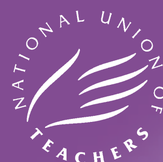
education review

Educating the whole child



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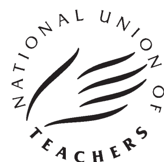

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Preface

The theme of this edition of *Education Review,* "Educating the Whole Child", was inspired by the Union's work on commercialisation and child health following the resolution on these issues at Annual Conference 2003. Media interest in the "obesity time bomb" has highlighted the vital role of schools in educating pupils to make healthy choices and develop the critical faculties to see beyond the advertising and marketing strategies aimed at the lucrative youth market.

The article from the research team at the University of Strathclyde summarises the review of the research into the effects of food advertising on children. The Union has been at the forefront of the campaign to ban advertising of food and drink products which are high in sugar, salt and fat during under-fives TV programmes.

Phil Willis's article on research undertaken for the Liberal Democrats into sport and fitness levels among secondary school pupils finds a link between social class and the levels of participation in physical exercise. There is a similar correlation between poor diet and families living in poverty.

Positive action by Government is essential to break the pattern of disadvantage and unhealthy life-styles and the Union supports the Department of Health consultation on the nation's health and well-being as vital to children and young people and their ability to learn.

The Review also contains important messages on the school curriculum. Schools find it difficult to provide sufficient time for physical education and education on nutrition and food preparation within the current over-crowded curriculum. Priority has to be given to core academic subjects seen as vital to SATs, examination results and performance tables to the detriment of the arts, humanities and "life-skills" subjects.

To illustrate this point, articles by Jan Campbell and Liz Craft of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority on citizenship and PHSE and by Anna Weyman of the Family Planning Association, on sex and relationships education, show the importance of these subjects for pupils at school and into adult life.

The research undertaken by NFER, outlined in the article by Dr Marian Sainsbury, into children's attitudes to reading, shows the paradox of the rise in pupils' reading standards and a decline in their enjoyment of reading.

To educate the whole child, every child should be treated as an individual with an education appropriate to his or her needs. The article by headteacher, Hazel Pulley, describes the systems adopted in her school to enable pupils to

manage their emotions and behaviour. Maud Blair of the DfES advocates that the needs of minority ethnic pupils should be a priority for the senior management of every school. Tim Lucas's article deals with the issue of homophobia in schools. Gerda Hanko draws on the proposals in "Every Child Matters" to emphasise the importance of integrated children's services for those with special needs.

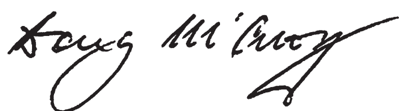
The article by Baroness Ashton on early years education demonstrates the Government's welcome commitment to supporting young children and their families, particularly those in areas of deprivation, through nursery provision and the Sure Start initiative to give children the best possible start at this crucial learning stage.

Once again, Wales acts as a "good practice" example. The article by Jane Davidson, Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning in Wales, sets out the ambitious aspirations for education in Wales which focus on a child-centred approach, based on working in partnership with the teaching profession. Teachers in England would welcome such clear and sensible priorities.

Perspectives from abroad have been a feature of *Education Review.* The article by Ben Levin of the University of Manitoba looks at education as one strand of social policy interconnected with others such as nutrition, housing and the local community support.

Education in Finland, highlighted in the OECD PISA report, is examined in the article by Pirjo Linnakyla of the University of Jyvaskyla on how equity and high standards must be complementary. The lessons from Finland in this respect have not been fully learnt by the Government, nor has the importance of promoting teaching as a high status profession with a wide degree of professional autonomy over the curriculum and pedagogy.

The NUT is an education union and has consistently taken a holistic view of children's education and the status of the teaching profession, This is why the Union continues to challenge the Government's narrow tests, tables and targets regime and it is why the Union is committed to ensuring that every child is taught by a qualified teacher. The education of the whole child deserves nothing less.



Doug McAvoy
General Secretary, National Union of Teachers

Wales: The learning country

Abstract: *In this article Jane Davidson, Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning, outlines the steps that the Welsh Assembly Government is taking to revolutionise education in Wales and promote lifelong learning for all.*

Jane Davidson

Jane Davidson is Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning at the National Assembly for Wales.

OUR GOAL IS for Wales to have one of the best education and lifelong learning systems in the world. A place where high quality, lifelong learning provides the skills people need to prosper in the new economy, liberates talent, expands opportunities and empowers communities. Our plans for the way forward for education in Wales have been published in *The Learning Country*[1] – our ten year plan.

Some may say we are being ambitious. I make no apologies. Our Learning Country agenda is a strategy for revolutionising education in Wales – for improving educational opportunities for all people at all times in their lives. I believe that Wales, as a small nation, has a major opportunity to be an internationally renowned learning country where we make education and training of the first importance.

Putting learning first

The Learning Country has been seen as a ground-breaking document made in Wales, made through partnership with people across Wales. The response was overwhelming, from parents, governors and teachers.

We are actively influencing the education agenda across the UK with our innovative "made in Wales" policies. We are putting in place distinctive Welsh policies that are right for us, that suit our circumstances. Our vision is a country in which we provide education and training second to none:

- a country where our very young have access to excellent nursery education;

- a country where our children go to excellent schools in buildings fit for purpose;
- a country which offers wide access and opportunities for all;
- a country which aspires to excellence across the board and which will not settle for second best in making lifelong learning a reality.

We will put the needs of learners first. To do this, we need to:

- raise standards across the board;
- support practitioners;
- give every child a flying start;
- provide a more rounded and flexible curriculum;
- enhance social inclusion; and
- remove barriers to learning;

We have already made good progress. 2003 was a remarkable year for education in Wales with the Chief Inspector's report saying that all aspects of education had improved. We are delighted that more countries across the world look to Wales as we take forward the major programme of commitments set out in *The Learning Country*.

Wales is now treated as a serious player in the education world both for what we have all achieved together and the vision set out in *Wales: A Better Country*[2] which will take forward our continuing plans for a better education and lifelong learning system for Wales.

I have no doubts that 2004 will prove to be an equally challenging year as there are many areas where we have commitments that are new and exciting for the people of Wales.

Adopting a child-centred approach

How is all this to be achieved? Well to begin with we aim to give every child a flying start. We seek to plant ambition and high expectation early on by encouraging schools to adopt a child-centred approach to education from the very beginning of their educational experiences.

The new innovative and uniquely Welsh proposals for a Foundation Phase for three - seven year olds are profound and far reaching and will give our youngest a flying start; an opportunity to transform their life choices and to lift standards and expectations in the early years.

The quality of provision and standards of achievement in both the maintained and non-maintained sectors have improved over the last five years in Wales. However, evidence suggests that children do not begin to benefit from extensive formal teaching until about six – seven years of age.

Those countries which outperform us educationally, which have better

literacy and numeracy rates at the age of 11 and better staying on rates at the age of 16/17 also have better early years provision – focusing on how to encourage children's learning, not just putting them in a classroom.

The best practice in early years education provides a good basis on which to build, not enough children in classes in Key Stage 1 (age five-seven) benefit from it. Formal learning is introduced too soon, before some pupils are ready and Estyn has commented that children are given too many tasks to do while sitting at tables rather than learning through well-structured play, practical activity and investigation. Some sessions are too long for young people to maintain their concentration and classrooms do not provide enough opportunities for practical activities and well supported play.

Educators have long argued that the years before formal schooling are critically important to a child's development. The stimulation a child receives in their early years can affect their abilities and potential throughout life. So we must get it right. That is why we will be working with the experts to develop a curriculum for a new Welsh foundation phase from the ages of three - seven which offers a broad range of experiences and has a positive long term effect on children's social and intellectual development.

Over the past two years, since I launched the idea that we should have the right framework for our very youngest children, there has been huge support for the establishment of a Welsh foundation phase of three - seven.

While I am completely committed to these proposals, I also recognise the importance of ensuring that they are not introduced overnight. We will want to pilot and have extensive ongoing evaluation. We have already given a commitment for a half-time Assembly funded place for all three year olds from September 2004. That is when we intend to start our new agenda. It is our chance in Wales to develop an exciting and innovative curriculum which will be the envy of many other countries.

Integrated Centres

We are also introducing new Integrated Centres which will bring together the four key elements of early years – wrap around care, open access play and training and development. I have already approved 11 centres throughout Wales in 2002-03 and have provided towards their capital costs. Excitingly, three of them have already opened – one in Conwy, one in Flintshire and one in Rhondda Cynon Taff (through the medium of Welsh). I have also announced that Ceredigion County Council will develop a centre in Aberystwyth which will operate under Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin and also provide early years places through the medium of Welsh.

Integrated centres will be established in all LEAs the length and breadth of Wales as part of our commitment to offer new opportunities to our youngest children.

A healthy start

We will also be piloting this year our imaginative free breakfasts proposal designed to ensure that all primary school children have the best possible start to the school day and helping their ability to learn. The aim is to provide all pupils registered in primary schools in Wales with the opportunity to have a free healthy breakfast at school each day. We will start to introduce them gradually on a pilot basis starting with schools in Community First areas. By September 2006 we would expect all primary schools will have been given the opportunity to participate.

