' formative work, and therefore their ability to contribute to their pupils' learning.

**The frequent changes in the assessment regime have made it more difficult for teachers to build up a coherent set of strategies to improve results, as effort spent in meeting one set of criteria can be wasted when requirements change.**

In a survey undertaken for the National Union of Teachers<sup>7</sup>, a representative sample of teachers gave their views on the effects of end of Key Stage testing on teaching, learning, assessment, reporting to stakeholders, workload and professionalism. Respondents felt most strongly that testing narrowed the curriculum, and distorted the educational experience of children. They felt that excessive time, workload, and stress for children were not justified by the accuracy of the test results for individuals. This lack of confidence was reflected in a preference for teacher assessment and the feeling that tests do no more than duplicate existing knowledge. In this climate it is not surprising that the majority of teachers do not feel that end of Key Stage tests help their assessment of pupils, or have mixed feelings about this aspect.

Respondents did not feel that the tests accurately reflected school achievements, but did accept that parents and governors had rather more positive attitudes to the tests than themselves. Over ten years after the introduction of the National Curriculum in primary schools, the associated testing continued to cause much greater concern in primary than in secondary schools. It might be assumed that the reluctance of primary teachers was due to their opposition to accountability, but this would then require an explanation as to why secondary teachers were more ready to accept accountability. An alternative explanation is that primary teachers were aware that their pupils were still developing their self-image, and were therefore concerned that premature testing might damage pupils' development of self-esteem, especially academic self-esteem, whereas their secondary colleagues were dealing with pupils who had already developed their self-image.

## The educational effects of testing

The teachers who responded to the survey separated out various issues relating to the educational effects of the tests - their accuracy in relation to assessment and their effect in distorting the balance of classroom and school effort by pupils and teachers, both overall and especially for children with educational difficulties. They also reported, however, that there was a greater level of support for testing among parents and governors. Teachers reported that the tests were more accepted, including by parents and governors, at secondary level, reflecting the long-standing experience of testing and examinations at secondary level. Those who taught older children, however, reported that the testing period was more stressful.

Respondents did not see the tests as helpful to teaching. They felt most strongly about the tests taking up too much class time and narrowing the curriculum. Their views were most diverse on whether the tests helped their teaching and were worthwhile for the pupils they taught. These educational concerns were separated from concerns about the effects of the tests on teachers' own workload. Primary teachers consistently spent more time and effort than their secondary and special school colleagues on tests. The care taken by many primary respondents in order to reduce the stress for pupils was clear, but this was at the cost of their own workload. Experienced teachers and teachers of younger children were the groups most negative about tests.

The results showed a consistent trend for primary teachers to be more hostile than their secondary colleagues across most aspects of the influence of testing. It might be considered that this reflected a sentimental approach by teachers to young children who should be protected from the harsh realities of competition. Interestingly, secondary teachers were in favour of more decisive Union action against Key Stage 1 testing than their primary colleagues who actually carried it out. In addition, the results above show that primary teachers put more work into making the test period stress-free for their pupils, and that secondary teachers report more stress resulting from the test period. This is consistent with Harlen and Crick's<sup>5</sup> findings that pupils become more, not less, stressed by testing as their experience of testing increases. In other words, the increasing incidence of testing at earlier ages has the potential to increase test aversion at later ages. This has been demonstrated in 2002 with AS and A levels, where experience of AS levels led to candidates withdrawing from A levels. Thus the increased incidence of early testing may be contributing to the difficulties, not only of primary teachers, but of their secondary colleagues.

## Increase in workload

Galton and MacBeath<sup>8</sup> in their study for the NUT found that primary teachers were now working somewhat longer hours than in Campbell and Neill's<sup>9</sup>

survey a decade earlier. At the time, Campbell and Neill considered that the steady increase in workload from year to year resulted from the progressive implementation of the National Curriculum at the time of their surveys. Policy-makers in England continue to debate whether Key Stage 1 testing should continue as it had recently been discontinued in Wales. This “natural experiment” may have interesting results if it can be related to future performance in the two education systems, though there will probably be too many confounding factors for fair comparison.

The greater resistance of experienced teachers to testing could be interpreted as resistance to change, but as Galton and MacBeath’s<sup>8</sup> respondents point out, the requirement to record large amounts of the work they do has a de-skilling effect. Practitioners in any occupation could normally expect to find the basic aspects of their work easier as they build up experience, and this would allow them to concentrate on more demanding aspects of work, such as supporting inexperienced colleagues. The requirement for large amounts of documentation, and especially the frequent changes in what is required, prevent teachers from doing this. This also contributes to the lack of support which new teachers in Galton and MacBeath’s study complained about. Lack of support for new teachers by their more experienced colleagues will hardly encourage them to stay in the profession. The problems resulting from teacher turnover will be explored later in this article.

Summative testing made the lack of ability of lower-achievers explicit<sup>10</sup> and demotivated them<sup>10,5</sup>. Black et al. considered that suitably designed formative assessment contributed to pupils viewing achievement as a result of effort, whereas with summative achievement they were more likely to consider it an unalterable reflection of ability. A number of respondents expressed concerns specifically about SEN children, but there was also potential for disaffection among those at the lower end of the normal ability range. Black and Wiliam<sup>2</sup> point out that formative assessment is particularly beneficial to low achievers, so that, in addition to raising standards generally, it reduced the spread of results. A concern mentioned by respondents in a previous survey for the NUT on unacceptable pupil behaviour<sup>11</sup> was that increasing curriculum regulation and inflexibility prevented teachers from adapting their teaching to the interests of potentially disruptive children. Testing can clearly contribute to this. Both Smithers and Robinson<sup>12</sup> and Neill<sup>11</sup> found pupil behaviour was a major reason for teachers leaving the profession.

## The future

Were the teachers in the survey simply repeating conventional wisdom which they had read? Galton and MacBeath’s report<sup>8</sup>, Black et al.’s report<sup>10</sup> and the EPPI report<sup>5</sup> appeared during the course of the survey, and press reports could have influenced later responses. Few respondents were likely to have had

access to the reports themselves when they returned the questionnaire, though 20,000 copies of Black and Wiliam's<sup>2</sup> earlier review of research on classroom assessment have been sold, suggesting it has had the potential to influence thinking at classroom level.

However, though some respondents referred to research findings, the great majority of written-in responses to the question "Would you prefer alternatives of assessing pupil achievement?" appeared to be based on respondents' own experience. Although research gives a consistent picture of the problems raised by assessment, teachers' direct experience exposes them to other consequences of the intensification of teaching, such as the increasing turnover of teachers, and resulting recruitment difficulties.

Smithers and Robinson<sup>12</sup> have described a situation where experienced teachers leaving the profession are being replaced by new recruits who are more likely to drop out of teaching after a short period. Knock-on effects of increased turnover included difficulties in checking the criminal records of newly appointed staff in light of the emphasis on child protection. Media reports of delays to this process and children being sent home because teachers have not been "cleared" further undermine the confidence of parents in school staff.

A final striking point from the survey is teachers' acceptance that parents and governors have a more positive attitude to testing than they do themselves. This raises the problem that a testing policy which contributes to difficulties in teacher retention and recruitment, and which research shows as educationally counter-productive, is much more popular with adult stakeholders outside education than with those inside education. Once a "tough" policy is widely accepted by the media and public, it is difficult for politicians to reverse it without accusations of being "soft" on producers such as teachers or "going native". The main hope must be that the increasing realisation, for example in the Cabinet Office Better Regulation Taskforce, that excessive accountability and bureaucracy is counterproductive<sup>13</sup> can be transmitted to the wider public. Otherwise there is a risk that the errors in the current testing regime and controversy about the value of the results will alienate some children not only from education, but also from the political process. ■

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# Teachers and leaders - NCSL's part in developing the teaching profession

**Abstract:** *This article sets out the role that the National College of School Leadership hopes to play in helping teachers rediscover their confidence, creativity and sense of professional freedom. It details the work that the College is undertaking to meet the development and learning needs of all leaders and argues that leadership does not start arbitrarily when teachers start a formal leadership role for the first time.*

**W**HEN it comes to leadership opportunities teachers are fortunate. There is probably no other profession where from the moment you take up your appointment, you are placed in such a clear leadership role. Leading a class of 30 pupils, guiding and supporting adult assistants and parent volunteers, adapting and shaping a lesson to the precise needs of the group call for leadership qualities which in many careers you would wait a decade to practise.

Newly qualified teachers relish the responsibility and creativity that is offered when they first enter the classroom. Sadly, research by the General Teaching Council and others shows that after the first five years, that sense of freedom and power diminishes for too many as the weight of the workload, the demands of agendas imposed from above and the bad behaviour of a minority of pupils wear away their energy and commitment.

The Government has put in place a far-reaching policy agenda to tackle the external issues; the College hopes to play its part by helping the teaching profession rediscover its confidence, creativity and sense of professional freedom in the classroom. We believe this in turn will nurture new generations of leaders capable of making our schools the best in the world.

**Heather  
Du Quesnay**

Heather Du Quesnay is Chief Executive of the National College for School Leadership.

## Leading from the middle

Of course, the exercise of leadership does not start arbitrarily when you assume a formal leadership role for the first time. The qualities, skills and behaviours that make good leaders are developed and refined over a lifetime. In any school playground, you can see young people giving a lead. We tend to call them “born leaders”, but that misses the point. At the College we believe that most people are born with some of the attributes and characteristics that will enable them to lead but that it is possible (and necessary) to improve and grow one’s leadership capacity through learning.

Leadership learning has two parts: first you need to have the opportunity (and encouragement) to act as a leader, second you need the space and the support to reflect on your exercise of the role and the resources to enable you to build the knowledge, skills and understandings you need to do the job better.

With this in mind, one of the first decisions that the newly formed National College for School Leadership made was to seek responsibility for the provision of development activities for middle leaders in schools (people who lead and co-ordinate subjects, act as Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators or take on pastoral responsibilities.) Despite some good local provision, they had previously been entirely neglected at national level, but two years ago an opportunity arose through the CPD strategy to change all of that. We took it, persuaded the Department for Education and Skills to give us the commission, and from September 2003 our new programme, “Leading from the Middle” will be offered to approximately 3,000 teachers.

Securing responsibility for middle leader development was significant not only because this group can be such an important force for improvement in the school, but also because we had from the start committed ourselves to the concept of distributed leadership. That means leadership exercised at all

levels, by teachers, support staff and pupils, who feel confident to take initiative and accept responsibility, thus multiplying the energy that drives the school forward. The symbolic value of NCSL being seen as a source of development and learning for all

**...the teaching profession should take much greater responsibility for its own development than has traditionally been the case.**

leaders and not just the headteacher was enormously powerful. It coincided with the messages we received from the thousands of headteachers we talked to in our first year of operation. Headteachers told us that they felt somewhat alienated by the notion of the head as charismatic super hero; they argued that their role was about building teams, motivating and empowering others to make their personal contribution to the school’s mission and goals.



## Developing a leadership framework

The theoretical basis for the College's leadership development agenda was set out in a report by a think tank chaired by Professor David Hopkins, now head of the DfES Standards and Effectiveness Unit. The report sets out ten propositions about school leadership, stating that school leadership must:

- be purposeful, inclusive and values driven;
- embrace the distinctive and inclusive context of the school;
- promote an active view of learning;
- be instructionally focussed;
- be a function that is distributed throughout the school;
- build capacity by developing the school as a learning community;
- be futures orientated and strategically driven;
- be developed through experiential and innovative methodologies;
- be served by a support and policy context that is coherent and focused on implementation; and
- be supported by a National College that leads the discourse around leadership for learning.

Building on the Think Tank's work, we devised a Leadership Development Framework, starting with emergent (or middle) leadership and progressing through established leadership (deputy and assistant heads), entry to headship, to advanced and consultant leadership. The concept of the consultant leader is vital to our vision for the future of the profession. We believe that the teaching profession should take much greater responsibility for its own development than has traditionally been the case.

We would want to see experienced headteachers (and increasingly other leaders) committed to playing a part in the wider development of the education system, by coaching and mentoring less experienced colleagues and by acting as facilitators, trainers and consultants to other schools and to groups of schools thus taking responsibility for the re-shaping and re-culturing of the service. We expect to see in the future much freer interchange of roles between those who lead in schools and those who lead in the wider system, whether within networks, federations or LEAs. The concept of the consultant leader is a significant step towards bringing this vision to fruition.

Lest there be any doubt, the College would reject the notion that the development of leaders takes place in any simple linear manner. The Framework has simply been a helpful way to check for gaps in current provision (and there are many) and to help our many partners in the provision of leadership development activity judge where their contribution can best be made. It gives us a scaffold and a vocabulary within which to address our

remit. But we do not imply that the learning of leaders can be organised in a tidy hierarchy of steps. The reality is far more complex.

## **Teamwork**

If a school is to realise the full power of distributed leadership, then it needs to be skilled at team working. Indeed, expressions like “the future is about teams” have become commonplace among those who talk about organisational development in all sectors, the world over. Teams can be of many different kinds from those that are part of the enduring organisational structure like the leadership team, to those drawn vertically from different levels in the school, like the change teams created by schools in the Workforce Pathfinder pilot to small project teams with a sharply defined brief and a short time-scale to get a job done. At the College we know from first-hand experience how helpful it can be to have skilled support for team working - we have a coach who works with us as a Leadership Team.

A key area of development for the College over the next few months will be to add a richer mix of team development programmes and activities to the existing “Building Capacity for School Improvement” programme. The middle leaders’ programme, “Leading from the Middle”, for example, has as a central component a school improvement project which the middle leaders are encouraged to address as a team. They are supported as a group by a more experienced leader, probably a deputy or assistant head, who is trained to act as their coach.

I am convinced that establishing a strong team culture in the school will do much to combat the feelings of isolation and stress which too many teachers experience and bring them the satisfaction and fulfilment which come from productive human interaction. Or to put it more simply, team working makes the job more do-able and more fun.

## **Networked learning**

One of the joys of the present stage in the development of the education service is the re-discovery of collaboration. For a decade and more after the Education Reform Act and the introduction of the OFSTED inspection regime, the culture of schools slipped increasingly into managerialism and competitiveness, as we attempted to ape the way we (or previous governments) thought private sector businesses behaved in the market place.

They were challenging and sterile times for teachers, worse in some parts of the country than in others, when cooperation with a neighbouring school was tantamount to betraying state secrets and the shrinking central resource base of LEAs precluded many of the traditional forms of in-service training teachers had enjoyed in the past. But the College has helped to lead a remarkable cultural change which has put collaborative working back at the

heart of the education agenda. Through our Networked Learning Communities initiative, we now have nearly 1,000 schools participating in collaborative learning communities focused on improving teaching and learning.

Our initial intention was to establish no more than 20 communities as an action research project. But the enthusiasm and energy generated among schools were such that the DfES allocated additional funding to allow nearly 90 communities to begin work in 2002-3. They have set themselves a rich variety of learning goals from citizenship to thinking skills, and creativity to pupil voice, all focused on raising pupil attainment.

The response to this initiative has been a massive confirmation of the profession's ability to take responsibility for its own learning and for joint problem solving when it is given the opportunity and a modicum of encouragement for self-directed development.

## **The symbolic value of NCSL being seen as a source of development and learning for all leaders and not just the headteacher was enormously powerful.**

There is little doubt that networked learning is a valuable and meaningful activity for those who take part, but the College's vision for Networked Learning Communities is bigger than that. We are committed to finding ways of capturing the knowledge that is created within the communities so that it can be transferred and applied by others within the wider education system.

This is a daunting challenge, both intellectually because of the difficulty of conceptualising and recording the changes in practice that occur and in terms of finding the processes by which transfer can take place. It is a problem that we share with universities and research institutions and, of course, with the newly established Innovation Unit within the DfES. Work on the Learning Exchange is one of our most urgent and demanding tasks. If we can solve it, we will have a tool to help us in another key aspect of our work, advising policy makers about the needs, views and good practices emerging from the field.

The College has established a National Leadership Network comprising nearly 200 leading headteachers to assist us in the task of advising policy makers. They will be organised on a regional basis and linked to our Affiliated Centres (partnerships of LEAs, universities, dioceses and leadership development providers which are coming into existence progressively over the next year.)

The Network will be a means of identifying, exploring and piloting good practice, with a focus on articulating the potential implications for policy and

on promoting beneficial change among a wider group of school leaders. It is led and directed by a group of headteachers. The benefits are as yet unproven but the opportunity to capture the ear of ministers and civil servants for a message about school-led change makes its potential enormous.

It is interesting to speculate about how much of the agenda the College has set itself would have been possible even five years ago without the information and communication technologies. The College's web-site, which has won considerable acclaim, is at the heart of all that we do ([www.ncsl.org.uk](http://www.ncsl.org.uk)). It carries learning materials, news, research reports, conference briefings (supported by video clips) and up to date reports on all our activities. There is a range of online discussion communities which allow leaders to engage in confidential discussion with each other, in public debate with policy makers (for example, recently on performance management and workforce change) and with educational and leadership gurus (Edward de Bono's hot-seat was a recent success).

We believe that the solution to many of the current challenges the education service faces, from teacher workload to the personalisation of learning lies partly with ICT (and wholly with our skill in adapting the technology to be the servant of pedagogy, not its master). Consequently, all of our activities depend upon the principle of blended learning, that is a mix of web-based activity, face-to-face encounter and private research with built-in opportunities to test and refine the learning in a practical school context. With a potential audience of at least 250,000, we have no choice but to go down this route, but we believe it is where the future lies, perhaps for schools as well as for national institutions.

The College is but one facet of the wide-ranging reform agenda the government is putting in place. Its very existence is evidence of the depth of the Government's commitment to bringing about a renaissance of the teaching profession. Our new building in Nottingham, opened by the Prime Minister in October 2002, is a physical symbol of the values of community, reflection and transparency in leadership which the College espouses. It gives school leaders a space of their own in which to reflect and to renew their skills, their energy and their optimism. We want it to be part of the lives of all school leaders, and we want the exercise of leadership to make every teacher's job easier, more fulfilling and more fun. Making a difference to the lives of young people should be about joy, hard work, yes, but not drudgery. ■

# What role can CPD play in supporting the needs and priorities of future teachers?

**Abstract:** *This article addresses the nature of the teaching and learning process, the consequences this has for CPD and the potential for particular approaches to CPD to make a practical and strategic contribution to the future of the profession.*

**T**HIS article starts from the proposition that teaching and Continuing Professional Development are fundamentally about learning and therefore so is the future of the profession. This position is worth restating firmly and often because central policy initiatives, however much they attempt to pursue responsive or learning oriented models perhaps inevitably appear to offer more passive, transmission based models of teacher learning. The enormous gap between central and classroom actions demands simplistic and relatively undifferentiated forms of communication; any subtleties are quickly undermined by conflict driven media coverage. But the reality of professional learning is that it is even more complex, context specific than student learning, requiring highly professional and differentiated responses.

In this article I want to explore the potentially dynamic relationship between effective CPD and the future of the profession. Effective CPD has the power not only to continually enhance teaching and student learning, it has the power to symbolise the importance of learning and to create detailed evidence about the teacher concerns and needs that CPD (and research) must address. I explore too how CPD can help teachers individually and collectively to take charge of their own future. I want to offer a warning too. Teaching and learning with and for students and continuing learning about these processes involve challenging and complex processes. Quick fix, centrally imposed responses will not rise to this challenge and nor will common sense or introverted recycling of current practice.

## Philippa Cordingley

Philippa Cordingley is founder and chief executive of the Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education (CUREE). She supports NUT, GTC, DfES, the National College for school Leadership and other national agencies in making effective links between continuing professional development and research and is the Co-ordinator of the EPPI registered, NUT sponsored Impact of CPD Review Group.

## The teaching and learning process and its relationship with CPD

CPD is a third order activity, by which I mean teachers teach in order to enable students to learn, so teaching is a second order activity. Teachers undertake CPD in order to learn how to enhance teaching and learning, so CPD exists to service teaching. So the first step is to unlock the key aspects of practice that shape CPD. That means that CPD is complex and can only be understood in relation to practice.

Teaching and learning is a partnership. The learner does the learning and the teacher facilitates this. Where, as in schools now and for the foreseeable future, there are many more learners than teachers engaged in this partnership, teachers have to juggle very quickly a mix of strategies, resources and opportunities in response to diverse students' starting points, needs and actions - all of which interact dynamically. Inevitably teachers have to reduce the number of variables - so that they can focus on those that make most difference to those students at that point in time in that specific context. The moment when teachers act in the presence of students is rather like the narrow waist of an hourglass. There was a lot happening before that moment and much will follow. Before the lesson there were plans, curricula, student experiences, previous lessons, targets and goodness knows what besides. But in this lesson, in this conversation, chance encounter or mentoring session there is the opportunity to act and, above all else, a necessity to make a judgement about what to do. After the lesson, there will be a wide range of other contexts in which learning can be reinforced, undermined, put to use or further developed at home, in school and in the wider world. The "waist" or moment of action is such a narrow point, when set against the two bulbs of the hourglass on either side. The students' learning and actions and the teachers' own actions are compressed or forced into particular shapes and forms by that constraint. Turning such compression into creative tension rather than a straight jacket, demands a complex mix of knowledge about:

- the students;
- the subject/curriculum;
- external expectations and other related demands on learning.

It also demands an equally complex mix of skills including:

- creation of active, motivating and appropriately differentiated opportunities;
- presenting information in stimulating and illuminating ways;
- skilful monitoring activities that create a window into learners' minds so that subsequent activities build on progress to date; and
- the capacity to build purposeful relationships.

This is a truly challenging combination of craft, science, technology and art.

This advanced mix of skills has profound implications for teachers' learning and for the future of the profession. First of all the considerable knowledge and skills involved must be internalised if they are to be deployed quickly in dynamic classroom settings. Internalised knowledge and skills are subconscious and this has two consequences for professional learning. When new strategies or ideas are tried out, teachers are inevitably unaware of their potential knock-on consequences. New approaches almost always mean that established ones, of whose existence teachers were hardly conscious, need unlearning, or at least adjusting; in the middle of change things usually get worse before they get better. Not unnaturally teachers are inclined to resist such disturbances. So if teachers don't have a strong reason to sustain an activity beyond the first wave of confusion, the pull of the status quo can be overwhelming.

A second consequence of internalisation is that teachers hugely underestimate their professional knowledge and skills. They are inclined both to describe their work as "common sense" and yet at the same time to look intensely, almost exclusively to other practitioners for insight or advice - thus belying the common sense rubric.

As a result, CPD for teachers has to be well resourced and structured if it is to be effective. NUT has funded the establishment of a Systematic Research Review Group to explore the impact of CPD to identify the particular ways in which it can support the needs and priorities of future teachers. This group is registered with and supported by the Evidence Informed Policy and Practice Information (EPPI) centre, the DfES sponsored "gold standard" for reviews of education research that offer a means of assessing the weight of evidence alongside a comprehensive description of what is known. The first review, sponsored by the NUT with additional financial support from GTC, explored CPD that was sustained and collaborative and shows how this is linked to positive impacts upon teachers and their teaching and upon pupils' learning. Establishing a link between CPD and both teaching and learning has hitherto been an elusive goal so this evidence is important and striking. This review highlights the importance of:

Teachers working together:

- to create the trust needed to reveal learning needs and difficulties;
- to provide moral support to encourage teachers to persevere through them;
- to create a context for meaningful teacher dialogue about teaching and learning processes; and
- to provide a safe place to acknowledge needs and explore the success and failure of different efforts;

Teachers working on a sustained basis:

- to persevere through early disturbances; and
- to practice new approaches until they can be integrated into a teacher's professional repertoire of skills, knowledge and understanding and thus be deployed through skilled professional judgement;

Teachers working with specialist, external expertise:

- to ensure that new ideas and approaches and the theories underpinning them are based on good evidence about effectiveness; and
- to ensure that similarities and differences with current practice are fully revealed;

Opportunities to practice new approaches with sustained feedback and coaching rooted in shared classroom experiences/observation:

- to ensure that aspects of the complex classroom dynamics that are not visible to the naked eye of the teacher involved in the changes are made available to them; and

opportunities for teachers to identify their own learning needs, within, frameworks or opportunities presented by others (including CPD providers and school leaders).

- The reasons for this are not explicit in the literature but we infer that this is important in ensuring that teachers are able to learn in a zone of effort beyond what they could achieve alone and unsupported (the zone of proximal development as Vygotsky<sup>1</sup> puts it).

The review of sustained and collaborative CPD highlights many benefits that are clearly relevant to the future of the profession from CPD that meets this broad set of criteria including increased teacher:

- self confidence;
- enthusiasm;
- commitment to continuing learning;
- willingness to take risks; and
- confidence in their own profession's capacity to make a difference to students' learning (self and professional efficacy)<sup>2</sup>.

In other words sustained and collaborative CPD carried out for and by teachers



with each other and with external support not only improves practice, it makes a very positive contribution to teachers' personal professional identity.

## **An anatomy of the connections between CPD and the future of the profession**

What does the evidence about effective CPD and about the nature of teaching tell us about the contribution of CPD to the future of the profession? First of all, the evidence suggests that teachers must be seen as central and active agents in their own and their colleagues' professional learning and formation. For example, teachers have a role to play in identifying their own learning needs. To be sure, the more teachers' individual needs are related to the needs of their pupils and their school, the more opportunities they will have for using their new found skills and understanding and the more recognition there is likely to be for their achievements.

But self identification of needs within a professional and/or organisational framework is, in effect, another iteration of the assessment for learning that teachers are developing in classrooms. Building upon what learners know and can do already is a precondition of effective learning. This means differentiation and differentiation for teachers at any point across a 35 year career span is bound to be even more challenging than differentiation for students.

The CPD needs of teachers cannot therefore be defined or understood generically at the level of the school development plan. An effective future for the profession entails much more sophisticated needs identification - and differentiation to ensure that these needs are met. In a situation where all CPD funds are delegated to the level of the school, this implies the development of school accountability to the community as a whole and to its teachers for identifying and meeting professional learning needs.

Teachers also have a central role in meeting their own and their colleagues' learning needs through observation accompanied by feedback, through the professional dialogue that is central to establishing a mutual learning culture and through peer coaching, quite apart from their leadership or managerial responsibilities.

The future of the profession depends upon teachers themselves, together with policy makers at school, LEA, regional and national levels all recognising that sustained and profound professional learning is not a demand on resources that must compete with enhancing learning and raising attainment, or a question of providing on behalf of or, worse still, compensatory support to teachers. It is the central means of achieving those shared learning goals for the system and it is one where teachers themselves are part of the answer not part of the problem.

## The contribution of CPD to the profession at system level

The virtuous circle of professional learning and professional formation for individuals can and should be understood as having the potential to feed a similar positive cycle for the profession as a whole. I'd like to illustrate this by creating an archetype of quite a large number of similar enquiry or peer coaching related forms of CPD in which I have been involved.

Pairs or groups of teachers engaging in collaborative enquiry or peer coaching related to thinking skills<sup>3</sup> have looked at claims for research about strategies with a power to make a difference, explore which strategies best address their own and their students' learning needs and set out to try these strategies as a means of enhancing practice. They may have undertaken this as an explicit CPD programme like the NUT peer coaching programme in Thinking Skills or as part of a more formal enquiry or research project, perhaps through the NUT supported scholarships or within the Networked Learning Communities (NLC) initiative.

Within either type of framework teachers will have worked with colleagues to identify specific goals, questions or needs to be addressed and specific means of doing so. They have experimented with new approaches using each other to observe what happens and so provide information or evidence not available to the teacher wrapped up in the moment of action. Colleagues will have provided feedback based on the observation in relation to the teachers' aims and expressed learning objectives and, together, the teachers will explore the different implications and meanings of pupils' responses and further potential refinements.

The dialogue, grounded in school classroom experiences, offers the capacity to extend teachers' professional understanding, knowledge and repertoire of strategies, thus reinforcing confidence that for example, even unsuccessful experiments can lead to more profound learning and a sense of self efficacy. Excited teacher conversation of this kind is infectious in staff rooms, particularly if it focuses over time on noticeable changes in pupils' learning. School leaders at various levels have also been anxious to learn about benefits from the investment. The dialogue resulting from shared work will have made sharing the learning with leadership colleagues both easier and more effective thus enhancing individual and collective professional learning.

Where the learning and enquiry extends to more explicit forms of research, teachers become recognised creators of knowledge about teaching and learning. If systematically pursued, reviewed and analysed cumulatively such developments have the power to inform the wider policy agenda and the wider identity of the profession and its needs and influence. This is evident in the increasing interest in teacher case studies providing systematic evidence of development and illustration of the processes involved.

Certainly teacher audiences have shown great enthusiasm for accessing such materials at national teacher research and CPD conferences such as those offered at the TTA DfES Teacher Research Conference 2001 and various NUT CPD conferences that have highlighted teachers' own research. The increasing use of such materials to illustrate and support web presentations of larger scale research (GTC Research of the Month - [www.gtce.org.uk/research/romhome.asp](http://www.gtce.org.uk/research/romhome.asp) and Neighbourhood Renewal [www.renewal.net/](http://www.renewal.net/)) is similarly extending the recognition and use of the outcomes of teacher CPD and research.

Beyond the direct benefits of individual teacher studies, teacher enquiry, taken collectively, also has the potential to inform the wider education research agenda. Huberman<sup>4</sup>, one of the most influential writers about research dissemination and impact suggests that one of the ways in which academic education research can effectively contribute to practice is through cumulative analysis of teacher research questions.

Whilst identifying and analysing teachers' research questions is currently observed more in the breach than in reality, it could be an important avenue for ensuring that teacher CPD contributes to the development of the profession as a whole as well as for individual teachers. The relationship between education research and CPD is directly relevant to the future of the profession too. Both the systematic research review of collaborative and sustained CPD and the evaluation of publicly funded post graduate INSET (mainly subsidised masters programmes) have emphasised the importance of specialist external support to complement internal peer support within CPD programmes that make a difference. This partnership is slowly being re-framed, in particular through dialogue about the nature, purpose and utility of education research and the growth of teacher interest in research and evidence informed practice.