Alongside such new initiatives we will continue to evaluate how our children's learning is assessed and encouraged particularly as they move between primary school and secondary school.

There can be no doubt about the importance of the early years to a child's personal and social development. We would all agree that we want Wales to be a place that puts learners' interests first and offers the widest possible access and opportunities for all. Our plans are borne out of a conviction that our youngest children need the best start in life and we intend to give them one but this approach should be carried through into later years of learning too.

Developing potential

Developing new Learning Pathways for the 14 to 19 yr olds is also one of our key strategies as too many young people are not developing to the fullness of their potential. Work on this area has involved many people across the whole of education and training and business sectors. Developing and delivering policies in partnership has been very much the hallmark. We are taking partnership working right to the heart of policy making. Additional guidance for the 14-19 pathways will be available soon and pilot work will begin in September this year.

In parallel with the 14-19 plans we will continue with the Welsh Baccalaureate pilots – in 18 schools and colleges with more to come on board in September 2004. I am particularly delighted that Wales is seen to be leading the way in developing a new broad qualification which UCAS (the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) is recognising as equivalent to an A grade at A level, so it will enhance the chances of our young people gaining entrance to universities across the UK

Wales has more learners in higher education than ever before and outperforms the rest of the UK in widening participation from non-traditional backgrounds. 91 per cent of our students come from state schools to Welsh universities compared with 86 per cent for the UK. The Aim Higher Wales campaign has been spreading its message of the benefits of higher education to Year 9 students considering their future options with 111 schools visited so far. The unique Assembly Learning Grant will continue to give students in

higher and further education from our poorest families financial assistance of up to £1,500. To date almost 19,000 people have taken up the grant.

We will continue to support the higher education sector through mergers such as that between the University of Wales Cardiff and University Wales College of Medicine.

A high profile area in the coming months will be the whole area of student support where we have been negotiating the transfer of responsibility for tuition fees and student support to the Assembly, giving us the opportunity to design a system for the future to suit the needs of Wales. An independent group is being established to advise the Assembly Government on how best to use its powers over student support from 2007/08.

Welsh-medium and bilingual provision

And running like a golden thread throughout all these plans is the commitment to expanding opportunities for Welsh medium education. The first strategic action plan for the language, Iaith Pawb, was published just a year ago. We worked hard to put our plan together and we will work hard in taking it forward. There have already been many very positive developments in recent months in support of the Welsh language.

Wales has more learners in Higher Education than ever before and outperforms the rest of the UK in widening participation from non-traditional backgrounds

This year's budget provides extra money for the training needs related to additional early years Welsh-medium and bilingual provision; extra curriculum resources and a new intensive Welsh language learning scheme for pilot English-medium primaries. There is also funding available for the expansion of Welsh-medium education in the higher education sector in our reconfiguration fund.

The Assembly Government is committed to a bilingual Wales and will continue to provide the environment and resources needed to realise this all important agenda.

Conclusion

My priority remains to firmly establish Wales as a Learning Country. It is about unlocking talent, widening access and encouraging people into learning who have never considered it before. It is also about ensuring that there is a continuum of learning with a child-oriented approach to learning from the cradle to the grave.

I will continue to underline the importance of putting learners first, broadening and enriching the experience of learning, while keeping standards high, equipping teachers to teach, and opening up new access routes to learning. We must make good use of the money available, we must ensure that our policies are evidence based, that they will secure social inclusion, that they will drive forward equality of opportunity and help progression towards bilingualism.

This is a hugely challenging education agenda because it means doing things differently, building on our success but being prepared to tackle failure. If we work in partnership for a common goal – to see the vision realised of Wales as a learning country, then Wales will truly be able to take its place on the world stage. ■

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Promoting equity: The wider role of the school

Ben Levin

Ben Levin is based at the University of Manitoba and has been involved with the evaluation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies in England. He has also undertaken research into large scale Government reform in education as well as being a senior official in Government.

Abstract: *Improving educational outcomes for all children demands a joined up approach where education is connected to a broader social policy. This article looks at the impact that issues such as nutrition, housing and the local community can have on raising educational standards.*

A HEARTENING DEVELOPMENT in education policy in recent years has been the return of interest in promoting greater equity in outcomes among learners. For quite a while during the 1970s and 1980s much of the focus of education policy, especially in the English-speaking countries, seemed to work against an interest in making sure that all students had a true opportunity, and the required supports, to be successful. As a result, levels of equity in education and other life outcomes stagnated or even declined in countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia and Canada.

In recent years interest in equity has re-emerged. Recent reports by the OECD, for example[1,2,3] have given great importance to equity issues in schools and other educational sectors. The results of the PISA 2000 study (www.pisa.oecd.org) showed that some countries were able to combine high levels of achievement with a high degree of equity, a message that was widely reported as such in the media in many countries.

The OECD continues to support work in a variety of areas of lifelong learning that is intended to promote greater equity in outcomes. In many countries, including Britain, governments have given renewed attention to trying to reduce gaps in outcomes between the top and bottom of the achievement range and among various segments of the population.

One should not be too wildly optimistic on this score; many strong pressures still work in favour of inequality and some of the equity focus appears to be more rhetorical than real. For example the Parliament of Canada unanimously passed a resolution in 1989 declaring their intention to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000, whereas ten years later the proportion of children living in poverty had increased by 30 per cent, due in no small measure to changes in government policies. Everyone working in education recognises that statements of good intention are all too easy to make – for educators as well as for politicians.

It is also the case that not everything done in the name of equity may actually be helpful. The "No Child Left Behind" legislation in the United States has a strong equity element to it - for example the insistence that all ethnic groups must make progress over time - but is widely distrusted by educators and many others as the wrong way to achieve the purpose. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies in England appear to have reduced gaps in primary school achievement in reading and arithmetic but not without costs[4], and with no further increase in test results in the last three years.

Nonetheless, there have been some important positive developments. One of the most important has been drawing explicit attention in schools to gaps in achievement. Schools in England are now among the best in the world at using student achievement data – not just from national tests but from a range of measures that look at many aspects of achievement – to look at which students need further support and how success can most effectively be fostered.

Although there is a strong belief that early intervention will create significant improvements in outcomes the evidence is actually not so straightforward.

A new approach

What we are realising, from many years of experience and a great deal of work in a number of countries, is that improving outcomes for children requires an approach that extends well beyond traditional practices of schooling or even the reforms currently being proposed for those practices.[5,6] Three areas of attention – early childhood, adult education and family and community development – are particularly important.

A rapidly growing body of evidence is showing how important children's very first years of life are. We know that early experiences – from pre-natal through their first few years – are very powerful influences on children's entire

life course. One wants to be careful on this point; it is clear that early experience is important but not determinative.

We have too much evidence that people can, much later in life, make dramatic improvements in their skills when given adequate support.[7] But even though early childhood experience is not everything it is certainly significant. Helping every child get adequate nutrition and early exposure to a rich and stimulating environment would likely have more impact on long-term educational outcomes than any other single change we might make.

The usual approach in this area has been intervention programmes related to students at risk focused on the pre-school years. Although there is a strong belief that early intervention will create significant improvements in outcomes[8] the evidence is actually not so straightforward.

A few examples such as the Perry Preschool Program are often cited to illustrate the dramatic benefits, but the Perry Program was very small and, although its participants significantly outperformed the control group on a range of life outcomes, their outcomes were still well below those of the population as a whole.[9]

Evaluations of Head Start and Early Head Start[10.11] in the US do show modest positive results, though not necessarily with lifelong effects unless the supports are also continued. Pre-school is an important area for action, but it is not sufficient in itself.

There are some very powerful examples of other areas that may be more efficacious. Rothstein (2000)[12] points out that in American inner-cities a significant number of children exhibit symptoms of lead poisoning which they get because they are living in sub-standard housing and eating paint flakes from the old, lead-based paint flaking off the walls. There are two ways to address this issue. One is to put in place expensive programmes to treat the outcomes of lead poisoning, including special education programmes in schools. The other is to paint the dwellings with non-lead paints. The second is much easier and cheaper, but to a large extent we do the first because we do not see the second as an educational issue.

Another instance would be nutrition. In northern Canada children have serious problems of tooth decay because fresh food and milk are very expensive. The same may be true in high poverty communities where families cannot afford a nutritious diet for children, who then have more illness, miss more days of school and require expensive treatment because they do not eat properly. (Of course in many communities pop is cheaper than milk.) It would be cheaper and easier, not to mention much better, to provide better diets. Fetal alcohol syndrome is another case – a case of much misery that is 100 per cent preventable yet not being prevented sufficiently.

Educators sometimes use this kind of argument to say that money should be transferred from health budgets to education budgets to deal with these

issues. However the reverse might be true; it might be much more effective in the longer-term to transfer money from schooling – keeping in mind the enormous growth in what everyone is spending on special education – to activities that have a reasonable chance of preventing the problems that we are busy trying to remedy.

The early years

All countries including the UK spend far more per year on schools or post-secondary education than on early childhood care and quite a bit of the latter is spent on child protection services rather than on prevention. In Canada on a per child per year basis, schools get about six times more public funding. Given what we know about early childhood development, that cannot be a sensible strategy.

The early childhood focus should not be primarily on day care. The returns would appear to be better from a primary focus on pre-natal to age three, with particular attention to high risk groups such as very young mothers or high poverty communities. Policies and programmes are needed that are non-punitive and focus on building the capacity of families and communities to attend to their own welfare.

We cannot focus solely on things like literacy skills, either, since it is apparent that nutrition, social support networks and adequate housing are also critical in helping children get a good start in life.[5,6] Relatively small amounts of money, used in the right way, could make a big difference.

A number of current initiatives in Britain appear, from my distant view, to be trying to address these issues. Indeed, the British Government has made some important commitments to early childhood and to the alleviation of child poverty even though some critics see these efforts as more focused on compliance than on building family and local capacity.[13]

Adult education

Attention to early childhood, however, does not simply mean programmes for young children. Adult education, especially for adults with low levels of skill or formal education, is also an important part of an early childhood strategy because improving the skills of adults will usually also improve the lives of the children they care for.[14] Anyone who works in early childhood, especially with children in difficult circumstances, soon realises that success with children requires close collaboration with their parents. After all, two year olds don't get to care programmes on their own.

While I was Deputy Minister (chief civil servant) for Education, Manitoba developed a network of adult learning centres focusing on high school completion and post-secondary entry for the large number of adults in the province who currently lack these qualifications.

I visited many of these centres, asking students why they had made the difficult and often frightening choice to return to school, often after many years away and having had a history of failure in their earlier schooling. For a huge proportion of students their children were a prime motivator. I heard many, women and men, say that they were driven to upgrade their own education to provide a good example to their children or to be able to help their children with their schooling or both. However adult education and literacy programmes in most countries are quite weak in comparison with schools and post-secondary education. We need to do more so that parents can help children be successful in school.

Role of the community

Attention to early childhood and adult education leads to a recognition of the need to focus also on building better connections between schools, families and local communities. Every study that looks at the link between school outcomes and the nature of the community finds a high correlation.

There is increasing evidence that the characteristics of a neighbourhood have an effect on school and individual outcomes over and above that of individual socio-economic status.[15.16] Education policy therefore needs to pay attention to building social and economic capital in local communities. However almost everywhere these efforts remain the exception because this kind of work is seen as outside the scope of what the education system does.

In the work my colleagues and I did looking at the implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies we pointed out what struck us as an imbalance between the resources devoted to school activities and the resources devoted to helping parents improve home literacy and numeracy practices, even though the latter may be just as important as the former.[4]

Joined up thinking

These examples illustrate a vital principle that must lie behind efforts to connect education to broader social policy. We are increasingly recognising the degree to which social policies in different areas need to be complementary – what the British Government calls "joined up thinking".

Building coherence across policy areas is a huge challenge for government and one that is still not handled as well as it should be in any country. We need to improve our capacity to connect our various policy efforts so that we are not contradicting our own efforts by, for example, helping people become more self-sufficient in one area while penalising them for doing so in some other field.

Joined-up thinking also requires that institutional needs do not take priority over learner needs, as they do so often still. I am thinking here of the largely artificial barriers between, say, early childhood and schools or between secondary schooling, adult education and post-secondary education.

In many cases institutional policies prevent learners from developing themselves as fully or as rapidly as they could, thus increasing costs and reducing efficiency. However, overcoming the enormous inertia in any long-established system of separate institutions and practices is an enormous task.

Manitoba has implemented, borrowing from many places in the US, a system of dual credits in which students can take college or university courses while still in high school and use the credits both towards their high school completion and towards the appropriate post-secondary qualification. This is a system that is efficient, motivating for many students, and builds accessibility to post-secondary education. Yet it remains the exception rather than the rule mainly for reasons of institutional self-interest.

Schools need their own version of joined-up thinking, in which we pay attention to the broad determinants of educational outcomes. Too often educators have blamed parents, families and communities for the problems of children and youth. Given how wrong and debilitating it has been for schools to be blamed for these problems, the weakness of doing the same to parents ought to be evident. It is surely right that parents and families have a great deal to do with children's success or lack of it in schools, but it is also surely right for schools to try to help them do better, not blame them for problems which are often not of their making either.

Some signposts

What would this joined-up thinking look like in schools? The answer to this question is far from clear but some signposts can be noted.

- Schools would look for opportunities to support and work closely with other community groups in areas such as early childhood development, adult education, or general community development. Educators would see these activities not as distractions from teaching the National Curriculum but as key parts of a strategy for student success.

- Effort requires resources, so schools need to look for ways to find or, if necessary, redeploy resources to these broader purposes. Might hiring an effective home liaison worker be a better use of funds than, say, another resource teacher or more computers? (This, I might add, is an empirical question that merits careful research.)

- Schools do not have to do everything. In many cases a school can contribute by supporting the work of local community groups, for whom a place to meet, some supplies, or a few hours of professional expertise can make a vital difference. Working with community groups also increases the likelihood of their supporting schools when the latter are under pressure.

I recognise that it is much easier for me to write these suggestions than for schools to respond to them. Schools and teachers are already under pressure in many, many ways. Schools are not responsible for social inequalities and cannot on their own resolve them.[17] Piling on more obligations may make people feel overwhelmed.

Yet these steps are necessary. If we truly want all children, and all schools, to be successful then we have to do those things most likely to create that success. Substantial evidence points to the importance of early childhood, adult education and community development as important success factors for children. Our own welfare as educators depends, in my view, on embracing and enacting a wider role for schools.

I welcome comments or reactions to this paper. I can be reached at Ben_Levin@umanitoba.ca. ■

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From the billboard to the school canteen: How food promotion influences children

Gerard Hastings, Martine Stead and Laura McDermott

Gerard Hastings, Martine Stead and Laura McDermott are based at the Centre for Social Marketing, University of Strathclyde.

Abstract: *In July 2002 the University of Strathclyde was asked to conduct a review of all the published research into the effects of food advertising to children. This article provides an overview of the review's findings and discusses what they mean for schools' role in promoting healthy eating both inside and outside the classroom.*

OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY are rising in the UK. The majority of 4-18 year olds eat more than the recommended amount of saturated fat, sugar and salt[1], and this is taking its toll on their health. In 1997, 15 per cent of children and young people interviewed in the National Diet and Nutrition

Survey were overweight and 4 per cent were clinically obese[2]; the same survey in 1999 found that 23 per cent were overweight and 6 per cent were obese[3]. More recently still, a 2001 survey found obesity levels of 8.5 per cent among 6 year olds and 15 per cent among 15 year olds.[4] All the available evidence suggests that these levels will continue to rise, creating a massive future public health burden.

Many different cultural, political, behavioural and environmental factors may be causing obesity levels to increase. In recent years, a spotlight has been turned on commercial food promotion: children's charities have for many years been calling for food advertising to children to be banned or curbed, and last year, the UK Chief Medical Officer's investigation into obesity included close scrutiny of food marketing as a possible cause. Similarly, the World Health Organisation identified the marketing of "energy-dense" foods as a probable cause of worldwide increasing obesity.[5]

In July 2002 the Food Standards Agency commissioned us to conduct a systematic and wide-ranging review of all the published research in order to establish the nature and extent of food advertising to children and what, if any, influence it has on them. The results were released in autumn 2003[6] and have received much media attention[7]. Government, the food industry, and groups concerned about children's health and policy are now actively debating the review's implications and the policy options. Schools, parents and all those concerned with children's education and welfare have an important role to play in this response.

Our methods

The research team comprised marketing, nutrition, food policy and economics researchers from the Centre for Social Marketing at the University of Strathclyde, the University of Oxford, City University and the University of York.*

We used systematic review procedures to search for, select and appraise the evidence. These are borrowed from medical science, where great care is needed to ensure that particular treatments are really safe and effective, and that every possible source of evidence is identified and rigorously evaluated. The search process throws the net as wide as possible to capture all possible studies, and then applies scientific standards to select only evidence of a satisfactory quality – for example, evidence which is free from bias, uses robust and clearly described methods and so forth.

The precise methods of this search and evaluation process are laid down in a detailed protocol, so that other researchers can replicate the review and

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* The full research team was: Gerard Hastings, Martine Stead, Laura McDermott, Alasdair Forsyth, Anne Marie MacKintosh, Mike Rayner, Christine Godfrey, Martin Caraher and Kathryn Angus.

check the conclusions it reaches. This is the first time that such procedures have been applied to a social phenomenon like food promotion. It was particularly important in this instance that the review methods used were both rigorous and transparent, as this would help ensure that its findings were accepted by the many parties with an interest in this issue.

Our initial searches yielded 30,000 potentially relevant citations (including duplications), which were ultimately sifted down to around 100 that were capable of shedding reliable light on the issues. This exhaustive (and exhausting) process has been more than vindicated; the review has been given enormous press coverage[7], but no one has come forward with a study we have missed.

Throughout the review, our work was overseen by an Advisory Committee, which included representatives from both the food and advertising industries, and scrutinised by FSA appointed expert advisors. Once the findings were produced, these were in turn peer reviewed prior to the report's publication.