Current Government policy in the UK has quite properly placed teaching and learning or pedagogy at the heart of its policy agenda, at least in principle. The development of teacher engagement in and with research as a component of CPD started to gather force in 1995 with David Hargreave's<sup>5</sup> provocative and inspiring paper about the problems within traditional academic education research and the need for teachers to engage with knowledge creation about their profession.

Initiatives from professional associations such as the NUT scholarships scheme, the development of Teacher Research Grants from the TTA and the DfES Research Grants to the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) sponsored Networked Learning Communities initiative that now involves over 1,000 schools, have created optional and permissive spaces for teacher initiated work in this area. Over 15,000 teachers have been actively creating knowledge about their profession whilst attending to their own professional learning over the last 4 years.

The time is therefore ripe for the systematic collection of research questions identified by teachers as part of their CPD in order to enable systematic and cumulative analysis of their concerns and needs. This would enable CPD to feed directly into needs identification for the profession as a whole whilst simultaneously informing the education research agenda thus helping to create an increasingly secure and relevant evidence base for professional practice

## **A second arena for CPD to contribute to professional formation**

There is another area where CPD has the capacity to contribute to the individual and collective formation of professional expertise and identity; one that is perhaps more immediately in the control of the profession since research funding is still channelled pretty exclusively through higher education.

This is collaborative curriculum development and design. I believe that CPD could be considerably enhanced by greater opportunities for teachers to be involved on a sustained and collaborative basis in curriculum development and design. I believe too that such involvement is essential if such work is to be meaningfully focused upon learning in ways that are practical and capable of responding to the rapid changes in young people's lives and the demands society places upon schools. Finally, I believe that curriculum development and design is fundamental to the future of the profession and collective professional self-esteem.

There is a clear, logical link between the importance of teacher contribution to the curriculum and the future of the profession. The decisions about the knowledge and skills that are so valued that they are the focus of the public education system are a fundamental expression of national cultural values. Therefore the framework for such decisions is properly made through the democratic process.

But beyond the framework, the curriculum is given life through the actions of teachers and their interactions with their pupils. Teachers so inhabit the curriculum that they understand it in the form in which they explore it with their pupils. In a study of effective teachers of literacy, Medwell, et al.<sup>6</sup> found that teachers whose students made highly effective learning gains demonstrably knew the curriculum intimately and in great depth. The researchers observed seminal lessons addressing every aspect of literacy teaching in highly skilled ways that elicited and responded to their pupils' knowledge and understanding.

The same teachers however, failed to perform well in out of context assessments of their literacy knowledge. The lesson here is not a negative one about teachers' abstract knowledge. It is a positive one about the importance of intimate knowledge of the curriculum as it is enacted.

Given the excellent progress of these teachers' students and what we know about internalised or tacit professional knowledge, it is also a strong indicator of the importance of an active role for teachers of the future in adapting, interpreting and extending the curriculum so that it is able to respond to the needs of society as they change.

The link between CPD and engagement in the process of developing, interpreting and enhancing the curriculum has long been recognised by academics as important to the role of teachers in framing their own identity and their place within the democratic framework<sup>7</sup>. Appropriately structured, these activities can also match closely the components of effective CPD set out earlier in this article as the following example shows.

From 1991-1994 I engaged in a three year evaluation of the links between INSET and classroom practice for Bradford LEA. I interviewed several people in both year one and year three of the project. In year one they had been working as advisory teachers or curriculum developers for the LEA, principally involved in responding to the National Curriculum.

At the end of year three they had returned to posts in schools as heads of department and deputy heads. What struck me then and now was the passion with which they expressed their view that sustained and creative interpretation of national curriculum frameworks provided one of the most fertile vehicles to professional learning.

I am struck by how close the two processes are or at least can be to each other. The business of curriculum design and development has to be sustained and collaborative if it is to be something more than the writing of policies to gather dust on the shelves of offices, work and staff rooms given the number of people, and interlocking or interdependent activities involved. Design, by definition, involves trailing or experimentation and refinement, as David Hargreaves put it "tinkering"<sup>8</sup>.

All of these processes require dialogue between teachers that is rooted in evidence (about the curriculum in theory and in its current practical forms). Specialist expertise will play a strong role within the school and also beyond it as national frameworks and/or evidence from research or elsewhere are used to integrate current practices.

Many teacher enquiries developed under the Best Practice Research Scholarship (BPRS) scheme take the form of curriculum development. The learning foci of many Networked Learning Communities (NLCs) also embrace the development of the curriculum in relation to the needs of specific groups of students (e.g. gifted and talent pupils or pupils with special needs and/or new curriculum requirement such as citizenship).

The reform of the National Curriculum is in the air. How many other national education policies have remained relatively untouched for 15 years? Curriculum reform for 14-18 students is already being considered within a

much broader framework than has hitherto been possible for this group.

My concluding point therefore is that curriculum development and interpretation together with a systemic adoption of models of CPD that build upon what we know from research are pivotal to the future of the profession. They would provide both symbolic and concrete operational resources showing that teachers have the power to be the solution not the problem and that they sign up for the learning that they urge upon their students. This would leave proper space for and truly complement the specification of a spare, central curriculum and professional framework.

Such a vision seems to me to offer an important opportunity - to provide both means and ends that are consistent with increasingly well informed professional judgement, skills, self-esteem, self-efficacy and better learning for pupils. But above all it would recognise that CPD is a process created for and by teachers, in partnership with other experts and national policy makers in the service of helping all students meet their full potential. It may not be cheap, quick or easy but it will be effective. ■

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# Future perfect

**Abstract:** *An increasingly test based culture means that school performance is ascertained by very limited measures. Both the current and previous governments have subscribed to the same wrong-headed idea that the effectiveness of what is put into a school can be evaluated simply by what comes out. In this article the author writes from his long teaching experience on what is really necessary to improve schools for pupils and teachers.*

**M**ORE than thirty years ago Edward Blishen edited “The school that I’d like”, a compilation of children’s responses to a competition set by *The Observer*. Many of their concerns: dull assemblies, poor school food and dilapidated buildings, might nowadays be little different and if they complained about exams then how would they feel now? Nevertheless, much has changed and some things have improved. The introduction of technologies based on computing will seem beyond pupils’ wildest expectations. However, whilst the curriculum has altered vastly, it is not necessarily in ways wished for then. Many students’ expressed hopes that learning should become more flexible, integrated and relevant to the world in which they expected to live their lives have yet to materialise.

What if teachers, especially those charged with the responsibility of leading schools, were offered a similar opportunity to propose improvements? Just in case, here is my contribution.

Much of what comprises the dead hand around the processes of education can be traced back to the way in which school performance is ascertained by very limited measures. Both the current and previous governments have subscribed to the same wrong-headed idea that the effectiveness of what is put into a school can be evaluated simply by what comes out. “Wrong-headed” because what comes out is being measured solely by the results of external assessment: SATs, GCSEs or AS and A levels. This has resulted in a culture in schools where headteachers feel under inordinate pressure to produce results, a pressure even the most empathetic cannot help but pass onto staff. Much more damaging is the way that only what appears to contribute to these outcomes is deemed significant. Exam results have steadily improved for a number of reasons but mainly because they have had to! Teachers have

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## Alan McFadden

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become expert in helping pupils pass them and their narrow focus has led to an assessment driven curriculum, often incredibly limited. Like many teachers, I feel I spend an inordinate amount of time on material which frankly does not intrinsically merit the attention. Schools and teachers must be held accountable but please not by such crude and ultimately reductive methods. Even the value added refinements, welcome in some respects, may serve only to disguise the broader problem caused by placing so much store on so little.

### **Attaining perfection**

And yes, we do have OFSTED, the mechanism by which a true picture of a school's effectiveness should be judged. Unfortunately even the best schools are placed under unnecessary pressure by an impending visitation - much of the stress is created by the necessity of ensuring all appears faultless. Teachers know full well that they and their school must, like all others, attain a level of perfection which simply does not match everyday reality. If they fail to create this impression their school will suffer; if they do well they will simply be playing their part in sustaining unrealistic expectations of schools. Staff are all too aware of this conundrum, itself a source of great concern to teachers who feel powerless in the face of such a contradiction. Personally I would prefer unannounced visits to my school or classroom providing every school and teacher were treated the same and the visits were regular so that a true picture was obtained. Yes, this would be expensive but it could be funded by money currently designated for the apparatus of testing and assessment. However, the reason why this won't happen is not financial, it is political. Has any Government the courage to find out the true nature of our schools and the problems facing them? I suspect not, because once the real problems were identified solutions would have to be found which that would cost not only a great deal of money but also human capital - the education system would need a greater share of the talent available in the workforce. Teaching as a career would have to be made far more attractive in terms of competitive salaries but also, and I would contend even more essential, working conditions.

As a manager I believe the greatest threat to maintaining standards, let alone further raising them, is the difficulty many schools experience in recruiting high quality teachers. Of course they do exist and many of our young teachers are at least as able and committed as any I have known but there simply are not enough of them. Too many schools, particularly in inner city areas and the whole of the south east, are struggling on with unfilled vacancies, perhaps covered by temporary or overseas trained teachers, often employing instructors without the capacity to train them to become effective. This Government has begun to make a career in teaching more accessible by improving salaries and offering salary grant on the Graduate Teacher Programme but the job must be made more attractive.



The school working time initiative does offer some hope of improvement in the teacher's lot; at last there is some attempt to define the core tasks of a teacher and how best can they be achieved. For far too long government, both local and national, has failed to address these issues. Only by clearing away those mundane destroyers of teachers' energy and absorbers of teachers' time, can teachers be free to be creative, empathetic and efficient. Only when the job of a teacher is made anything like manageable can anyone distinguish between that great majority of teachers who perform their role conscientiously, and the few who do not!

Managing groups of children for extended periods, whilst at the same time advancing their learning, is the central role of a teacher; tasks which are carried out routinely by no other group of people. In fact it is churlish not to recognise, both professionally and in terms of salary, anyone who does carry out this role. Simply filling the gaps with classroom assistants is neither realistic nor does it make any kind of sense educationally. State schools have been encouraged to imitate the best of what might be found in the independent sector; to my knowledge using unqualified assistants is not part of their routine practice! Classroom assistants and non-teaching staff have a great deal to offer schools but teaching should be carried out by teachers.

Provided with sufficient funds we can remove some of those tasks that irritate our staff, but essentially we need more teachers. The single biggest engine for real improvement of our working conditions and for raising pupil achievement I have witnessed is a reduction in the number of pupils a teacher has to deal with; this can only be achieved by smaller classes and a lower contact ratio. Perhaps the vexed question of providing Planning, Preparation and Assessment time (PPA) in primary schools can be addressed by having sufficient staff in local secondary schools so that they teach subjects like modern languages and ICT in the local primary. This could be practicable should primaries be able to accommodate secondary staff when they were "free". This strategy would not only create real free time in primary school but also relieve teachers of yet more demands on their already amazingly wide expertise. Finding additional staff would be a massive challenge but by no means impossible. My experience in training for the GTP suggests there are many able people who would prefer teaching to the soulless demands of too many other jobs.

What has always motivated teachers is a sense of making a difference to pupils' lives, not being a cog in a vast curriculum delivery machine. The best teachers have always required sufficient autonomy to be able to respond to individual needs. Too often today this has been reduced to an injunction to show on paper that a child's needs are being met. Like all teachers I struggle to meet the needs of the individual child whilst at the same time dealing with a group. In any school the system's inability to address a pupil's needs leads

to responses from quite a large number of children that necessitate we deal with them as individuals but so often this is too late and all our valuable time is spent on solving the behaviour problems which have ensued. What would revolutionise schools and the working lives of teachers would be to timetable regular slots with individual pupils in place of periods currently devoted to whole groups. Imagine if 10 or even 20 per cent of a teacher's working week were spent in this way what dividends might follow. Pupils' educational needs

## **What would revolutionise schools and the working lives of teachers would be to timetable regular slots with individual pupils in place of periods currently devoted to whole groups**

could be met and the teacher's day would be transformed.

So far my wish list would be costly though many dividends would result. Many of them might well in the long term save money spent today sustaining an unproductive system. Nevertheless, there are less costly ways to improve the daily experience of teachers and school leaders.

We live in a society where anyone in authority and certainly anyone working in the public service is under great pressure. I feel far too much time is spent by so many staff in school responding to parents who question all that we do. No, I do not want to return to the deferential culture of the past but teachers need more support and protection; parents have responsibilities as well as rights. Recent high profile cases have begun to send out the right message to our communities and might be seen as an attempt on the part of the Government to re-balance after a long period in which schools were seen too much as businesses and parents their customers. This was always far too simple an analogy - the relationships between school and family, teacher and child are far more complex. Education needs the sustained support both of the Government and the media and that means supporting teachers.

### **Creating a culture of trust**

Ultimately the Government needs to show that it trusts teachers. By now it should be clear that many of the problems I have identified, such as league tables to assess schools' performance, stem from a culture of distrust. Similarly the whole plethora of curriculum interventions have their origins in an unwillingness to allow teachers autonomy. As with working conditions, there are signs of hope in the approach found in the Key Stage 3 Strategy. For once I believe school leaders have been offered training materials that benefit from current research reflecting best practice and which are designed to develop

teachers' professional understanding rather than dictate the detail of everyday classroom activity. Reform of the assessment system must follow to return assessment to its proper purpose: informing teachers how much a child has learned and acting as a tool to determine what a child needs to learn next. This would eliminate many of the fundamental contradictions at the heart of our education system and would at a stroke enable teachers to devote their time and energy to the development of individual pupils, the very reason why most became teachers in the first place. Pupils, teachers, schools, all could become winners without ever having to enter the competition! ■

# Literacy for the future

## Sue Palmer

Sue Palmer, an independent writer and inservice-provider, has published many books and articles on children's literacy and contributed to National Literacy Strategy training packages.

**Abstract:** *Literacy in the future will make higher demands on oracy skills, particularly the ability to speak in a "literate" way. This article looks at how current practice in primary schools may be contributing to, but also inhibiting, the development of such skills. It also considers the effects of changes in primary school staffing policies on the spoken language models available to children.*

**A** while ago, I was invited on to BBC Radio 4 Woman's Hour to discuss "the old and new literacies". As a travelling literacy specialist, my job was to argue the case for old-fashioned reading and writing skills. Representing literacy in the future was Chris Yapp, an information technology expert who advises the Government on what children need now to equip them for life in the year 2020.

If Jenni Murray expected disagreement, she was disappointed. I am all in favour of new technology in the classroom, as long as children also learn to read and write; Dr Yapp agreed that success in the new literacies would continue to be underpinned by competence in the old.

But one thing he said during the discussion has echoed through my brain ever since. It was that children entering primary school today need plenty of opportunities to read aloud, recite poetry, and take part in spoken presentations. When they enter the workplace, 15 to 20 years hence, he explained, computers will be operated by voice-activated software. Handwriting, spelling and keyboard skills may well be redundant, but clear articulation will be at a premium.

Even before that meeting, I had - like many others on the literacy scene - been concerned at the lack of attention to speaking and listening in the primary National Literacy Strategy. I was convinced that a major factor in the apparently intractable problem of teaching writing was that excessive concentration on pencil and paper work left no time for active learning - opportunities for children to acquire ideas, experiences and language. Briefly, pupils had nothing to write about, and - without preliminary opportunities to talk - no words in which to write it.