Our findings

The review showed that food is promoted to children more than any other product, apart from toys (and then only at Christmas). Television is the principal medium for this advertising, which is mostly concerned with the "big five" of pre-sugared breakfast cereals, soft-drinks, confectionery, savoury snacks and, coming from nowhere in the last ten years, fast food. Content analysis studies find that the advertised diet contrasts sharply with that recommended by nutritionists and public health experts; importantly, it is consistently higher in salt, sugar and fat.

There is plenty of evidence that children notice and enjoy food promotion. However, establishing whether this actually influences them is a complex task. The review tackled it by looking at studies that had examined possible effects on what children know about food, their food preferences, their actual food behaviour (both buying and eating), their diet, and their health outcomes (eg. obesity or cholesterol levels). The majority of studies examined food advertising, but a few examined other forms of food promotion, including packaging and vending machines in schools.

In terms of nutritional knowledge, food advertising seems to have little influence on children's general perceptions of what constitutes a healthy diet, but, in certain contexts, it does have an effect on more specific types of nutritional knowledge. For example, in one study, more exposure to soft drink and cereal adverts reduced primary school children's ability to determine correctly whether or not certain products contained real fruit.

The review also found evidence that food promotion influences children's food preferences and their purchase behaviour. A study of primary school children, for instance, found that exposure to advertising influenced which

foods they claimed to like; and another showed that labelling and signage on a vending machine had an effect on what was bought by secondary school pupils. A number of studies have also shown that food advertising can influence what children eat. One, for example, showed that advertising influenced a primary school class's choice of daily snack at playtime.

Trying to establish whether or not a link exists between food promotion and diet or obesity is extremely difficult as it requires research to be done in real world settings. A number of studies have attempted this by using the amount of television viewing as a proxy for exposure to television advertising. They have established a clear link between television viewing and diet, obesity, and cholesterol levels. It is impossible to say, however, whether this effect is caused by the advertising, the sedentary nature of television viewing or snacking that might take place whilst viewing. One study resolved this problem by taking a detailed diary of children's viewing habits. This showed that the more food adverts they saw, the more snacks and calories they consumed.

Thus the literature does suggest food promotion is influencing children's diet in a number of ways. This does not amount to proof; with this kind of research, incontrovertible proof is simply not attainable. Nor do all studies point to this conclusion; several have not found an effect. In addition, very few studies have attempted to measure how strong these effects are *relative* to other factors influencing children's food choices.

Nonetheless, many studies have found clear effects and they have used sophisticated methodologies that make it possible to determine that i) these effects are not just due to chance; ii) they are independent of other factors that may influence diet, such as parents' eating habits or attitudes; and iii) they occur at a brand and category level. In other words, advertising can shift children's preferences not just between different brands of chocolate biscuit, but between chocolate biscuits and crisps or apples.

Furthermore, two factors suggest that these findings actually understate the effect that food promotion has on children. First, the literature focuses principally on television advertising; the cumulative effect of this combined with other forms of promotion and marketing is likely to be significantly greater. Second, the studies have looked at *direct* effects on individual children, and understate indirect influences. For example, promotion for fast food outlets may not only influence children, but also encourage parents to take them for meals and thereby reinforce children's perceptions of fast food as normal and desirable.

How reliable were our findings?

There are still gaps in the research base; the size of the effects on children, for example, is still unclear. There are also inconsistencies; some studies show effects, some do not. Food knowledge, preferences and behaviour are

influenced by a wide range of complex and dynamic factors. Unpicking these is difficult, and isolating the possible influence of just one variable – in this case promotion – particularly so.

It should also be recognised that, despite the extent of our work - which took a full year to complete - we looked at only one piece of the obesity jigsaw. We were not asked to examine all the other possible causes of childhood obesity, only food promotion. Sedentary lifestyles, too much time at the computer (so-called "mouse-potatoes"), limited play because of hazardous streets, fewer children walking to school, the sale of school playing fields, the decline in home cooking, and many other social phenomena are all thought to be influencing obesity trends.

This said, great pains were taken to make this review as transparent and reliable as possible. We went to these lengths to help ensure that the review findings would be accepted by the many parties with an interest in this issue. This effort has paid off: not only has the public health community accepted our findings, but at least parts of the food industry have done so as well. Indeed some needed no convincing; the Co-op, for example, ceased television advertising to children some time ago.

…advertising can shift children's preferences not just between different brands of chocolate biscuit, but between chocolate biscuits and crisps or apples.

The implications for schools

The review concluded that there was sufficient evidence to show that food promotion *can* have and *is* having an effect on children and young teens, particularly in the areas of food preferences, purchase behaviour and consumption. It was also clear that these effects are significant, independent of other influences and operate at both brand and category level.

This does not amount to cast-iron proof of an effect, but in our view does provide sufficient evidence to conclude that an effect exists. In other words, commercial food promotion is a significant influence on our children – one that, currently, is contributing to their rising levels of poor diet and obesity. Comprehensive and co-ordinated action on food promotion is now urgently needed.

The Food Standards Agency has convened a nationwide public debate on how policymakers, the food industry and all those concerned with young people's health and welfare can work together to bring about improvements in young people's eating. A number of different policy options have been proposed for consideration:

- tightening up existing (voluntary) codes of practice;
- increasing promotional activity for healthier food products to redress the current imbalance;
- providing guidance to schools and other educational establishments to help encourage healthy eating; and
- introducing statutory controls on the promotion of foods to children (for example, banning food advertising to children of a certain age).

Some policy responses to this complex issue are beyond the remit and power of schools: regulation of television advertising, for example, is clearly in the hands of the Government and the food industry, although this is not to say that schools should not seek to contribute to the debate.

But in many other respects, schools are at the centre of the issue. They form one of the most important environments in which children make food choices. For primary school children in particular, who have not yet become sophisticated purchasers of clothes and music, food is the key product category in which they exercise their developing identity as consumers – every day they make, talk about, compare and consume food choices with their peers.

Schools must continue to create a culture that promotes the consumption of healthier foods, and discourages the consumption of less healthy foods. This requires action both in and outside the classroom. Continuing to teach children how to read and view advertising more critically - "media literacy" - will continue to be important, although this is only one part of the solution. Healthier alternatives to the heavily-advertised high fat, sugar and salt diet must not only be made easily available in school meals, vending machines and tuckshops, but must also be attractively priced, presented and promoted in ways which give them greater prominence than less healthy alternatives.

Crucially, the review points to the need for robust scrutiny of all forms of food promotion to which children are exposed. Although our review primarily focused on television advertising (because most of the published academic research has examined television advertising), it is reasonable to suppose that the other forms of food promotion which schoolchildren encounter - including the billboard advertising they pass on the way to school, the vending machines they use in schools, the signs and displays they see every day in the school canteen, the attractive and well-produced commercially sponsored materials they use in the classroom, and the confectionery and crisp coupons they are urged to collect to provide "free" computers and sports equipment for cash-strapped schools – are also influential.

The national and local guidelines governing these forms of promotion should be critically reviewed, and, if necessary, enhanced with more stringent criteria and controls. It is also worth noting, however, that some parts of the

food industry already seem to be acknowledging the particular sensitivities of the school environment; Coca Cola, for example, is removing its branding from school vending machines in Scotland in response to government requests to increase healthy choices in schools.

In conclusion, schools play a key role in shaping children's food choices and dietary health. But action on all fronts is needed. Indirectly, our findings support the ethos of the Health Promoting or Healthy School: it is not enough to teach children nutrition in the classroom if this message is undermined by the wider school environment and by the contradictory efforts of the food and advertising industries. ■

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Our children deserve the best

Baroness Catherine Ashton

Catherine Ashton is Minister for Early Years and School Standards.

Abstract: *Good early years education and high quality care are crucial to the overall well-being and development of children and their ability to flourish when they go to school and in their later years. In this article Catherine Ashton, Minister for Early Years and School Standards, outlines the work that the Government is undertaking to ensure that all children get the best possible start in life.*

THE GOVERNMENT HAS an ambitious vision for Britain's future in which education is at the heart of a modern, fair and dynamic society. As the Prime Minister recently said, we have a passion for education. It is our priority to ensure that every child, irrespective of background, has the chance to make the most of his or her potential, and grow up with a wide range of opportunities.

The early years are an exciting and extremely important stage of a child's learning journey. Good early years education and high quality care are crucial to the overall well-being and development of children and their ability to flourish when they go to school and in their later years.

If we get this right and provide a good foundation, our children get off to a flying start; as shown by the DfES-funded *Effective Provision of Pre-School Education* study (EPPE)* undertaken by the Institute of Education at the University of London.

This is why we are investing in early years provision, through the programmes that form the Sure Start initiative, on a scale unmatched by any government in recent times.

* The longitudinal study of the Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) funded by DfES provides compelling evidence of the positive effects of good quality pre-school provision on children's social behavioural and cognitive outcomes at entry into primary school.
The study collected a wide range of information on over 3,000 children, their parents, their home environments; and from 141 pre-school settings drawn from a range of providers (local authority day nursery, combined centres, playgroups, private day nurseries, maintained nursery schools and maintained nursery classes).
The key findings are given at the end of this article.

The pace of change has been very rapid.