Talk is, of course, a vital component of all learning. Opportunities for talk across the curriculum help children engage with ideas, consolidate understanding and absorb new information into memory. Talk before writing provides opportunities to develop a range of appropriate vocabulary, to firm up ideas and feelings on a subject, and to start putting those ideas into some sort of order. The conversation with Dr Yapp provided another, deeply pressing, argument in favour of speaking and listening: technology will soon expect us to talk, rather than write, our ideas on to the page.

### **Differences between spoken and written language**

The importance of “clear articulation”, however, is only the tip of the literacy iceberg. Significant though articulation may be from the point of view of IT software, it is no more important to the quality of the writing than neat handwriting and careful spelling is to a written piece today. Until five years ago, the teaching of writing was deeply hindered by a general misconception that it was merely a matter of transcriptional skills, the spelling and handwriting required to put the words on the page.

Writing is about much, much more than mere transcription. It is about organising ideas into an intelligible form and composing explicit, coherent sentences in which to express them. For most children, learning to read and write involves learning a whole new way of using language, moving from the familiar fragmented patterns of spoken language to the more complex, organised patterns of the written form. Speech is interactive - batting words and phrases back and forth - and produced within a shared context, so a great deal of meaning goes by on the nod. Writing, on the other hand, must be explicit, complex, crafted. It requires a wide vocabulary and a greatly enlarged repertoire of sentence constructions. To dictate successfully into their computers, our children will need not only clear articulation, but the capacity to talk, fluently, in written - rather than spoken - language patterns.

This capacity is, in fact, a recognised by-product of literacy learning. As people become literate, the more complex structures of written language feed, on formal occasions, into their speech. In fact, we can all assess pretty accurately how “literate” someone is without ever witnessing them in the act of reading or writing. We can tell by the sort of words they use, the complexity of their language, their ability to express ideas clearly and cogently, their access (when required) to the grammatical forms of standard English. What we call “literacy” is just as recognisable in individuals’ ability to “talk like a book” as in their capacity to read or write one.

### **Developing literate talk through reading and writing**

How then do we help children to “talk like books”, this important literacy skill of the future? There are three main ways that the skill can be developed. First,

and most obviously, children can be encouraged to read, and to read widely. This is a “natural” way to pick up written language patterns, just as we pick up spoken language patterns - through exposure. There has been considerable emphasis in the last five years on the teaching of reading, and much celebration of increased test scores of 11 year olds. However, while many children read well enough to achieve an “average” score in the Key Stage 2 tests, surveys suggest that a dwindling number actually take advantage of the skill to read widely in their spare time.

To a large extent this is a cultural change. Today’s children can access all the entertainment, all the information they need via a screen - in a multimedia world, reading is becoming something of a minority occupation. Teachers wishing to buck the trend complain, however, that there is no longer time in a crowded curriculum to encourage reading for its own sake; and in ring-marked literacy time, the emphasis is on skills needed to pass tests. It seems unlikely that in the future we can rely on children acquiring literate language patterns merely through wide exposure to print.

Second, we can concentrate on the teaching of writing skills, and in this respect there has been much progress in recent years. The National Literacy Strategy’s emphasis on teachers’ own knowledge about grammar, analysis of how texts are put together, and promotion of “shared writing” sessions, when the teacher demonstrates how to write, providing a running commentary on the act of composition, have had widespread influence on practice. However, children also need opportunities to write widely, experimenting with and innovating upon the written language patterns they have met.

As mentioned above, the enforced separation of literacy from the rest of the curriculum, and the lack of preliminary experience and opportunities for talk, has left many children impoverished in terms of ideas and vocabulary. If children have nothing to write about, their ability to compose is seriously undermined. Progress in writing is likely to remain slow until cross-curricular literacy, accompanied by attention to speaking and listening, are back on the agenda.

### **Developing literate talk through speaking and listening**

The third way to address the development of literate talk is as a specific aspect of “oracy” teaching - providing spoken language activities which encourage learning of written language patterns through auditory and articulatory learning channels. One very obvious, time-honoured teaching practice springs to mind: reading aloud. Reading well-written texts aloud provides opportunities for children to hear literate language produced from their own mouths; to discover how standard English and sophisticated vocabulary actually feels; to respond physically to the ebb and flow of well-constructed sentences. Sadly, pupils have few opportunities to read aloud in today’s

primary classroom. The National Literacy Strategy's main vehicle for developing individual reading is "guided" group work, where emphasis is on the development of reading strategies or discussion of aspects of the text.

There is also little time for listening to good books read aloud. One casualty of our overcrowded, increasingly target-driven curriculum has been the tradition of "storytime", when the teacher reads a serialised story aloud to the class. This tried and tested way of turning children on to books, while simultaneously tuning them into the sounds and rhythms of written language, has been abandoned in many Key Stage 2 classrooms due to lack of time.

More sophisticated speaking and listening tasks - pupils crafting speeches for themselves, with plenty of opportunity to prepare and rehearse before

**...the enforced separation of literacy from the rest of the curriculum, and the lack of preliminary experience and opportunities for talk, has left many children impoverished in terms of ideas and vocabulary.**

public presentation - would also clearly develop the capacity for literate spoken language, but I have already mentioned the paucity of these activities in today's primary classroom. While "Speaking and Listening" is an integral part of the English National Curriculum, it was not specifically included in the National Literacy Strategy Framework for Teaching which, five years ago, most schools were encouraged to adopt. Teachers, pressed for time by the manifold demands of the curriculum and constant Government initiatives, have believed ever since that speaking and listening are not particularly valued by the educational elite. Coverage of spoken language also suffered because it was by its nature ephemeral: teachers could provide no "evidence" of the time and effort accorded to it. The National Primary Strategists and QCA are attempting to redress this balance with the issue of new guidelines on speaking and listening during 2003, but considerable damage has already been done.

### **Providing models of literate language use**

There is one group of children, however, for whom our tests-and-targets culture is unlikely to affect the development of relatively literate speech patterns. These are middle-class children who spend their lives surrounded by literate adults. Not only do middle-class parents encourage reading, compensating for the loss of "storytime" at school by reading aloud (or often providing books on tape) at home, but their own speech usually reflects written language patterns, exposing their off-spring to sophisticated, educated use of language from their earliest years. If we need evidence of this, we have

only to look at the many middle-class dyslexics who, despite their difficulties with the written word, still sound extremely “literate”. While middle-class children still need to be taught literacy skills, they have a head-start in terms of translating these into more sophisticated patterns of spoken language.

One of the aims of universal primary education has been to compensate children from economically-deprived homes for any social and intellectual advantages denied by their birth. This, of course, includes linguistic disadvantage. Throughout the twentieth century, we expected more and more from our primary teachers, demanding ever higher levels of educational achievement and training, which ensured that teachers provided the same models of literate language in school that middle-class children were lucky enough to meet at home. However, the first three years of the new century have seen a huge change in the educational qualifications of the adults employed to interact with, and talk to, primary children.

The employment of teaching assistants to take over increasing levels of day-to-day classroom interaction with pupils has meant we can no longer assume a certain level of “literateness” in the spoken language models school offers. While some teaching assistants (particularly in wealthier areas) are educated to degree level or beyond, many (especially in economically-deprived areas) have not been lucky enough to have much of an education themselves. Children who need help to move beyond context-bound, implicit spoken language patterns, are now often being “taught” by adults themselves trapped by a limited lexicon and impoverished awareness of grammatical constructions. As teachers increasingly move into a managerial role in the classroom, access to literate language models for all children will be further reduced.

Throughout the twentieth century, an increasingly democratic educational system allowed innumerable children from working class homes to attain, through literacy, the freedom to achieve their full potential - some of us even got to appear on Woman’s Hour. Unless we look seriously at where our tests-and-targets culture and our increasing dependence on untrained staff is leading us, we may end up denying the next generation access to that same precious freedom. ■



# Gender stereotyping and primary schools: moving the agenda on

**Abstract:** *This article explores how many of the current approaches taken to tackle boys' under-achievement are unhelpful in breaking down gender stereotypes. It reviews the outcomes of nearly 30 years of equal opportunities policies in schools for pupils and teachers. An alternative approach, based on gender relational theory, is suggested in order to challenge boys' and girls' ideas of what it means to be a "proper boy" or "proper girl".*

In the years immediately following the passing of the Sex Discrimination Act in 1975, attention was centred on the inequalities experienced by girls and women teachers. An array of evidence was produced by feminist academics and teachers indicating that girls experienced a very different education to that of boys, and female teachers a very different career to that of their male colleagues. For example, in those days prior to a National Curriculum, topics were taught that would appeal to boys to keep them motivated and interested; assessment procedures were found to be biased in favour of boys and girls were channelled into subjects related to their expected future domestic role.<sup>1</sup>

It is fair to say that significant progress has been made since this time in the educational opportunities of some, but not all, girls. It remains the case that the inter-relationship of gender, social class and ethnicity means that a substantial number of girls are not succeeding in school.<sup>2,3</sup> Similarly, while there are far more female headteachers of schools today than in the 1970s and 1980s, males continue to be disproportionately represented in positions of authority and, as a consequence, the average salary of male teachers is higher than that of their female colleagues.<sup>2</sup>

## Christine Skelton

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These ongoing gender differences have been superseded since the mid-1990s by concerns over boys' under-achievement. The high profile given by the Government and media to "the problems of boys" has been greeted somewhat wearily by those of us who have long worked in this area, not least because girls' under-achievement has never been regarded as being of particular concern by official bodies. Perhaps of more surprise is why, when there is such concern over the "gender gap", so little notice appears to be taken of the evidence that shows not all boys are failing and, indeed some are doing well.<sup>3</sup>

Setting to one side the arguments that demonstrate differences between boys (say comparisons between white, working-class and white, middle-class boys) are of more consequence than trying to compare "boys" with "girls", the question is why does stereotyping by gender continue to be an easy and unproblematic official device for looking at pupil performance? Why, after all these years of equal opportunities policies and strategies that alert teachers to their own gendered expectations and ask them to encourage non-stereotyped behaviours and attitudes in the children in their classes, are we encouraged by officialdom to enforce gender stereotyping?

*The Times Educational Supplement* noted recently that the Government had "announced a co-ordinated challenge to the laddish anti-learning culture" by requiring "local authorities to tackle the issue and curriculum advice for teachers from the exam watchdog".<sup>4</sup>

### **Why boys' under-achievement strategies will not work**

There are two ways of looking at why strategies aimed at boys' under-achievement will not work. The first perspective is based on the premise that boys are under-achieving because the equal opportunity approaches used by schools to combat gender stereotyping have gone "too far" suggesting that it is these very strategies that have caused boys' under-achievement.<sup>5</sup> This argument suggests that equal opportunities initiatives were not aimed at boys, only at encouraging girls to be more assertive and confident, gain an interest in traditionally male curriculum areas such as maths and technology, and to become more competitive in their outlook. To put it briefly, these strategies helped girls to become more "boy-like". Proponents of this stance say that, as a consequence, boys have felt challenged by these more assertive behaviours of girls and have either become "soft" (victims) or even more "laddish" in order to assert their masculinity over the girls' apparent adoption of masculine behaviours.<sup>6</sup>

The aim then is to eliminate the negative attitudes associated with "laddism" by providing boys with more positive images of "doing male" -but from what has been offered so far this seems to be a reinforcement, rather than a challenging of, traditional gender stereotyping. For example, Government-funded schemes include Playing for Success and Fantasy Football (a pilot

scheme run to assess its potential for raising standards of numeracy), both of which are based on football, the epitome of traditional, dominant forms of masculinity.

A further approach utilised by the Government has been the attempt to recruit more men teachers, particularly into primary schools, in the anticipation that they will provide disaffected boys with exemplars of alternative (i.e. more compliant) forms of masculinity. Yet there is no clear articulation by the Teacher Training Agency of the kinds of male teachers they want to recruit, nor is there any evidence to suggest that male teachers do, or want to, offer “alternative” - non stereotypical - types of masculinity.

To complement such official gendered responses to tackling boys’ laddish behaviours are the published books and resources that similarly encourage schools to treat boys as both a homogenous group and different to girls, thereby requiring separate and different teaching approaches.<sup>7,8</sup> The best that can be achieved by pursuing such strategies is that the educational achievement and motivation of some boys may be increased. The worst, and more likely, scenario is that teachers and pupils are encouraged to see learning styles, achievement and ability solely in terms of gender differences.

A second perspective on why strategies to tackle boys’ under-achievement will not succeed is based on what we have learned does not work, in terms of changing children’s notions of appropriate gendered behaviours. If the policies adopted by schools over the last 20 years to eliminate educational inequalities had been effective, then we would not today be worrying over boys’ laddish behaviours and their subsequent disinclination for schoolwork.

The aims of these policies were, after all, to help divest children of ideas that certain areas of the curriculum were for girls (such as English) or for boys (such as maths/science) or that only boys could play football while girls occupied the home corner. However, the evidence is that techniques applied to eliminating gender stereotypical attitudes and behaviours have not worked. A survey of recent research literature on gender shows that girls continue to be less confident about their abilities and that boys, even if not acting in traditionally dominant male ways, position themselves as being a “proper boy” in the classroom.<sup>8</sup>

### **Tackling gender stereotyping in primary schools**

The reason why strategies seen as helping to eliminate children’s stereotyped attitudes and behaviours have been largely ineffective is because they were based on sex role theories which have themselves been challenged in recent years. Strategies based on sex roles assume that young girls learn how to be a girl by receiving approval for feminine traits such as caring, gentleness and helpfulness, whilst young boys learn that they are expected to be boisterous, rough and energetic.

Children pick up these gendered messages from their relationships with their families, their interactions with their local communities, nursery workers and primary teachers, as well as the media. So the way of redressing the images they have picked up is for schools to offer alternatives. For example, primary schools would make sure male and female dolls were available in the home corner; wall displays and friezes would show adults in non-traditional roles such as female doctors and fire officers and male nursery workers. In addition, girls were given opportunities to play with constructional toys while boys were encouraged into the writing corner.

Recent theories about gender have challenged sex role theories saying that children are not passive respondents who simply absorb society's messages about how to act in a gender appropriate way. Nor is gender fixed and unchanging regardless of the context (for example, a girl might quietly play with her friends one minute and be seen to be scrambling up the climbing frame, shouting out to them, the next).

## **...these strategies helped girls to become more "boy-like".**

Furthermore, the context has an important role to play in how gender is seen. For example, a school I

undertook research in was located in a particularly tough area. The school understood being a "school boy" meant being confrontational, requiring tremendous encouragement to work and needing socialising into schooling. As such, the incentive system of the school was geared towards rewarding those disaffected boys who occasionally demonstrated they could co-operate with the school's expectations.

Unfortunately, it meant that those boys who were never anything other than co-operative and hardworking could not access the reward system simply because the school was not geared up to encouraging the continuation of such behaviours. Yet if those same boys had been pupils at the other school I researched in, located in a middle-class, suburban area, they would have been in a much better position - because that school had a different conception of "school boy", one that rewarded diligence and co-operation. The problem then with strategies that have been based on sex role theories is that they assume there is such a person as a "typical boy" or "typical girl".

These more recent theories on gender indicate that in devising strategies to tackle gender stereotyping we need to take account of four principles, specifically that:

- boys and girls are active participants in constructing their masculine and feminine identities;
- schools need to recognise the images of masculinity and femininity the pupils bring with them into the school;

- the school should identify what images of masculinity and femininity it projects to its pupils;
- teachers need to ascertain if they want boys and girls to act in different ways and ask whether they make assessments about their abilities based on gendered expectations.

The intention here is for schools to recognise that strategies to tackle gender stereotyping must be based on the situation in that specific school. The theory underpinning this approach is referred to as “gender-relational” theory which is where there is an understanding that boys become boys by learning what it means not to be a girl and girls become girls by learning what it means not to be a boy. So if a school praises a number of girls in a class for their enthusiasm for literacy activities and their outstanding achievements in English Key Stage tests, boys will not want to be seen to be doing the same. Boys do not want to put themselves in a position whereby they can be seen to be enjoying or being successful at the same activities as girls, lest they be accused of “being a girl”. Indeed, at certain ages, they prefer to act as if the “other” did not exist so it is hardly surprising if they reject initiatives aimed at entering the other gender’s sphere.

Once a school has identified what images and expectations of masculinities and femininities, it, the teachers and the pupils are bringing to the classroom, there is a basis for moving forward. Whereas in those strategies developed on sex role theories advocated that opportunities simply be offered to children to take up activities associated with the opposite sex, in gender relational theory, the adult is the key person in developing awareness both in terms of behaviours and intervening in children’s play.

The aim is for adults to introduce pupils to the range of ways of “doing boy” and “doing girl”. An example of this is, “what is a princess?” The whole gamut of ways of “doing princess” can be gained from an examination of Ladybird traditional fairytales, feminist fairytales and examples from our own Royal Family. The following offers some advice as to how teachers might actively intervene to challenge pupils’ existing notions of what is acceptable for “boys” and “girls”:

- Become involved in the full range of classroom activities and be careful not to avoid certain spaces (e.g. research has shown female teachers tend to avoid the sand and water trays, which tend to be favoured by boys rather than girls).
- Observe children’s storylines to identify the ways in which they make sense of themselves and others and find ways of weaving alternate storylines into children’s play which treat the themes of children’s stories seriously, but which are fun.

- Take opportunities to discuss gender stereotypes and expectations with children directly, in classroom debate and discussion of materials.
- If boys or girls dominate a play area they should be asked to question their reasons for doing so. This means that any discussion about gender is firmly based on the children's own storylines and pays attention to what they are saying about their rights to play. For example, teachers might ask "Who can you play with?" "Can only boys play with blocks?" "Can boys and girls play together with blocks?"

To make any advances in gender equality in primary schooling it is important that we pay attention to boys and girls and recognise that social class and ethnicity are as, if not more, significant than gender in developing relevant school policies. Tackling children's conventional stereotypes requires strategies that address pre-existing notions of what being a "proper boy" or "typical girl" means in individual schools. ■

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# The needs and priorities of future teachers - a psychological perspective

**Abstract:** *In a fast changing world, some future needs and priorities will change dramatically but many will remain precisely as they are today. People have a need for both stability and change. Governors have an interest because governing bodies have both a strategic role and a duty of care to employees at their school. Knowledge of chaos theory and scenario planning can give insights into possible futures. Knowledge of the psychological impact of change can give people the tools they need to embrace beneficial change. If head, staff and governors together take control of their destiny, they can be party to inventing the future for their school.*

**T**he pace of change today is such that none of us can keep abreast of it all and this has a negative impact on the control-freakery to which we are all prone. We all want to feel in control and it is well known that one of the primary factors in stress related illness is a feeling of lack of control over events. It would be very easy to become alarmed about possible futures, but by understanding some of the factors on which change depends and by focusing some of that need for control we can become important drivers for change. In that way, the change that occurs will be bottom up rather than top down and that can only be to the advantage of the young people in our schools.

## Jane Phillips

Following a first career in teaching, Jane Phillips undertook two further periods of formal education and now works as a business psychologist. In addition to the development of staff, she has a particular interest in organisational leadership and how this impacts on working practices. She is a governor of a primary school and has also been a governor of two secondary schools. For the past two years she has been Chair of NAGM (the National Association of Governors and Managers).

## Why is this a governor issue?

Governing bodies have ultimate responsibility for almost everything that happens in their schools. This ranges from “keeping the school land free of litter” to appointing the headteacher. They have three designated roles, strategic - looking to the future of the school; accountability - being

accountable themselves and holding the school to account, and “critical friend” - both supporting and challenging the practices of the school. Although, in most schools, the LEA is the employer, governing bodies also carry significant employment responsibilities towards staff, including a “duty of care”. This duty entails attention to employees’ present needs and priorities and to a large extent their responsibility is conducted through their

agent, the headteacher. From a psychological perspective, people’s needs include: stress reduction, attention to work/life balance, appropriate deployment and career path development. Some of these are specified in the Workload Agreement, and although the governor organisations were not signatories to the agreement, we will be bound by it.

## **The psychological needs and peculiarities of people are defining factors in both the pace and the breadth of change.**

## What does chaos theory tell us about the future?

Chaos theory was formulated by physicists but has implications for any organisation which is of sufficient size to allow description as a complex adaptive system. A school is a complex adaptive system as is the education system as a whole. I asked a physicist at Cambridge University to explain chaos theory to me in one sentence, and in words that I could understand. A tall order but she nearly managed it: “In complex systems the initial conditions have a huge effect on the outcome. So if you vary the initial conditions by a tiny (possibly undetectable) amount, you will get a completely different outcome. It’s that butterfly’s wing thing.” She realised she had my attention so launched into Quantum theory: “And Quantum theory states that you cannot know the starting conditions completely. This means you can’t predict the future.”

Thus, in our schools and in our education system (a complex system if ever there was one) the logical link that we expect between input and outcome (A leads to B leads to C) is unreliable. Any input can have any number of possible outcomes; some can be predicted and some can’t. In my profession, we call this the “law of unintended consequences”. Those of you involved in organisational development and change management in your schools will recognise this phenomenon. It happens whenever a change occurs in one part of the system. If the change agent understands the system s/he will have predicted and pre-empted most problems. If not - that butterfly’s wing could be fanning a hurricane.



It is for school leaders - and these are distributed throughout the school - to understand the system they are developing. If they do not understand the present, they will never be able to predict the future. And if they cannot predict their possible futures, they cannot invent the future they want. But understanding of their system is, in itself, not enough. The school and the education system are part of a bigger complex adaptive system - society.

### **What can scenario planning offer?**

At present, throughout the country, LEAs and others are undertaking “2020 Schools Projects” or projects under some similar title. Groups of practitioners are looking to the future and trying to anticipate what the school of the future will be like. Scenario planning is a useful tool in these arenas but it is not for the faint hearted!

Scenario planning looks at uncertainty in a structured way. The technique was developed by Shell in the 1980s and has been refined over the intervening years. The technique develops “scenario plots” or “stories”. These are constructed out of driving forces - sometimes called “drivers for change”. While the external forces that can drive a plot are innumerable, they can be segmented into two categories; environmental forces and actions of institutions. The environmental forces which are usually cited are: economic, social, cultural, ecological and technological events, trends and developments. In addition, external forces are produced by other organisations including competitors, political parties, government agencies and regional and international bodies.

For those who have neither the time nor the inclination to explore scenarios in depth, an understanding of the technique can give insights which will aid decision making in school. Greater understanding of the influences external to the school which impinge on practice within can only be of benefit.

### **And psychology?**

The real gap in scenario planning, which impacts on its effectiveness, is its omission of any reference to psychological factors as either drivers or resistors of change. The psychological needs and peculiarities of people are defining factors in both the pace and the breadth of change. And from a moral standpoint, any change agent who neglects the impact of that change on the people involved must be described as negligent.

The study of people as individuals and of people in groups offers some surprises. As an example it is well documented in the psychological literature that people in groups take riskier decisions than those who decide singly. This phenomenon is called “risky shift” and occurs because, in a group, all can abdicate individual responsibility for the decision. This finding is counter-intuitive - most of us believe that a group decision must be more soundly based than one made by an individual. But the phenomenon becomes more

in line with our intuitive thought if we consider the behaviour of crowds. Just ask the police about crowds “turning ugly” and they will tell you of people who are normally law-abiding citizens but who, in a crowd, behave in a truly anti-social manner. So be wary of abdicating responsibility for decision making in your school!

Change is now the main constant - it is always with us. An understanding of the principles of successful change can make it less threatening and possibly even welcome. It would be useful if governments were to understand these principles!

- You must know what something is before you try to change it. Diagnosis is the key to effecting planned change.
- Because all human change takes place in systems or organic units, you cannot change just one isolated element.
- People resist punishment. Change generates discomfort - even change which is desirable. People tend to consider alterations in a familiar system as a form of punishment.
- People are reluctant to undergo temporary discomfort for long-term gain. So those entering a change effort must be provided with support during those early painful stages.
- Change generates stress. This can be reduced by ensuring that people can influence the change - thus gaining a degree of control.
- Participation reduces resistance and self-generated change produces the least resistance; the greater the degree of participation, the greater the chance of success. This means that those with power must be willing to share that power otherwise the proposed change is likely to fail.
- Behavioural change usually comes in small steps. Abrupt changes in behaviour are rare - and probably unhealthy. So we must allow adequate time for changes to take place.

### **In conclusion**

Chaos and Quantum theory suggest that, in a complex world, we cannot know what the future holds. So, in this uncertain world, to quote Alan Kay, “the best way to predict the future is to invent it.” There are external forces, there are internal constraints. But if we, at school level, are together to take control of our destiny we need:

- To know where we’re coming from - to have a shared set of values;
- To know where we want to get to - to have a shared vision;
- To communicate our needs and priorities to those who need to know them; and
- To work collectively and individually to meet those needs and priorities.

This requires greater confidence that we have previously shown - but it will lead to the future we want rather than the future that others want for us.

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# Getting the climate right

## Gloriana Morehead

Gloriana Morehead retired after 32 years in primary education including 12 years as head teacher. She is an active member of the NUT and has served as divisional secretary. She was a performance management consultant and is a governor in two schools.

**Abstract:** *This article outlines the benefits of introducing a school management model that encourages genuine participation in school decision-making. Creating an environment where teachers feel valued and able to contribute to the management of their schools will lead to professionally fulfilled staff who give their all for the education of children in their care and gain the job satisfaction needed to remain in their school and within their chosen profession.*

**W**E are now in the midst of one of the worst shortages of teachers since the 1960s. In spite of an increased number of places the number of students completing training and entering our schools is declining. Even more seriously, rising numbers of newly qualified teachers are leaving the profession after only about three years in the job, and more experienced long serving teachers are seeking to leave through ill health, or a desire to preserve their health.

The problems facing teachers are ones of low pay, too much central direction, unrealistic workload and too much bureaucracy. Teachers feel undervalued and put upon and many will say that the paperwork, directives and target setting has reduced the craft of teaching to a “painting by numbers” approach which lacks creativity, spontaneity and room for individual decision making. Low pay, central direction and bureaucracy - the big questions- are for unions and ministers to sort out. However the way a teacher feels about the job in school is for schools to influence. This should be addressed on the premise that to nurture teachers is to nurture children’s learning. If we are not careful the teaching profession could become staffed by an itinerant band of travellers with no more than a transient interest in the schools where they are teaching. Much can be done to promote health and job satisfaction and help keep teachers in a long-term commitment to their schools and profession. External factors and pressures can be ameliorated by a high quality internal climate.

## Encouraging participation

Gaining a headship entails perseverance, commitment, relevant experience and extra qualifications, together with an element of good fortune. Even so a head teacher does not have a monopoly on expertise in every field and in every circumstance, and must draw on the qualities and knowledge of the staff to make wise decisions. In any school there may be a diversity of experience from the newly qualified to the nearly retired. There will be some staff who have had career breaks, some who have time-consuming family commitments, some who enjoy and wish to stay in classroom teaching and some who are working toward their (promoted) career plan. Ultimate responsibility lies with the head and there will be times when decisions will be made by the head alone, although all the staff, whether promoted or unpromoted, experienced or newly qualified, have a contribution to make to the running of the school. Faced with this wealth of experience and expertise it is helpful if the mindset of the head is more consultative “first among equals” rather than autocratic and hierarchical. To be otherwise loses a treasure house of expertise and considered comment.

For a truly consultative model it is necessary for all to be able to express their opinions without apprehension. For teachers who have not had opportunities or practice to make such contributions it may well be necessary to formalise how this may be done through such means as assertiveness training.

To many, assertiveness conjures up pictures of hectoring and bossy people manipulating others and getting their own way. In contrast true assertiveness enables individuals to express their needs and opinions calmly and rationally without detriment to others. It is not about trying to get needs met in spite of other people or without listening to what they need, but working with them in cooperation.

It embodies such ideas as how to express needs and make requests, how to say no and refuse requests and how to give and receive criticism.

Assertiveness is saying directly what you want or feel without threatening or putting down another person. It is not being aggressive with other people but being open with feelings both positive and negative. It is about resolving conflicts and differences of opinion in a way that leaves all parties feeling good about themselves even if they have not had all their needs met.

Whole staff understanding and shared practice of such principles enables information and ideas to be exchanged freely without fear and without giving or taking offence. It eliminates furtive post-meeting discussion in the corridor as everyone has had an opportunity to contribute to the decision making process and shape the outcome. Agreed actions should then be implemented without exception until further change is seen to be necessary, initiated and agreed by the participants.

## Models of management

It is becoming almost standard practice in primary schools to have a senior management team, often consisting of the head, deputy and one or two senior teachers, and this model is much favoured by OFSTED inspectors. This contradicts the premise that everyone can contribute and can result in school policy being made by the head and a few senior members of staff.

There is much talk within the European Union about the concept of subsidiarity. It means that member states, while respecting European directives, have the opportunity to make local decisions. In other words, decisions are taken at the level at which they must operate, and this idea could well be borrowed for use in schools.

The senior management model is hierarchical and would have the head and small fixed team identifying and discussing an area for change, and then either presenting their deliberations at a full staff meeting for further discussion, or directly instructing staff to implement their action plan.

The subsidiary model is task-orientated and would have the head and those closest to the situation exploring the problem together. This means that no one has imperatives about their sphere of work drawn up in their absence, they can feel ownership of the decisions made and consequently have a vested interest in putting them into practice. It also means that everyone can be involved at some stage as each “working party” may have a different membership and always includes those most affected.

The two models are diametrically opposed; one is a passive top-down model where staff wait to be told where improvement is needed and what to do about it; the other is bottom-up where staff are more active in evaluating their own situation and suggesting initiatives.

## Building confidence

When staff are fully involved in making and carrying out policy decisions they need to have confidence in themselves and their professional ability and also to feel that their head and colleagues have confidence in them. The surest way to build this confidence is through praise, encouragement and professional development.

On the same principle that teachers should “catch children being good” so a head and colleagues can find numerous times in the school day when teachers can be given genuine, warm, but not ostentatious praise. It means a lot to hard-pressed professionals that someone has noticed and commented on their work in a positive manner outside the formal appraisal system.