- There has been a guaranteed free early education place since 1998 for every four year old in the country whose parents want one, and there will be a free place for every three year old by April 2004.
- Between January 1999 and January 2003, the number of free early education places taken up by three and four year olds increased from 819,500 to 1,024,000.
- Between 1997 and September 2003, 808,000 new childcare places were created for well over 1.4 million children, with a wide variety of providers (day nurseries, childminders and before- and after-school clubs) and increasingly delivered alongside early education and other health and family services, to meet parents' needs and provide real choice.
- By March 2004, we will have created 900,000 new places for 1.6 million children. Taking into account turnover, this means that one million extra children will have a childcare place. By March 2006, enough new childcare will have been created to benefit over two million children in total.
- In 1997 there was much less financial support for families' childcare costs. The Government is now spending almost £2 million each day helping families through the tax credit system.
- At January 2004, 300,000 lower and middle income families were benefiting from the childcare element of Working Tax Credit (WTC), 120,000 more than under the previous arrangements prior to April 2003 through Working Families Tax Credit, and over six times as many as the number who benefited under the previous administration's Family Credit.

Supporting children's development

We have also established the Foundation Stage as the first part of the National Curriculum – recognising this important phase of education for children aged three to the end of the reception year in schools, when most children have reached the age of five. The Early Learning Goals set out what most children should achieve by the end of the reception year, and the introduction of the Foundation Stage Profile helps teachers assess progress and enables them to build on what children have learned during the Foundation Stage.

The principles of the Foundation Stage support close working relationships with parents, and help all those working in these settings respond to children's individual learning and development needs across six wide areas of learning. This is fully consistent with our plans to support personalised learning throughout primary education.

Our focus continues to be on equipping all those working in the early years with the key skills necessary to enable all children to reach their full potential. We need to create effective and inclusive early learning and caring

environments where children feel valued, and develop confidence and strong self-esteem. We know that children learn best with enjoyment and challenge, and this should be the essence of all early years settings. To support this we have extended the new Primary National Strategy, and appointed a Foundation Stage Director, Lesley Staggs, and an expert team to provide national support to local authorities as they strive to raise quality and improve access to local services across the early years sector.

We also need to do more for children in their earliest years, and have introduced the *Birth to Three Matters*[1] framework to support children's development in this age range. The Framework identifies four "Aspects" which celebrate the skills and competences of babies and very young children; and it highlights the interrelationship between growth, learning, development and the environment in which children are cared for and educated.

The framework aims to build on the skills of all those supporting children's development by providing information, effective practice, and examples of play and learning activities in order to meet the individual needs of babies and young children. A national training strategy will ensure the Framework is successfully embedded in good practice.

Closing the gap

We are also pledged to closing the "childcare gap" between children from disadvantaged areas and others.

The Government's Spending Review 2002 unveiled a major programme to build on the strong base we have created so far, transforming early years provision with a £1.5bn budget, including more than doubling childcare spending by 2006. We are establishing a network of children's centres in disadvantaged areas which will offer services to at least 650,000 children and their families by 2006, and we are building on existing successful initiatives such as Sure Start Local Programmes and Neighbourhood Nurseries.

Despite the substantial increase in provision, we recognise that in some areas childcare remains less extensive. A number of our key programmes have focused on expanding provision in the most disadvantaged communities and to poorer families. Sure Start local programmes are making an important contribution to expanding childcare provision in disadvantaged areas, as well as encouraging and supporting parents considering work. All 524 local programmes are now up and running, offering services for up to 400,000 children in poverty - around 30 per cent of the total. In addition, 575 Neighbourhood Nurseries have been opened, providing over 17,000 new daycare places in our most disadvantaged communities.

Supporting learning

When children go on to school, smaller classes allow teachers to spend more

time with them individually in the vital early years. We have achieved smaller classes by putting £620 million in to schools: enough for 6,000 new teachers and 2,000 additional classrooms. A further £73 million is available this year for children aged seven to 11 who are in classes which might have been made bigger where popular schools have expanded to meet demand from parents.

This money will help make sure that children who have benefited from smaller classes continue to do so as they move up to the next stage of school life. We pledged to limit the size of infant classes for five, six and seven year olds to no more than 30 pupils by 2002. Now only 0.1 per cent of the country's 63,000 infant classes exceed this.

As a parent myself, I know how important it is for teachers to be supported in the classroom. There are now more than 20,000 teaching assistants in place and overall 186,000 support staff in schools helping to free teacher time. This allows teachers to focus on the core tasks of lesson preparation, teaching and assessment of pupils' work, and can only enhance teaching as a profession.

We all know it is essential to master the basic skills in the early years. The most recent performance tables showed the best primary results ever. Seventy five per cent of all 11 year olds are reaching the standards expected for their age in mathematics, and 80 per cent in English. Over the past three years there have been national improvements of 10 per cent in English and 12 per cent in mathematics.

We must never underestimate the importance of the early years in a child's life. They should be enjoyable and secure, but also full of fun and challenge.

These improvements are being helped by the literacy and numeracy strategies introduced in 1998 and 1999. OFSTED, which has had a major role in driving up standards, has reported that the strategies have transformed primary school teaching.

The strategies have introduced more whole-class teaching where appropriate and more emphasis on phonics, spelling and grammar. I know they have been a challenge for teachers, but due to their hard work we are now seeing some real direct benefits. An additional £192 million is available this year through the Standards Fund for primary literacy and numeracy. The strategies are now also being incorporated into the secondary curriculum.

We must never underestimate the importance of the early years in a child's life. They should be enjoyable and secure, but also full of fun and challenge. It is a vital time when children develop rapidly: physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially. Our children deserve the best and we must do our

best to make sure they get it. I am delighted that with the help of skilled and committed professionals throughout early education and childcare, we are close to achieving a firm foundation for success for ALL our children.

Key findings of the EPPE Review:

- Pre-school experience, compared to none, enhances children's development;
- The quality of pre-school settings is directly related to better cognitive and social behavioural development in children;
- Good quality provision can be found across all types of early years settings. However, quality was higher overall in combined settings (these are centres that fully combine education with care), nursery schools and nursery classes;
- Settings which have staff with higher qualifications, especially with a good proportion of trained teachers on the staff, show higher quality and their children make more progress;
- Where settings view educational and social development as complementary and equal in importance, children make better all round progress. Effective pedagogy includes interaction traditionally associated with the term "teaching", the provision of instructive learning environments, and "sustained shared thinking" to extend children's learning;
- Disadvantaged children and those "at risk" of SEN can benefit significantly from good quality pre-school experiences, especially if they attend centres that cater for a mixture of children from different social backgrounds; and
- Learning at home with parents makes a positive difference to *all* children's cognitive and behavioural development. Although parents' social class and levels of education were related to child outcomes, the quality of the home learning environment was more important. The home learning environment is only moderately associated with social class; the findings therefore suggest that what parents do is more important than who they are. ■

To see the full report, visit: http://www.ioe.ac.uk/cdl/eppe

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Creating a healthier generation

Phil Willis

Phil Willis is Liberal Democrat Shadow Secretary of State for Education and Skills.

Abstract: *In this article Phil Willis, Liberal Democrat Shadow Secretary of State for Education and Skills, outlines the findings of his recent inquiry[1] into sports and fitness in secondary schools. The inquiry sets out the changes that need to take place if we are to enthuse children about sport and encourage healthy lifestyles.*

A PERVERSE IRONY IS at play in Britain today. Our sporting heroes are honoured by the Queen, instantly recognised as celebrities by millions, and the whole country will join together this summer as we support our athletes in the Olympic Games and cheer on our footballers in the European Championships. Given the prominence of sport in the nation's conscience, it would seem we are fanatics, so surely it follows that the next generation of up and coming stars are a picture of health and fitness?

A quick look at the latest findings suggests not:

- According to the Health Development Agency, 15 per cent of 15 year olds and 8.5 per cent of six year olds are classed as obese.
- The Food Standard's Agency calculate physical activity in schools to have fallen by 70 per cent in the past 30 years and call child obesity a "ticking timebomb".
- Obesity in children aged six to 15 has more than trebled between 1990 and 2001, according to February 2004's report by the Royal College of Physicians, the Faculty of Public Health and the Royal College of Paediatricians and Child Health.[2]

The figures suggest our young people are increasingly a generation of couch potatoes, who would rather watch TV and play video games than engage in physical activity. The implications for the nation's wellbeing and health, both now and in the future, are extremely worrying. Not only in terms of related problems such as heart disease and diabetes, but also in terms of mental health. Evidence increasingly shows the old idiom to be true –"healthy body, healthy mind."

What has been going wrong and where does the problem lie? Schools have always been central in encouraging young people to take up different sports, to appreciate the importance of team work, winning and losing, and above all, practice. Through PE, biology and food technology, schools can lay the foundations for future fitness and health throughout life, as pupils learn the importance of physical exercise and good diet.

I recently conducted research into the issue of sports and fitness in secondary schools to assess the nature of the problem and help inform the debate on how we can work together to improve the situation.

Aims of the Inquiry

The inquiry set out to achieve these 3 key aims:

- To assess the nature and condition of sports facilities in secondary schools and how this has changed in the last five years;
- To assess the range of extra-curricular sports and fitness activities available to pupils; to assess the nature of participation in these activities and in normal PE lessons; and
- To assess the average fitness and health of pupils and whether this had changed over the last five years.