Teachers also need to be encouraged to take on tasks, responsibilities and initiatives to develop their expertise and enhance their experience. As a backdrop to this they need comprehensive and relevant in-service training and professional development that can take many forms and guises.

Each school now has to have a performance management policy that also embodies training and professional development. However, to gain the best from this, the teacher needs to take a pro-active part. Ideally at the annual meeting with their team leader they should come with a clear idea of how they can best move forward. They might ask themselves such questions as, “What are the main tasks and responsibilities of my current post? During the past year what aspects of my job have given me the most satisfaction and how can I build on these? What has given me the least satisfaction and can anything be done about this? Did anything prevent me from achieving something I intended or hoped to do? To help improve my performance in my job, what changes would I like to see in the school organisation? What additional things might be done by my head teacher? Me? Anyone? What might be my main objectives for next year? How would I like to see my career developing?”

Some of these questions impinge on school management and organisation and, in an open climate, could and should be raised at any time outside the performance management structure.

### **Working smarter - not harder**

Even when teachers are consulted, trained and appreciated still more is needed. Staff should feel included in the team and be treated not only as a worker but as a whole human being with a life outside school. At times this other life will be the uppermost focus of concern and the teacher will need and expect flexibility and support. On these occasions it is well if the LEA and the school have adopted family friendly policies. Individuals may need varying levels of support and it is worth bearing in mind that fair treatment does not necessarily always mean absolutely equal treatment.

## **The subsidiary model is task-orientated and would have the head and those closest to the situation exploring the problem together. This means that no one has imperatives about their sphere of work drawn up in their absence...**

The head must try to ensure that teachers can achieve a satisfactory work/life balance and encourage them to work smarter - not harder. Often this means trying to devise the shortest and most economical way to satisfy external demands without internal overload.

Schools are subjected to many initiatives and targets and heads themselves are pressured to deliver on someone else's agenda. Some respond by ensuring that every minute of available directed time is filled. However, teachers know

best when and how they can fulfil workload. Some like early mornings, some stay in school working in the evenings and some leave school promptly to fulfil their family obligations and work later in the evening.

Similarly, to help teachers juggle their lives, meetings should be scheduled well in advance, have a known agenda and operate on a “task and finish” basis.

The need to protect staff from excessive workload means that the head has to sieve and prioritise the myriad directives, initiatives and targets coming into school. Contrary to current exhortations, the answer cannot always be to delegate. The focus has to be the teacher in the classroom with the children that they know in the best learning situation that they can devise. Too many delegated tasks detract from this focus.

Currently government initiatives and targets pressure LEAs which in turn pressure heads. It takes professional confidence to resist where necessary and this puts the head firmly in place as a buffer. Dealing with external factors and supporting the internal climate is a tough job in which the head needs exactly the same support as the staff. Headteachers too, need a work/life balance and a stable personal support structure. Unfortunately this is not always forthcoming from LEAs and heads need to rely on their own networks and colleagues and, of course, the help and advice of a good professional association.

Encouraging genuine participation in school decision-making can be difficult at times especially when it means that one’s own long held personal schemes are extensively modified. However the rewards from this style of management are great and results in contented, professionally fulfilled staff who will give their all for the education of the children in their care and gain the job satisfaction needed to remain in their school and within their chosen profession. ■



# Learning and creativity

**Abstract:** *Creativity is a central ingredient and condition of successful teaching and learning. Through creative action we confirm purpose, and develop the skills and critical faculties to continue learning throughout life. This article outlines the work that Gateshead LEA is undertaking to encourage creativity and innovation in its schools and stresses the importance of creating a culture of trust and openness in schools.*

In many ways “learning” and “creativity” are two sides of the same coin; they are the currency of education. Creativity in its broadest sense is an essential ingredient and condition of successful teaching and learning. Creativity is about unlocking the potential of children, young people and adults, which is the whole purpose of education. Indeed, it is now understood through research that creativity can be taught and that everyone has the potential to be creative in the widest sense. Thus creativity includes science and technology, thinking skills and accelerated learning, as well as music, drama, sport and the arts.

In order to encourage creativity there has to be a culture of trust and openness in our schools which allows teachers to develop a real sense of ownership and involvement. This comes about through developing a sense of common purpose, and a climate which allows people to make mistakes. Many teachers feel there has been an excessive degree of central control and prescription and that their professionalism has not been respected. That may be changing. A high trust culture, with high expectations and clear accountability, will allow teachers to develop their own creativity and professionalism.

Developing creativity in schools becomes an important way of developing ownership and the “informed professionalism” of teachers. Through developing creativity teachers can be encouraged to be to be proactive and unlock their own potential and at the same time develop the broader curriculum. An emphasis on creativity can help develop a learning culture in both schools and local communities, which enables individuals to develop the confidence and the self-esteem to learn.

## Brian Edwards

Brian Edwards is Group Director Learning and Culture and Director of Education at Gateshead Council. He is also Chair of the Association of Chief Education Officers

The conditions necessary for creativity are remarkably similar to those for learning. There needs to be inspiration, distillation, clarification and perspiration for learning and creativity to take place. Understanding comes from incubation and evaluation and persistent effort. If individuals have self-belief and trust their own abilities and judgement then they are prepared to take risks and persevere and this leads to success and the development of a creative drive.

## **Learners for life**

Developing excellent learners for life requires the development of early language, thought and action that leads to self-confidence and the ability to ask the right questions, to listen to our experience and learn. Steady improvement can lead to self-fulfilment and the belief that everyone has something they are good at, that everyone has a contribution to make. Successful learners are proactive and meet the challenge of life through involvement and participation. Through creative action we confirm purpose, and develop the skills and critical faculties to continue learning throughout life.

This will not happen unless we have excellent schools, which have three core characteristics:

- high quality professional leadership;
- a concentration on teaching and learning;
- a commitment to being a learning organisation.

High quality professional leadership involves having a shared vision, a sense of common purpose, with shared long-term goals. This requires the building of consensus and commitment in order to generate energy. The vision has to be turned into reality through appropriate delegation, with strategic management that is characterised by effective planning and co-ordination.

Excellent schools have high expectations of every pupil, individual improvement targets and regular reviews of individual progress and systematic monitoring and self-evaluation with teachers involved in classroom observation. They have teachers who have knowledge and understanding of the content of teaching and how pupils learn and have expertise in how to manage the process of teaching and learning.

Teachers are now proving that there is such a thing as pedagogy in the UK; there is an art and science of teaching and learning. Excellent teaching involves assessment and progression, differentiation and feedback, questioning, reflection and self-evaluation. This leads to excellent learning where there are clear learning intentions, well structured lessons, in well-organised classrooms where learning is well matched to previous learning and the stages of child development.

## **A culture of collaboration**

Our experience in Gateshead has shown that a culture of collaboration based on trust and respect leads to excellent teaching and learning and rising standards. This allows innovation to take place in a climate of success and high expectations. A culture of learning, where teachers learn together, encourages motivation and high self-esteem, and will permeate the classroom-learning climate. We have deliberately encouraged this approach in Gateshead, for example, by establishing Professional Learning Partnerships. These bring teachers together from different schools on themes such as literacy, and provide the opportunity for sharing good practice and collaborative professional development. There are similar partnerships between the management teams of schools in challenging circumstances.

Such collaboration will not take root unless there is right culture. We have in Gateshead deliberately tried to develop a high trust culture with innovation, collaboration and high expectations and this was confirmed by OFSTED who recognised that Gateshead Council (LEA) and schools “... work together with common goals in genuine partnership”. Our Education Strategic Development Plan sets out a shared vision, with agreed values and principles, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities, which includes the statutory responsibility of promoting high standards of education. In a genuine partnership, schools, with greater self-management through further delegation, will recognise and accept the challenge and support role of the LEA and will demonstrate a full willingness to share and receive good practice and participate in partnership approaches to raising achievement.

## **A culture of learning, where teachers learn together, encourages motivation and high self-esteem, and will permeate the classroom-learning climate.**

Teachers must be given the time and professional freedom to develop their own creativity so that they are not simply robots “delivering” a pre-ordained product. The DfES now frequently refers to “informed professionalism” and this must imply trust in competent professionals who take responsibility for their own professional development. The peer support programme being developed by the NUT is an example of professional collaboration in action and again it is good to see creativity in the curriculum as part of that programme. I believe that LEAs do have an important role to play in professional leadership and in continuing professional development and increasingly this is carried out in partnership with other bodies. The planned collaboration between the NUT and Gateshead LEA on creativity is a good example of that.

## A whole-school approach

Anyone who is involved in education must be concerned by the report *A Life in Teaching? The Impact of Change on Primary Teachers' Working Lives*<sup>1</sup> by Professors Maurice Galton and John MacBeath of Cambridge University. This report found that art and music are almost being squeezed out of the curriculum and that science is being taught for just under two hours a week and ICT, history and geography for under an hour each. The report found that, whilst the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have had benefits in their field, they have affected the balance of the curriculum.

There is yet hope that the exhilarating vision set out in the report *All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education*<sup>2</sup> produced by the Committee chaired by Professor Ken Robinson in 1999 could still become a reality. This report argues that no education system can be world-class without valuing and integrating creativity in teaching and learning, in the curriculum, in management and leadership and without linking this to promoting knowledge and understanding of cultural change and diversity. This is because creativity is a basic capacity of human intelligence. Furthermore the report recognised that “children who perform poorly in conventional academic tests may have strong abilities in other areas”.

More recently, on 12 November 2002, David Miliband, Minister of State for School Standards, in a speech in Walsall launching Creative Partnerships in the Black Country,<sup>3</sup> said:

“But we also know that a creative curriculum, creative teaching methods, creative use of school time and staff, and creative after-school activities can help young people fulfil their potential. We want all children to master basic skills, but also want them to become confident, independent and enthusiastic learners.”

In that speech the Minister referred to creativity that involves science as well as art, technology as well as architecture and set out a vision of creativity in teaching and learning and between schools and their local community. He went on to state:

“I know from my experience in the North East with the Angel of the North and the revival of Gateshead around art and music, that creativity can spur renaissance and renewal wider and deeper than art has traditionally reached. This is my message: just as citizenship cannot be taught through one lesson a week but requires a whole-school ethos and commitment, so creativity is not something for one lesson or one department. And the contribution of creativity to a rich and challenging educational experience for all pupils is not beyond us.”

A number of LEAs are recognising the importance of this approach through including creativity, culture and the arts as a local priority in their Education Development Plan as a strategy for raising achievement and encouraging inclusion. In Gateshead this is expressed as “Raising Standards through Education with Character”. This includes using culture and the arts as a vehicle to raise standards across the curriculum as well as a focus on raising standards in culture and the arts themselves. We are broadening the range of extra curricular activities available and ensuring all are included and we are seeking to encourage a sense of ownership of Gateshead’s ongoing regeneration.

We have established a Culture and Arts Steering Group with representatives of the LEA, headteachers and teachers, the arts service and local arts organisations. This has resulted in projects such as inclusion through dance, fast tracking in art and design, and cultural diversity projects, as well as family and community learning involvement. Sharing good practice in this field has been encouraged through holding culture and arts showcase days and in courses and conferences.

We have been able to join up our actions in this way though being a learning and culture group, which integrates its planning within Gateshead Council’s one council approach. Furthermore the emphasis on creativity supports the Newcastle/Gateshead bid to be the European Capital of Culture in 2008 for which we have now been short listed. Indeed our local Regional Development Agency has launched a creativity challenge which seeks to galvanize employers, schools, universities and all local bodies in support of the renaissance of the region by encouraging creativity at different levels throughout the North East, and gives the Capital of Culture bid a unique focus. The aim is to attract creative industries, establish incubation units linking universities and scientific research and development as well as establishing a European Centre for Enterprise and Creativity to develop creativity skills for businesses, public organisations and voluntary groups.

LEAs can play a key role in encouraging creativity and innovation for teachers by developing the culture in which creativity can flourish and councils can lead local initiatives and innovations within a partnership approach. By being a high trust LEA, and establishing a culture of success based on high expectations, it has been possible to create a vibrant learning culture across the borough. We are fiercely aspirational for our local children, young people, and adults and we are building a distinct ethos as a centre of excellence in culture and creativity.

Creativity is a key ingredient of education and the growth and development of the individual and their family and community. As A.H.Maslow <sup>4</sup> wrote:

“ My feeling is that the concept of creativeness and the concept of the healthy, self-actualising, fully human person seem to be coming closer and closer together and may turn out to be the same thing.”

Learning and Creativity is about growth and our work as educators is to develop the powers, tastes, faculties and abilities of all children, young people and adults. A fundamental tenet of teaching is that everyone is different but each has their own best to offer, something they are good at and a contribution to make. Therefore, learning and creativity is at the heart of education, and indeed is central to the work of everyone involved in education today. ■

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# Effects of the General Agreement on Trade in Services on the education systems in Europe

**Abstract:** *During spring 2003 the negotiations concerning the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) move into a more intensive phase. Many people think that trade has no link to education policies. Developments related to GATS prove that this is a false assumption - education policy in the future may be increasingly linked to trade policies. This article will outline some thoughts on the likely effects of GATS on the education systems in Europe. In order to do that it is necessary to look at what is meaningfully described as a growing education market.*

## A growing education market

According to UNESCO<sup>1</sup> public expenditure on education world-wide is about \$US 1386.8 billion. This represents the costs for about 52 million teachers, one billion students, and hundreds of thousands of educational establishments throughout the world. Some describe this huge sector as a colossal “market”. Others speculate on the tactics used by private companies to open up this market.<sup>2</sup> An OECD study<sup>3</sup> notes that relatively good information exists on the number of students studying abroad and the income some countries get from such education consumption, but there is much less information on other aspects of the education “market”. Heyneman<sup>4</sup> observes that education and training stocks have seen a rise in North America of 134 per cent since 1994 and that the education and training industry is the second largest, accounting for nearly 10 per cent of GDP in North America. The overall market for foreign students in tertiary education corresponded in 1999 to 3per cent of the total trade in services in OECD countries.<sup>3</sup>

## Sheena Hanley

Sheena Hanley has taught in primary and secondary schools in the UK and in Canada and was also Director of a Head Start programme. In 1989 she joined the secretariat of the World Confederation of Organisations of the Teaching Profession to coordinate development cooperation programmes. Following the Constituent Congress of Education International in January 1993 she was appointed Deputy General Secretary.

## Ulf Fredriksson

Ulf Fredriksson is a trained primary and secondary teacher and holds a Ph.D. in comparative and international education from the Institute of International Education, Stockholm University, Sweden. He has worked for Education International since 1994 based in Brussels, Belgium, as education and research co-ordinator. He has published books and articles on international education, intercultural education, teacher union history and reading among students of immigrant origin.

The explosion of information and communication technologies (ICT) is resulting in an unprecedented expansion of distance learning, the emergence of “virtual university campuses” and other computer aided learning methods. This information revolution, fuelled by the spectacular development of the Internet, has already caused profound and increasingly rapid changes. The market for educational software alone has risen from \$US 130 million to \$US 460 million in Europe and from \$US 200 million to \$US 1.1 billion in the rest of the world.<sup>4</sup> In 1996 foreign “distance-learning” students in Australia corresponded to 3 per cent of all the foreign students enrolled at Australian universities and in 2000 the figure had increased to 6 per cent.<sup>3</sup>

International trade in education services has become an important area of activity and is undergoing rapid expansion. In higher education where this form of trade is most common, education services trade amounted to \$US 30 billion in 1999 in OECD countries.<sup>3</sup>

The interest in education as a commodity is linked to privatisation of education. Where markets are created private companies compete for contracts. In the USA Sylvan Learning Systems has won contracts to provide remedial teaching for disadvantaged children in 17 states.<sup>5</sup> The dismantling of what was understood to be the responsibility of the government is underway in many countries and the groundwork has been put in place for private companies to take responsibility for certain areas of education. According to an American consultancy firm, International Data Corporation, private companies now have 13 per cent of the education market in the USA, but their share is expected to expand to over 25 per cent over the next two decades.<sup>5</sup>

## What is international trade in services?

What exactly is meant by “international trade in services”? In GATS four forms of trade in services are identified:

- The cross-border supply of a service from the territory of one country to another country. In the case of the education sector, distance education is subsumed under this category.
- The consumption of a service abroad by the citizens of a country on the territory of another country. In the education sector, the most common example is undertaking a course of study abroad.
- The commercial presence of a service supplier from a country on the territory of another country, enabling the supplier in question to provide a service on that territory. In the education sector, the activities carried out by foreign universities or other institutions fall within this category.
- The presence of natural persons enables a form of trade resulting from the mobility of people from one country, who supply a given service in another



country. As far as education is concerned, courses offered by foreign teachers are a classic example of this.<sup>6</sup>

## **GATS and WTO**

GATS, concluded by the member countries of the World Trade Organisation (WTO)<sup>6</sup> in 1994, should be seen in the context of increased interest for education as a market. Through GATS, the WTO has created an instrument to fulfil the clearly defined objective to progressively liberalise international trade in services, and this includes education services. There has, so far, been little impact on the education sector as a whole from trade liberalisation, but from around the world clear signs of changes can be seen in the way education is provided. There is an increased interest for education to be partially or fully provided from the private sector. This is particularly true in the higher education sector and increasingly in vocational education but it is not limited to these sectors.

To date (February 2003) only four countries (USA, New Zealand, Australia and Japan) have made any proposals on education for the current GATS negotiations.<sup>3</sup> But more could do so either at a later stage in these negotiations or in a future round. The EU Trade Commissioner, Pascal Lamy, has recently declared that EU rules out talks in the on-going GATS negotiations on further liberalisation of its health, education, energy and water markets. "I would like to be absolutely categorical about this, we are not proposing any undertakings at all in these areas," Lamy said in the beginning of February 2003.<sup>7</sup> This is an important message, but it does not mean that EU will not come back to this issue in future rounds.

## **Public services**

It has been argued that public services are not included in GATS, but the definition of the services covered by the GATS includes all services unless they are exclusively provided by the public sector. In order to remain outside the scope of application of the Agreement, the education system of a country must have no commercial purpose and not be in competition with services provided by private providers.

The education sector varies from one country to another in accordance with the amount of state funding and regulation provided. It also varies in the degree to which private education is available in a country and what type of education is considered to be private. According to UNESCO, a school is considered to be private when it is privately managed, even if it receives subsidies from the public sector.<sup>1</sup> In the Netherlands most schools are government funded (almost 100 per cent) and subject to government inspections, but some schools are under the management of municipalities while others are under independent foundations and associations.

According to UNESCO figures 69 per cent of all primary school pupils and 79 per cent of secondary school pupils in the Netherlands are enrolled in private schools. The boards of these school are elected or appointed, not by the municipality, but in accordance with the rules of the associations and foundations. In this sense these schools are regarded as private.<sup>8</sup> Most school systems now ask parents to pay some costs. They pay for books or materials in some countries or pay a fee for materials for gym use, for art materials or for extra curricular activities for example. What are the implications when university students pay registration fees for courses or pay library or laboratory fees, which are increasingly common?

The vast majority of European countries have mixed systems, in which the private sector plays a role and competes with the public sector. Following the logic of GATS, many would fall within the scope of application of the GATS.

## What are the problems with GATS?

To understand the concerns about GATS and education, it is necessary to look at the regulatory powers governments have under the GATS. The GATS preamble gives governments some right to maintain control over public services. In the text (Article I: 3 (c)) there is a reference to services “supplied in the exercise of governmental authority”. Article VI specifies a number of conditions - mainly qualifications, licensing and technical matters - where governments can set domestic regulations and Article XIV sets out some GATS general exceptions which governments can use to defend public services.

The problem is:

- The preamble is not a substantive protection. Preambles are usually an “understanding” underpinning oral agreements. A preamble does not provide the same protection as articles within the body of an agreed text. Preambular texts are resorted to when no agreement can be reached which will bind parties to a signed article.
- Two key terms in important parts of the text (Article I: 3 (c)) are not defined. They are the terms “commercial” and “in competition with “. Services provided by governments cannot be supplied on a commercial basis or in competition with a service provided by a private supplier if it is to be exempted from GATS. This is unclear and is already subject to conflicting interpretations. What is clear is that any exclusion will be interpreted narrowly because - and it is necessary to go back to the objective of GATS - the agreement is intended to reach progressively, “higher levels of liberalization of trade in services”.

- Article VI of GATS deals with a number of conditions - mainly qualifications, licensing and technical matters - where governments can set domestic regulations. This could be weakened by current negotiations on GATS disciplines. The regulations which governments pass must be the “least trade restrictive” - something that is in itself open to dispute panel challenges. There are reasons to believe that governments will not be able to regulate with certainty for public services. It is difficult to regulate for today but what happens if changes are needed to maintain the services in the future?
- In the WTO when there is a dispute a Trade Dispute Panel interprets what is meant and makes the definitive decision about the interpretation and it can impose sanctions to ensure compliance with its decision.

### **Europe as an exporter of education?**

GATS has a double message. The proposals put forward for negotiations by the USA, New Zealand and Australia all indicate that they want to sell their services to other countries. They themselves do not wish to import education services from others. They are however interested in making it easier for foreign students to study in their universities. The EU has also earlier indicated a similar opinion (Personal Communication: EI/ETUCE meeting with the EU Trade Commissioner Lamy on 11 February, 2002).

Australia, France, Germany, the UK and the USA attract more than 75 per cent of all foreign students studying in the OECD area. The OECD countries account for about 25 per cent of the foreign students in OECD countries, while China (including Hong Kong) accounts for 9 per cent, India for 3 per cent, Malaysia 3 per cent, Morocco 3 per cent and Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand together for 5 per cent.<sup>3</sup> Will education be a future export product for industrialised countries, and if so, what implications will that have for education systems in other parts of the world?

### **Summary**

The main risks for the future are:

- that governments will use GATS as an excuse for deregulation and privatisation within the education sector;
- that the protection said to be provided in GATS for services provided under government authority is ambiguous at best and open to interpretation by Trade Dispute Panels.
- education will become part of general negotiation game where governments may have to open up the education market in their own countries in order to get access to other markets; and

- education policies will be decided increasingly by trade ministers instead of education ministers.

Even if the EU now, on behalf of all member states, has declared that it does not intend to negotiate on further liberalisation in trade on education, this does not mean that the issue will not come back and it does not prevent governments from taking other measures to privatise education. ■

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# A “tight loose” profession or a two tier workforce?

**Abstract:** *The nature of secondary schools and the work of secondary teachers will continue to change as the twenty first century progresses. The issue however, is whether the direction that these changes take will be in the interests of teachers and their students. This article argues that we should be extremely critical about key aspects of “modernisation” in secondary education.*

## Learning more

Arguably the most fundamental change that has taken place within secondary education during the last 15-20 years has been the huge increases in participation in full-time education beyond the age of 16. A large proportion of this has taken place in school sixth forms. Whereas only 30 years ago, 40 per cent of students left school with barely any formal academic qualifications, today a school where 50 per cent of its Year 11 students gain five A-C grade GCSEs is not seen as being particularly special. Likewise, in many schools 80 per cent of Year 11 students will transfer to post-16 education. Indeed, completing seven years or more in secondary education is now increasingly regarded as representing just one stage in a process of “lifelong learning”.

Much of the interest shown by political elites in encouraging young people to stay on in education is linked to arguments about the importance of education in promoting national economic prosperity. As a result and as part of an attempt to create a new correspondence between education and the needs of the economy<sup>1</sup>, there have been various blueprints for the modernisation of the curriculum and the reform of qualifications for those at the upper end of the secondary age group. Many of these have sought to replace the current system of GCSEs and A levels with a multi-staged diploma or baccalaureate. They have generally included a core entitlement for all students and have emphasised the importance of developing “key skills” and using information technology.

## Martin Allen

Martin Allen is a teacher at Alperton Community School in Brent and is also Vice Chair of the NUT Secondary Advisory Committee.

There is cynicism in some quarters about whether the economy of the twenty first century will ever provide large numbers of highly skilled jobs for everyone and fears that a generation of overqualified check-out operators will be produced. Certainly, the types of jobs that young people were previously able to move into, now no longer exist. Neither are young people prepared to settle for “youth training” schemes that do not guarantee stable employment. This situation in itself has been enough to produce a major re-evaluation by large numbers of secondary school students who are only too clear about the material value of gaining as many qualifications as possible.

### Learning differently

Many responses about how education should respond to the economic changes of the twenty first century emphasise the way in which learning processes will become more student-centred, more research-based and more dependent on information technology and e-learning. Thus in a recent edition of *Education Review*, Rachel Jupp from Demos writes:

“School education must be restructured to ensure that every individual has the skills and confidence to use the opportunities knowledge-based society presents”

As a consequence it is argued that the organisation of schools will need to change; “independent learning” must replace uniformed mass schooling. Rather than simply being places that students visit at different times for different

lessons, classrooms must instead become resource bases (as is the case with the new City Learning Centres in the Excellence in Cities initiative)

The relationships between staff and students will also need to change as classroom activity becomes more collaborative. Learning will need to be measured in terms of “outcomes” to be organised on a portfolio/project orientated basis, rather than being based around testing and formal exams.

**There is cynicism in some quarters about whether the economy of the twenty first century will ever provide large numbers of highly skilled jobs for everyone and fears that a generation of overqualified check-out operators will be produced.**

These new styles of learning are said to be a reflection of the changing nature of the work place. It is argued that bureaucratic “Fordist” organisations with a clearly defined power structures are increasingly inappropriate for economies of the twenty first century and will be replaced by smaller post-Fordist enterprises with flatter hierarchies that require a new “collective intelligence”<sup>3</sup>.

## Different courses for different horses?

However, the division of post-16 education (and as New Labour now propose, 14-19 education<sup>4</sup>) into “academic” and “vocational” pathways would appear considerably at odds with the educational needs of advanced economies. Also the accompanying argument that these reforms will provide a “diversity” of opportunities for secondary students is a highly doubtful one.

For example, an ex-student contacted me recently for advice about starting a Masters degree. The student had achieved far more than some of her teachers could have anticipated. She had only managed a few low grade GCSEs in Year 11 and as a result had started an Intermediate GNVQ in the sixth form before progressing to Advanced level. While her progress into higher education should be commended, the last six years of her life had been spent entirely on business studies courses and she had completed several modules about marketing or dealing with various aspects of “customer service.” Living at home and commuting to a “new” London university her experience had been an extremely narrow one. This is not to criticise the efforts of individual teachers across the country that have helped thousands of young people in similar situations, only to raise issue about the new type of learning careers that are on offer.

Even if we accept New Labour’s arguments about the need for a work-force in which people constantly have to learn new skills simply to keep up, then surely high levels of general education will be required by everyone? Rather than creating the “diversity” that Labour crave for, many critics see the divisions emerging in the latter years of secondary education as mirroring those that used to exist between manual and non-manual work. Combined with the emergence of a work-based pathway alongside the vocational and academic, they could represent a return to the ideas of the 1944 Education Act. Differences within schools will also unfold as a result of the creation of the various “specialist” categories linked to extra funding

## Outcomes -the GNVQ experience

The “outcomes” approach towards learning is not without its problems. While many practitioners would want to support some of the more general pedagogic assumptions that are behind this style of learning, what is equally important is the context in which this sort of learning takes place. For example, in a divided education system, an outcomes approach will have little value if it continues to be associated with lower status vocational qualification, this has been the case with the GNVQ for example.

The management of education, particularly secondary education continues to replicate that of private business. Schools and colleges are forced to compete constantly against one another for students and teachers are under constant pressure to meet targets to satisfy an army of inspectors and

consultants. The obsession with meeting outcomes can become an end in itself degenerating into a prolonged recording exercise with extensive box ticking. Again this has been a feature of the original design of the GNVQ

Other critics argue that converting the curriculum into outcomes or to statements of competence results in the destruction of knowledge as a holistic entity. It produces a student population that might know what has happened, but never need to understand “how” or “why”. Anybody who has had experience of the language used in the old style GNVQ will also appreciate this.

### **A tight loose profession or a two tier teacher force?**

The shape that the curriculum takes in the twenty first century will determine the type of teacher force that will be responsible for its delivery. According to Michael Barber,<sup>5</sup> a central figure in New Labour’s thinking on education, the learning changes of the new century will encourage the development of a “tight loose” profession. Teachers as “managers of learning” will adopt a more flexible approach to suit the new learning conditions. Barber argues that teachers will face additional challenges, as other adults will play an increased role in schools. There will be teacher “associates” (specialists from other professions) but also a new group of “para professionals” who will primarily play a supportive role to teachers. For Barber, the teacher force of the twenty first century must go through a positive reconstruction.

In contrast to Barber’s optimism, the increases in academic, vocational and now work-based pathways in the curriculum could have rather different consequences. It could speed up the creation of a two tier workforce where the “teaching” of some groups of students becomes equated with the “supervision of learning” an activity that in many cash strapped schools will be gradually handed over to the new class of “higher level” classroom assistants promoted by David Miliband. *The Times Educational Supplement* on 14 February 2003 took this scenario a step further by disclosing Government proposals to delegate assessment of vocational courses to “industry”.

### **Reshaping the curriculum - bringing teachers back in**

This need not happen. Teachers can influence the direction which these changes take. For the last ten years, if not more, teachers have been largely excluded from decisions about what is learnt in school and how. This is not to deny that the current Government does not “consult” but to argue that this is essentially a cosmetic exercise and one used to give policies constructed by a small number of government advisers an air of legitimacy.

There are opportunities for teachers to help shape the future direction of secondary education. The collapse in public confidence about the reliability of A levels opens up opportunities to create a new baccalaureate qualification.



There are also opportunities for discussion between teachers, not only in their own staff rooms but as a result of technological change across school boundaries, through internet forums.

A recent example of how teachers are still able to influence debate was the opposition earlier in the year by English teachers as members of LATE/NATE against the new Key Stage 3 proposals for English - seen as a further attempt to replace the emphasis on understanding textual meaning by a concentration on grammar competence. These teachers were able to do this because despite a decade of reactionary policies in relation to the teaching of English, they have been able to maintain a thriving and critical practitioner network around English, something that is now absent in many other curriculum areas<sup>6</sup>.