A cross-cutting aim was to be able to assess the difference between schools with a high intake of pupils from poor families, compared with schools with a very low intake of pupils from poor families.

The survey, to be completed by Heads of PE, was sent to a sample of secondary schools of similar size and all in the state sector. Chosen because their intakes represented different ends of the deprivation spectrum, half the schools had more than 50 per cent of pupils on free school meals and half had less than 2 per cent of pupils on free school meals. Within these parameters, the schools were randomly chosen.

Key Findings

- Only one in ten Heads of PE believe the average pupil in secondary schools to be of good health and fitness;

- 65 per cent of Heads of PE said the health and fitness of their pupils had deteriorated in the last five years;
- Only 30 per cent of teachers are able to describe the sports facilities at their schools as either "good" or "very good";
- 50 per cent of all Heads of PE believe sports facilities at their school have deteriorated over the last five years;
- Amongst mixed sex schools, 60 per cent of Heads of PE noted the difficulty in encouraging girls to participate in extra-curricular activity; and
- Amongst schools with a low intake of poor students, the participation rate in extra-curricular activities is twice as high as the participation rate in schools with a high intake of poor students – 48 per cent:23 per cent

Heads of PE confirm the shocking lack of fitness and health amongst pupils and highlight the deterioration over the last five years. But what is behind this?

Facilities

It is too easy to blame the standard of sports facilities. True, few Heads of PE are happy with the state of their playing fields, courts, and sports halls but there is no bottomless funding pit to dip into. However, for PE teachers such as this, who report that, "Outdoor surfaces are very dangerous, with pipes running between courts and holes for tennis nets not covered in", it must be frustrating to see that by early this year, only £8.5 million of the £750 million promised for school sport by the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, in 2000 has been spent.

So much for tackling obesity being a priority! It is to be hoped that it is those schools with a high intake of children from poor families who benefit when this money is finally spent, because predictably it is these schools which suffer from poorer facilities.

Despite the problems PE teachers face with facilities on-site, the standard of facilities off-site goes some way to making up for it. It has become very common to use local sports centres, gyms and swimming pools. However, obvious disadvantages are the time, extra costs and organisation needed, not to mention the lack of facilities in non-urban settings.

Other factors must be at work in the rising obesity crisis amongst young people.

Participation

At present the National Curriculum advises two hours a week of physical activity, which can incorporate after-school activity – but this is no good if the majority of pupils do not participate in extra-curricular sport. There is no shortage of after-school activity on offer at most secondary schools, but many teachers are experiencing serious problems getting pupils to participate.

Our research shows that amongst schools with a high proportion of pupils

from poor backgrounds, the participation rate in extra-curricular activities is particularly low. Many PE teachers also have great difficulty in encouraging girls to participate in both in extra-curricular activity and in normal PE lessons, especially Muslim girls.

The challenge of involving girls, particularly those from ethnic minorities in appropriate physical activity should be made a priority by Government. It will need to be a sensitive approach involving teachers, parents and the pupils themselves. Regular involvement in sport is not only healthy, it provides a focus for disaffected youngsters and can be a real force for good in the community.

However, we must approach this problem in the round. Tackling obesity through sport and exercise is one side of the coin. The other is diet.

A well-balanced diet?

All successful sportsmen and women know the importance of a healthy diet in maintaining fitness and good health. However, the latest Department for Health's "Health Survey for England"[3] reported that children tended to eat just two and a half portions of fruit and vegetables a day – half the minimum recommended amount. Only one in seven children ate five or more portions.

Although school meals often contain a "healthy option", such choices are dwarfed by the vast array of burgers, chips, chicken nuggets and pizzas on offer, not to mention the omnipresent tuck shop – full of crisps, chocolate and soft drinks. Schools must be central in changing attitudes toward healthy food and promoting a health conscious and balanced approach to diet, not least because it is a sad fact that for many children, their school meal is the only hot meal of the day.

Evidence suggests that we need a radical overhaul in school food. The Food Commission has shown that the additives used in hundreds of children's food and drink choices is conducive to poor behaviour and a reduction in concentration levels. Tests at one school in Worcestershire suggested that a reduced-additive school meal yielded highly positive results in the classroom, in terms of concentration and also at home, in terms of ability to sleep.

One primary school in Nottingham sources all their food locally, putting a major emphasis on fresh and healthy ingredients. They manage to keep the price of the meal to the parent the same as other Nottingham schools (£1.70) but are able to spend more per head on the ingredients by cutting out the cost of managers, administrators and other middle-men (the new meal costs 60p or 70p compared with as little as 31p elsewhere). The rise in children having school meals has shown the scheme to be a success, in pupil popularity stakes as well as diet.

Yet barriers to a healthy and fit lifestyle clearly do not stop with school meals. Children are constantly bombarded with advertisements for sweet and calorific food and soft drinks, cleverly – or cynically – placed in commercial

breaks to children's TV programmes. Trapped in a vicious circle of poor diet and no exercise, the last thing many children need are aggressively marketed fatty foods.

It is not only TV advertising that is a cause for concern. Soft drink and junk food manufacturers are tapping in to schools' need for income, and offer books, computers or – most ironically of all, sports equipment – in return for advertising rights. One of the most controversial schemes in recent times was Cadbury Schweppes' "Chocolate-for-sports-kit" offer, for which the Food Commission calculated to earn the most expensive item – a set of posts for a volleyball net – secondary school children would need to eat 5,440 chocolate bars containing over 33kg of fat, and nearly one-and-a-quarter million calories.

Recommendations

We need to look for innovative ways to enthuse pupils throughout their school years, and think creatively to instil them with a love of sport and establish recognition that physical activity and healthy diet must form part of their regular routine throughout their lives.

There is no shortage of after-school activity on offer at most secondary schools, but many teachers are experiencing serious problems getting pupils to participate.

From an early age, children should be encouraged to be active and care about their health. But in a culture where testing and target-hitting are so central, primary school teachers do not have the flexibility, and to a certain extent the training, to be able to incorporate sport and physical activity into other subjects such as literacy and numeracy. This is backed up by many teachers, according to the British Heart Foundation.

The vast majority of primary school teachers now train through the one year postgraduate route, and time is limited. PE, music, art and religious education all tend to miss out in favour of literacy, numeracy and science. Therefore, Liberal Democrats propose that all newly qualified teachers should complete specific training on PE during their induction year. This would ensure that at the beginning of their careers they gained insight into how to enthuse children about sport and to encourage healthy lifestyles.

Physical activity should form a core part of the 14–19 agenda. The Liberal Democrats have long argued for a "climbing frame" approach to the 14–19 agenda, with increased diversity in the system enabling students to study in a

variety of settings and gain credit for a wide range of their academic and non-academic activities. This should also apply to involvement in sports and physical activity – for instance, by including dance as a structured form of activity, participation and enthusiasm amongst girls would certainly increase.

The Government must address the issue of schools assessing student health and fitness as a core objective alongside more traditional academic subjects. And in line with Sport England recommendations, two hours of sport per week should be made compulsory at secondary schools if we are going to begin to deal with these problems.

Examples of best practice in the provision of healthy school meals should be emulated as widely as possible and encouraged by Government. In addition, it is surely sensible to look at the issue of junk food advertisements. Bans on cigarette sponsorship for sporting events has been a success, it is now time the code on food and drink advertisements directed at children was examined to see if there are areas where it could be toughened up.

The education world needs to be on the frontline in the fight against child obesity. It will be a long battle, but one which needs to start now. The attack must be two-pronged, taking on the problem of both exercise and diet.

The Liberal Democrats want to raise the importance of sport and health, bring it from the fringes to the centre of the lives of our young people. This is an immediate and significant concern and should not remain a side-issue a moment longer. ■

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Finnish education – reaching high quality and promoting equity

Pirjo Linnakylä

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Abstract: *PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) showed that the Finnish education system has succeeded both in academic terms and in promoting equity. This article tries to open up some perspectives on the possible reasons underlying the high performance of Finnish students. There is no one single explanation for the result. Rather, the successful performance seems to be attributable to a web of interrelated factors having to do with comprehensive pedagogy, students' own interests and leisure activities, the structure of the educational system, teacher education, school practices and, in the end, Finnish culture.*

IN THE LIGHT of the recent international assessments (PISA, TIMSS-R, CIVIC, IALS), the Finnish school system seems to be successful in providing the majority of its students with a solid foundation for further studies, working life and active citizenship. The results of PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) 2000, in particular, showed that the Finnish education system has succeeded both in academic terms and in promoting relatively high equity among the 15-year-old students.

In PISA, Finnish students showed the highest achievement in reading literacy among all OECD countries: Finland's performance was significantly higher than that of any other participating country. In mathematical literacy and in scientific literacy, Finland also ranked among the best OECD countries.

The Finnish strategy for building up education has been based on the principle of equity and particularly on an effort to minimise low achievement. One of the most interesting findings of PISA, therefore, was the one indicating that in Finland the gap between high and low performers was relatively narrow. In reading literacy, for example, the standard deviation for student scores proved the second smallest among OECD countries.

Likewise, the number of low performers – those reading at or below PISA proficiency level 1 – was significantly smaller in Finland (7 per cent) than it was in the United Kingdom (13 per cent) or in the OECD countries on average (18 per cent). Indeed, it seemed to be a characteristic of the Finnish performance profile that the lowest scoring students performed better than their fellow students in the other OECD countries. The difference between Finnish top performers and the OECD average, on the other hand, was much less pronounced, albeit clear.

Equal opportunities to learn

As regards equal opportunities for learning, the PISA results also revealed that in Finland parents' socio-economic status had a relatively low impact on student performance compared to other OECD countries. In the United Kingdom and particularly in Germany and Switzerland, the findings were quite different. The impact of socio-economic factors was, in fact, stronger in most OECD countries than it was in Finland. These results suggest that the Finnish comprehensive school has built up literacy competencies that not only are of high quality but also attest to relatively high equality as far as students' social background is concerned.

As a token of the equal educational opportunities, the differences found between schools in Finland were among the smallest in the OECD. While these differences accounted for 36 per cent of the variation in student reading performance in the OECD countries on average, in Finland only 5 per cent of the total variation was between schools. Even the weakest performing Finnish schools achieved the OECD average.

Small between-school variation is a characteristic of all the Nordic countries. This is largely due to the fact that these countries have non-selective education systems where all students are provided with the same kind of comprehensive basic education up to the age of 16. In contrast, variation between schools tends to be more pronounced in countries where students are channelled into different kinds of schools, streams and tracks at an early age.

The results of PISA indicate that small between-school variation is one of the key factors associated with high and relatively equal performance. These results are most encouraging, which can be seen in that in PISA differences among schools between the different regions as well as the urban and rural areas of Finland proved relatively small. In Finland it is thus of little

consequence where the student lives and which school he or she goes to. The opportunities to learn are virtually the same all over the country, whether the student lives in the far North, in the remotest districts of Lapland or in the Helsinki capital area.

Factors behind the success

There is, of course, no one single factor behind the high reading literacy achievement of Finnish students. Rather, the good performance was related to or associated with a whole network of interrelated factors. This network consists of students' own interest and engagement in reading, their learning strategies and leisure activities in the learning environments provided by schools and homes as well as the values, aims and expectations of these students and their parents and teachers.

Based on regression analyses of the PISA data, the single key factors which proved the strongest determinants of Finnish youth's reading literacy scores were students' own attitudes and activities, specifically engagement (which explained 22 per cent of the variance) and interest in reading (18 per cent). The next strongest factors derived from the home background: its cultural communication (6 per cent), cultural products (6 per cent) and parents' socio-economic status (6 per cent). Still another equally strong factor was the student's self-concept as a mother tongue learner (6 per cent).

A comparison of the Finnish and the British results reveal both similarities and differences with regard to the major background factors. Engagement in reading (15 per cent) as well as cultural communication (7 per cent) and cultural products provided at home (10 per cent) were strong predictors also in the United Kingdom. Parents' socio-economic status, however, explained more of the achievement in the United Kingdom (15 per cent) and in the OECD countries on average (11 per cent) than it did in Finland (10 per cent).

These findings suggest that in Finland students' own engagement in reading plays an important role in equalising the reading performance of students coming from different social backgrounds. Finnish students also displayed the highest level of interest and the third highest level of engagement in reading in the PISA countries. In Finland, 41 per cent of the students, for example, reported that reading was one of their favourite hobbies. For girls the figure was 60 per cent.

Finnish students likewise spend more of their free time reading than do British students on average. Also the reading materials favoured by students are more diverse in Finland than in the United Kingdom. Finnish students, including girls, are the most active newspaper readers and they borrow books from the library more frequently, compared to their peers in the United Kingdom or in any other OECD country. In Finland, the comprehensive

network of municipality libraries supports students' interest and engagement in reading.

The comprehensive school – a pedagogical philosophy and practice

As an effort to strengthen equal opportunities to learn, Finland has built up a comprehensive basic school system. In this system every child attends school free of charge for nine years from the age of seven to the age of 16. The comprehensive school is, however, not only a system. It is also a matter of pedagogical philosophy and practice. It accentuates the fact that school is for each child and has to adjust to the needs of each child, not the opposite. The pedagogy is built up to fit heterogeneous student groups.

Teachers cannot exclude anybody or send him or her to another school. In comprehensive pedagogy students' own interests and choices are taken into consideration when selecting course contents, text books, learning strategies and methods as well as assessment devices. In heterogeneous groups class size has to be relatively small, of course. Accordingly, PISA shows that in Finland class size is among the smallest in the OECD countries. Heterogeneous groups require a flexible, school-based and teacher-planned curriculum, student-centred instruction, counselling and special education support for students with learning difficulties.

...in Finland parents' socio-economic status had a relatively low impact on student performance compared to other OECD countries.

Special education has played an important role in Finland in catering for students who have problems following regular teaching. Finnish special education, however, is not only for students with serious problems in their studies: every student is entitled to ask for special help at school. Special education is usually closely integrated into normal teaching and is highly inclusive by nature. Only about 2 per cent of students attend separate special education institutions.

A student with problems in a certain subject or subjects typically has the opportunity of studying once or twice a week in a small group of two to five students or even individually with a special teacher. The special teacher may sometimes, for diagnostic observation, be present in a normal class, particularly during the primary grades, so as to see how individual students are working in bigger groups. On the primary level, priority in special education is given to reading and writing skills along with mathematics. On the lower secondary

level, foreign languages also cause difficulties to a number of students. A student's right to special education is written in the Finnish school laws.

All schools have a broadly based system of counselling that underpins the development of students, and provides guidance in studying, career planning and choice of further studies. The task of counselling is to ensure that every young person leaving school is aware of what choices of further education are open to him or her and what working in the adult world entails, and has a clear plan for his or her own future.

Teachers are highly valued experts

In order to succeed in a heterogeneous group a teacher has to be well educated, a true pedagogical expert, which Finnish teachers are. All teachers have a master's degree either in educational science or in a teaching subject. The teacher's profession, especially that of the class teacher, is highly valued in Finnish society. A good example of this is the popularity of the class teachers' programme provided at universities: there are so many applicants that only 10 per cent of them can be admitted, and these students are highly motivated, multi-talented young people who have been successful not only in their earlier academic studies but also in art, music and sports.

In Finnish culture, the profession of teacher has been rated among the most important professions of society, and a lot of resources have consequently been invested in teacher education. Teachers have also been trusted to do their best as true professionals. Accordingly, Finnish teachers have been entrusted with considerable pedagogical independence in the classroom, and schools have likewise enjoyed substantial autonomy in organising their work within the flexible limits of the national framework curriculum.

Regarded as educational experts, teachers are also relied on when it comes to student assessment, which is usually based on students' class work, projects, teacher-made exams as well as portfolios. At comprehensive school students are not controlled by any national test or examination at the end of or during the school years. Even though there are national guidelines for performance graded as good, these guidelines are not strict; students' effort and activity are always taken into consideration. It is only in the core subjects (mathematics, science, mother tongue and foreign languages) that the outcomes of the whole nine-year comprehensive school system are followed by sample-based national assessments.

Flexibility in the curriculum

Until the 90s, the Finnish national core curriculum used to be strict and detailed and textbooks meticulously controlled, the goal being educational consistency across schools and classrooms. The structure, organisation, contents and resources of the comprehensive school were minutely

established in the curriculum. A profound change in curricular philosophy and practice took place in the early 90s. The national curriculum underwent reorganisation, whereby it became more flexible, decentralised and less detailed. At the same time, questions about the accountability of schools and about the need for national testing programmes and national standards for student grading gained momentum also in Finland.

Finnish schools still have a high degree of autonomy in pedagogical and curricular practices. This is also confirmed by the findings of PISA, which reveal that Finnish teachers are vested with a considerable degree of decision-making authority as concerns school policy and management. Finnish teachers, as an example, have almost exclusive responsibility for the choice of textbooks. They also have more say than their colleagues in the OCED countries, on average, in determining course content, establishing student assessment policies, deciding which courses the school should offer and which text books it should use, and allocating budgets within the school.

Governing bodies of schools and local educational authorities, by contrast, have less decision-making power in Finland than in the other OECD countries. Interestingly enough, in PISA, countries with greater degrees of school autonomy, such as Finland, attained higher average levels of student performance than did those with lower levels of school autonomy. A high degree of school and teacher autonomy in decision-making may thus be assumed to have been one decisive factor contributing to Finland's high performance in PISA.

Cultural change

In the long term, the development of the Finnish comprehensive school has been underpinned by an exceptionally broad cultural and political consensus about the main lines of national education policy. In Finnish culture, grave political conflicts and sudden changes in educational thinking have been relatively rare. Throughout the 20th century, educational services were developed evenly and in agreement with the needs of different population groups and regions.

As a culturally homogeneous country, Finland has been exemplary in taking care of its minorities. In Finland there are two official languages, Finnish (94 per cent of the inhabitants) and Swedish (6 per cent). Both of these language groups are equally entitled to and have equal resources for education in their own language from the primary level up to the university level. Other minorities, however, are still relatively small in Finland. In the PISA data, for example, non-native students accounted for a mere 1 per cent (the OECD average being 4.7 per cent) and those not speaking the language of assessment for 1.3 per cent of all Finnish students (compared to the OECD average of 5.5 per cent).