Restoring the influence of teachers will be a long and arduous task. It can only be achieved by rebuilding the collective culture of teachers. This does not mean that we return to the “secret garden” of the post-war period, but instead create a new kind of publicly accountable and critical professionalism where teachers use their individual and collective expertise to lead and inform debate about the direction of curriculum change and the way in which a secondary school of the future should be organised. ■

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- <sup>6</sup> see [www.nate.org.uk](http://www.nate.org.uk)

# Book reviews

## **WORKING WITH DISAFFECTED STUDENTS: WHY STUDENTS LOSE INTEREST IN SCHOOL, AND WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT.**

Kathryn A. Riley, Elle Rustique-Forrester et al

*Paul Chapman Publishing 2002 £17.99 ISBN 0 7619 4078 2*

Several of my colleagues, on seeing what I was reviewing, said that the obvious opening statement was, “I was given this book to review, but I just couldn’t be bothered...”

In many ways that graphically describes the awful frustration that practitioners feel when dealing with disaffected young people. It is exactly what they say. Again and again.

But it also describes the temptation to use a blame model. If you focus on the “villains” then you do not have to do anything. It’s all their fault. They are damned. They are bound to fail.

Well, I am really glad to have had the chance to read this book, and for me the thing that clinched it was the final part of the title. Kathryn Riley is right to look for things that could possibly make a difference. When schooldays are NOT “the happiest days of your life,” and there are some heartrending examples from young people in this book about just how unhappy they can be we should not only be ashamed but we need to be aware of how those consequences of unhappy schooling are passed down to the next generation.

This book is the account of an extended study (over two years) of student disaffection in Lancashire. It tells the stories of the disenfranchised (and, no I do not just mean students. Parents and teachers have voices, too.) The aim is to recognise and build upon existing good practice. It is clear about the methodology used, and very readable, but at no point is the complex and intricate nature of “disaffection” dumbed down, nor are “quick-fixes” suggested as anything other than what they are: short term, disappearing initiatives dependent on funding by political whim. This is not just about attendance and exam scores; if we are serious, we are talking about challenging practices, attitudes, beliefs and conditions towards learning.

I cannot tell you how much I enjoyed the grown up approach of this book, soundly grounded in evidence, and not afraid to talk in terms of a really inclusive approach. In particular, I loved to hear the clear statements on the need for trust between Government and schools.

Personally, I would like to hear more about the impact the resultant “Blueprint for Change” had on practice in Lancashire, but I am probably jumping ahead, and will have to wait for the next book.

**MAX HYDE**

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**BUSINESS IN ACTION: THE BUSINESS OF BUSINESS**

Andrew Gillespie

*Hodder & Stoughton 2002 £9.99 ISBN 0-340-84820-0*

*Business in Action* is a lively and comprehensive textbook for students of business. Mainly aimed at 16+ students, some of the ideas and activities could certainly be used by Key Stage 4 or university students.

The book is divided into chapters, each of which addresses individual business functions from start-up through change and crisis management to success and future planning. Aspects are brought alive by the use of actual case studies from a broad range of existing businesses like Ben & Jerry’s or Easyjet alongside general information and challenging activities or problem-solving exercises. Each section ends with a handy summary of the key points. For example, the chapter on Operations Management has a case study from Aston Martin and its emphasis on quality control systems to ensure exclusivity. With this in mind, the exercise asks students to identify new products for Aston Martin and consider how this particular company might approach development and production. Students will undoubtedly be interested in the company and suitably challenged by the exercise.

It is good to see that Gillespie also addresses the business context, company values and ethical issues. He importantly acknowledges that businesses do not operate in isolation but are accountable to stakeholders including employees, customers, shareholders, suppliers and the communities in which they are operating. In a section on Corporate Social Responsibility, he shows clearly that companies need to be responsive to environmental issues, globalisation, fair trade, etc. This not only assists with providing a well-rounded and thoughtful approach to business but also some excellent topics for lively classroom debate.

There is a clear possibility of students finding this book aspirational. In the process of using it, they will be given a full and well-researched account of what business is and what it does. Given these insights, they will then be able to match this to their own interests and capabilities. The relevance – even importance – of acquiring key skills for learning, employability and adult life becomes obvious in the context of the dynamic nature of business conveyed in this book.

Andrew Gillespie writes enthusiastically, sometimes passionately about business and exhorts his reader to embrace the excitement of being there. As he says in his introduction, “This book should be a valuable read for anyone wanting to learn about, think about and even fall in love with business.” He certainly captures the buzz and would probably capture your students’ imagination.

**CAROL KAY**

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### **TOUT TERRAIN**

Tim Swain and Christiane Salvador

*Hodder & Stoughton 2002 £16.99 ISBN 0 34084564 3*

This one-volume textbook for AS/ A2 French, covering the specifications for all examination boards, offers a major advantage for students: it is structured for their convenience. It is evidently written by experienced teachers who understand how their “client group” will use such a textbook. The authors have addressed the major issue that confronts the teacher: how to cover the linguistic structures and topic content of six units in a brief year and simultaneously retain the interest of a wide ability range.

Their strategy has been to create a textbook that moves at a rapid pace but whose consistent structure from beginning to end makes it a pleasure to use. Each of the 12 units is broken down into nine two-page spreads on different aspects of the unit topic, with differentiated activities for all four skills worked into virtually every subsection. Concise grammar sections highlight essentials in red. Practice activities are necessarily brief, but rehearse the relevant linguistic detail using the language of the topic. Occasional short exercises in the long-abandoned task of English to French translation (which of course most students have secretly engaged in when writing essays despite their teachers’ warnings) offer helpful practice in manipulating structures.

A boon to hard-pressed teachers is the authors’ suggestions at the end of each unit of appropriate websites for follow-up work, so that students can acquire those essential but difficult-to-find resources from the francophone world.

The French is pacy and the topic material lively. The inevitable AS A table unit has a “conversation avec Jose Rove” which would spark debate with any group. The A2 unit on racism touches on issues from the problems of *peids noirs* like the parents of Zinedine Zidane to the explosive post-colonial situation in the Cote d’Ivoire.

While one must acknowledge the cost implications of A2 students

retaining their textbook, necessitating the purchase of additional copies for the AS students following them, the advantages of having access to a complete course book are obvious. If any textbook can answer the needs of all students, it could well be this one.

**JANET STURGIS**

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**BETTER BEHAVIOUR IN CLASSROOMS: A FRAMEWORK FOR INCLUSIVE BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT**

Kay Mathieson and Meg Price

*RoutledgeFalmer 2002 £22.50 ISBN 0-415-25341-1*

Pupil behaviour is a big issue for the teaching profession. It is frequently cited as a major reason why teachers are leaving the profession and potential recruits are put off joining.

The authors of this useful resource have the appropriate experience as practitioners (Kay Mathieson is a senior teacher in a Pupil Referral Unit and Meg Price is a principal teacher in an inner-city secondary school) to have produced an easily accessible, informative and practical resource for all teachers.

The book provides positive and realistic advice and guidance to show teachers how skills can be improved through a stepped and planned programme. Starting with the emotional brain and its effect on interaction and behaviour leads to a clear and practical overview of “whole school behavioural patterns”, which is of particular use.

A detailed focus on individual classroom interactions is used to explain how prediction skills can be used to plan an effective behaviour management strategy which meets the individual needs of schools.

Particularly useful is the photocopiable INSET sessions section. This is well produced and based on four assumptions:

- The behaviour of teachers influences the behaviour of pupils
- Techniques of classroom management can be identified and learned
- Teachers must take responsibility for developing their skill
- Effective teachers are skilled in minimising problems

These sessions seek to prepare INSET leaders to be clear about their role and the message they wish to communicate. There is a focus on subtle messages, positive approaches to behaviour, problem solving and group interaction.

Teachers wishing to obtain a greater understanding of pupil behaviour and

schools wishing to instigate an effective whole school approach to these issues will find this resource a sound starting point.

**JERRY GLAZIER**

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**CREATIVITY AND EARLY YEARS EDUCATION - A LIFEWIDE FOUNDATION**

Anna Craft

*Continuum Studies in Lifelong Learning* **£16.99** ISBN 0 - 8264 - 5743 - 6

The vast majority of teachers today reflect nostalgically on the days when they could be more creative, less hampered by the constraints of National Curriculum and free to explore learning. However, when push comes to shove, as my Granny used to say, most teachers find it quite challenging if they are asked to explain what they actually mean by creativity.

This is where Anna Craft's book comes in. It explores in detail the meaning and use of creativity and is both informed and authoritative. The author cross-references her proposals and suppositions through a variety of research including her own class-based material and that of nationally and internationally recognised authors.

The result offers the reader a comprehensive guide to creativity and creative thinking for both pupil and pedagogue. Anna Craft explores what she calls "little c" creativity: "personal effectiveness in coping well with recognising and making choices, above and beyond what has been needed hitherto. It could be described as a creativity of everyday life..."

The importance of creativity is placed where most of us would like to see it, somewhere near the top! The author argues that creativity can be found in core curriculum subjects and that children whose creative urges have been and are encouraged will have a clearer understanding of the convergent answers, through divergent (creative) thinking.

The book carries an inspiring chapter on Possibility Thinking which "encompasses an attitude which refuses to be stumped by circumstances, but uses imagination, with intention, to find a way around a problem". I believe many teachers will respond well to the notion that independence in learning can come from the ability not just to be able to problem solve (as is promoted so often that problem solving is sadly becoming clichéd and ultimately misunderstood), but to be able to problem find! To identify a question, a topic for investigation, a puzzle to explore, a possible new option, leads to the sort of engagement that facilitates that holy grail of learning.

At last here is an academic and practical work that also focuses on how the teacher can achieve her aim. Chapter 11 explores the importance that the adult

in the classroom plays. It makes sensible suggestions for CPD and recognises that teaching creatively and creative teaching require an energy cost that needs replenishing in a variety of different but mutually supportive ways.

The book is easily accessible and can be dipped into to explore aspects of the various chapters. Conveniently each section is followed by highlighted notes in summary which will help those studying the subject for the purposes of essay writing and those who wish to skim read to search out particular points.

In conclusion, this book is a boon to those who wish not only to develop their creative practice but also to have all the right material to justify their philosophy of teaching to any that may enquire!

**NIGEL ASH**

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### **EVERYDAY SAFETY IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

Malcolm Griffin

*RoutledgeFalmer 2002 £25.00 ISBN 0-415-22820-4*

This 111 page, ring-bound book, is a development of a similarly titled one directed at primary and nursery schools. It is written by a former head teacher and later health and safety manager for a local authority. The opening chapters of the book cover areas such as risk assessment, the prevention of, and where this is not possible, the response to accidents and the provision and administration of first aid. Chapter four provides guidance on the contents of health and safety manuals.

Especially helpful is chapter five, which consists of 56 pages which may be photocopied, all of them being checklists on such varied matters as accidents, asbestos, concerts, contractors, evacuations, fire, first aid, grounds, lettings, maintenance, vehicles, visitors, visits, waste, and work experience.

The book also provides information on such general matters as consultation, curriculum safety, and stress. The final chapters list useful addresses and books and resources.

This excellent book is a practical, easy to read, easy to understand, and easy to use guide to dealing with issues of safety, not only in secondary schools, but in all schools, and it is very much recommended for use in all schools.

**GORDON O THORNHILL**

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## **EDUCATING YOUNG CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

Louise Porter

*Paul Chapman Publishing/Sage Publications 2002 £16.99 ISBN 0-7619-4126-6).*

This comprehensive guide and reference book is composed of 12 chapters, each dealing with a specialist aspect. It is edited by Dr Louise Porter (Senior Lecturer in the School of Education at Flinders University, South Australia), who has also written seven of the chapters. The umbrella term “special needs” includes those that are gifted and learning at an advanced level, as well as those who have recognised disabilities or learning difficulties. “Early Years” covers the conventional period of “birth to eight years old”.

The book is presented in two main sections with three excellent, detailed appendices. Each chapter has its own list of additional resources with a dedicated chapter-by-chapter bibliography and very good index, all of which helps to make this volume a very useful work of reference for the staff room library.

Part I, written by Louise Porter, focuses on “Foundations of Early Years Education” and Part II deals with “Programming for Atypical Developmental Needs”, with chapters written by all six authors, each of whom covers a specialist subject or “developmental domain”. Appendix I covers common causes of atypical development (syndromes); Appendix II deals with typical developmental milestones and Appendix III describes indicators for advanced development (giftedness) in young children.

Part I has four chapters, starting with Fundamentals of Early Education then moves on to Collaboration with Parents, Identification and Assessment and finishes with Planning Individual Programmes. The “assessment” chapter tackles the topic of labelling a child, which your reviewer has found by experience to be a difficult one when reporting to parents because they are often seeking a label. Louise Porter says it is usually more important to describe the specific needs and what is required to address them rather than use a label because many can be misinterpreted as an explanation and be used to excuse under-achievement. There is also a danger in labelling a young child with a short developmental history on which to base conclusions.

Part II has eight chapters dealing with each of the following: Vision, Motor Skills, Daily Living Skills, Hearing, Communication Skills, Cognitive Skills, Emotional and Social Needs and concludes with Guiding Children’s Behaviour. This last chapter is an excellent summary of attitudes and ways of addressing behaviour difficulties in young children.

**IAN RIX**

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## **A CENTURY OF EDUCATION**

Edited by Richard Aldrich

*RoutledgeFalmer 2002 £22.99 ISBN 041524323-8*

An interesting academic read, full of information about different stages of education and, importantly, those directly involved in it. This book is very well indexed with contents organised for the reader to select the area of greatest relevance.

The book begins with a comprehensive register of abbreviations used and a list of the key events in the century of education. Planning for each chapter is in five main sections: The Situation in 2000, The Situation in 1900, Changes and Continuities, Conclusion and Key Reading.

The ten contributors that Richard Aldrich has brought together are extremely well-qualified to write about their subjects. They include Professors Peter Gordon, Roy Lowe, Gary McCulloch and Alison Wolf as well as senior lecturers, all of whom have specific knowledge and are responsive to wider implications.

There are the expected age related chapters: primary, secondary, further and higher education and one on central and local government. Success and problems are discussed objectively throughout but at times with a more personal viewpoint refreshingly appearing.

The book outlines the people involved in education: teachers, pupils and students explaining the positive and negative aspects over the last century. Often the “players” are subsumed into establishments; it is good to see their roles examined independently. The last three chapters cover special educational needs, the curriculum and qualifications and assessment with Alison Wolf showing in her chapter on assessment that she must have prescience: “that students are entitled to expect that the government has secured quality.”

This book accurately records a century of education and is a must for those who wish to know more.

**JANIS ADAMS**

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## Reviewers

**Max Hyde**, NUT Executive member and secondary teacher representative to Warwickshire County Council.

**Carol Kay**, Southwark Education Business Alliance manager

**Janet Sturgis**, teachers French at Beacon Community College

**Jerry Glazier**, NUT Executive member

**Nigel Ash**, teacher and consultant for able and talented children's training

**Gordon O Thornhill**, health and safety advisor

**Ian Rix**, senior advisory teacher working for Norfolk Psychological Services

**Janis Adams**, Chair of governors and former secondary head of humanities

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