The pursuit of equality, however, will also have to be a leading principle in the future development of the Finnish comprehensive school. The depth of the Finnish tradition of equality, in fact, will be put to a severe test owing to the increasing numbers of immigrant students and growing cultural heterogeneity. To tackle multiculturalism in education, Finland will understandably have a lot to learn from countries which have had ample experience in immigration both in the past and in the present. ■

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How can schools meet the needs of minority ethnic pupils?

Maud Blair

Maud Blair is a policy official at the DfES leading on work to raise achievement of African-Caribbean pupils.

Abstract: *The growing diversity of British society has bought with it a new set of challenges for the education system. This article argues that inequalities in education will continue unless schools and teachers are given the support that they need to help all children achieve their potential.*

I HAVE SPOKEN AT a number of conferences on the topic of this article and have been told on several occasions, that we have been "saying these things for 20 or more years now". Why then do we keep saying the same things? Has nothing changed?

I believe some things have changed. There is certainly a greater awareness of diversity, of equality and of the need to assist pupils to achieve their best regardless of ethnic or social background than there was 20 or more years ago. The rise in awareness is inevitable given the growing diversity of British society. But this rich diversity brings with it greater complexity, greater need for innovation and imagination in schools as well as a need for space and time to reflect on the rapid social and educational challenges that teachers are faced with.

Space does not allow for a discussion of the complexities of the education system. Suffice to say that we will continue to say the same things for some time to come unless we can:

- establish real ownership at all levels of the education system for the rights and needs of marginalised and (however unintentionally) excluded groups;
- equip head teachers as well as new and established teachers with the knowledge and skills to work in and with diversity; and
- build the capacity in schools to move beyond an instrumental pedagogy that stymies innovation and imagination, to approaches that take into account in practical ways, the complexities of the teaching and learning environment.

Establishing ownership

It is a sad reality that issues of race and ethnicity are often "bolted on" to policies and practices in education. Terms such as "mainstreaming" are often presented as an answer to this problem but can result in a few individuals having to act as the "conscience" of the organisation because of the absence of an informed leadership willing to think and act "outside the box" and take the necessary risks which enable cultural transformation to take place.

Mainstreaming needs to go beyond "awareness" to a conscious decision to place particular issues at the centre of an organisation's thinking and practice. At the level of the school, it implies that the head teacher and the rest of the senior management team, including school governors, have taken steps to understand what it means to be of minority status within the society, to understand the specific issues for the groups that make up the community of the school and that they have carved out spaces to discuss this at management meetings especially those where key decisions are made about the school.

This level of ownership opens up the "conversation" that schools need to have about meeting the educational needs of minority ethnic pupils. It endorses the importance of issues which are otherwise seen as too difficult or too sensitive and allows for the leadership and sense of responsibility for equality to be distributed across all levels of the school community. It also means that these discussions are not confined to the post-OFSTED meetings on equality but are raised at other strategic departmental or middle management meetings because the senior leadership in the school promote that approach.

This assumption of responsibility for race equality by the school leadership is essential for a whole-school approach to school improvement. In general, it is individual members of staff or individual departments that take the initiative to place equality issues at the centre of their planning and practice.

Without the leadership of the senior management team, these isolated examples of good practice will not permeate the school at large. The existence of an EMAG teacher does not signal commitment to equity for minority ethnic pupils but can often be just another "bolt-on" which guarantees marginalisation rather than ensuring equality of opportunity.

Schools are not, however, helped by simplistic discussions about who bears

most responsibility for low achievement among minority ethnic pupils. It is a collective responsibility which needs to be borne at all levels of the society. Schools which have taken ownership and responsibility for ethnicity and race equality are reaping the benefits of greater involvement of parents and success for their pupils and as long as this sense of collective responsibility is sustained, they will continue to do so. But most schools are still struggling with these issues and need to understand them in their full complexity.

Recent public discussions which seem to acquit schools of their institutional responsibilities encourage solutions that are short term and detrimental to both schools and to their pupils.

Developing workforce skills

To a large extent, schools feel that they are constrained to operate within prescribed and highly restrictive boundaries. That these boundaries, however inflexible they may seem to be, do not exclude a focus on diversity in structural and systemic practices, is not self-evident to those working in schools. In order to make explicit the possibilities within schools, leadership needs to come from the Government. Government can shape the agenda in policy areas relating to race equality and indeed it is a duty under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act for the Government to promote race equality.

This can partly be achieved by opening up in a more overt way the training needs of teachers for 21st century Britain and the important role of continuing professional development. Related organisations, such as local education authorities, the TTA, the CRE, OFSTED, the QCA, the Unions, have a collective role to play in helping and guiding schools in their efforts.

Representatives from these organisations and from schools need to come together with senior civil servants in education to debate the issues honestly and openly and work out the practical steps needed to make the vision of "every child matters" a reality. At the very least, this would provide a strong foundation and the encouragement schools need in order to tackle an area that is driven by fear, uncertainty and controversy. It is surely high time we equipped those with responsibility for children not only to take race equality for granted, but to know how to realise this in practice.

Teacher education

The above discussion does not mean to imply that schools are not already doing a lot of very good work in meeting the educational needs of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. There is good practice in many schools. Rather, it is to underline the importance of leadership that cuts across different sectors from this Government right through to schools if the good work that exists is to be accepted, disseminated more widely and sustained. In all this, teacher education is a key issue.

New teachers need the skills that will enable them to work in the more complex environment of the 21st century British school. But it is not only their pupils that teachers need to understand. They also need an understanding of how institutions work to exclude and marginalise and their own role in perpetuating such practices.

The recent discussions referred to earlier about the education of black pupils and about who holds responsibility for failure and underachievement have damaged many years of hard work to create this understanding. Not only is it welcome to hard pressed schools to hear that the institutions are fine and it is the pupils and their communities that are to blame, but this perspective has been welcomed by the right wing popular press keen to undermine notions of equity in education.

What schools can do

Leadership

I have already stressed the importance of leadership, not only in schools, but across the education sector. However, I have focused on the leadership "from above". Crucial to this area of work is the leadership shown across the school workforce from the head teacher to non-teaching staff. It is an area where everybody can learn from each other but requires an environment in which those with knowledge and expertise are enabled to exercise their leadership in sharing that knowledge and keeping it on the agenda.

The senior management team in a school would need to facilitate this by raising the profile of race equality in the school. This can be done by having equity issues as a regular item at SMT meetings in order to monitor the progress made by the institution as a whole in relation to both overt and hidden practices, as well as monitoring of groups whose progress may be a concern to the school.

Single issues such as curriculum, behaviour and attendance policies, INSET needs, racial harassment and bullying policies and so on, can be discussed and monitored continuously in this way. It is also up to the SMT to facilitate a more distributive approach to leadership in this area. There are many teachers who are very successful with pupils from different minority ethnic backgrounds. They have a great deal of knowledge and skill to share with colleagues but unless an ethos of trust and openness exists, they can have little incentive to stick their heads above the parapet.

Relationships with pupils

Strategies for raising achievement (whether it be of boys, girls or minority ethnic pupils) work best in an environment in which pupils and parents are involved in discussion and implementation of policy and practice. The

authoritarian top-down approach which insists on blind obedience is unlikely to win the cooperation of pupils but also misses the opportunity to create a community of practice in which all stakeholders feel a sense of belonging and responsibility.

An ethos of collective responsibility ensures that pupils are involved in the decisions that affect their learning. Clearly this does not mean all decisions made in the school, but those, for example, the anti-bullying policy and the behaviour policy which impact directly on pupils. Involving pupils helps to create a sense of community as well as an ethos of trust, of ownership and high expectations.

The existence of an EMAG teacher does not signal commitment to equity for minority ethnic pupils but can often be just another 'bolt-on' which guarantees marginalisation rather than ensuring equality of opportunity.

It allows staff and pupils to work together to create a shared language, to understand each other's concerns and importantly, communicates to pupils that the school is willing to listen to them and respects their views. This type of practice is relevant to all pupils in the school but is likely to have a particularly positive effect on those groups of pupils, such as African-Caribbean pupils, who generally feel misunderstood, undervalued and stereotyped. Importantly, pupils are able to take responsibility for their own behaviour. Where schools have tried this approach, it has had a tangible effect on discipline and consequently on the experience of teaching and learning. The important message here is that pupils must be able to experience that the valuing of diversity is not only a stated vision of the school but permeates their experience of it.

Expectations

People often ask why it is that some minority ethnic groups such as Chinese or Indians do so well academically while others achieve below potential. As with everything, there is no single simple answer. A number of factors, social class, culture, teacher expectations, etc, all contribute. I would like here to stress the importance of teacher expectations.

Expectations differ for different groups and as research has shown so often, teacher expectations play a crucial role in academic achievement. It is probable, but requires research to substantiate, that teachers in Britain have

higher expectations of Chinese pupils (regardless of social class) than they do of white working class pupils and higher expectations of the latter than of Caribbean heritage pupils. Other factors will contribute to the expectations teachers have of different groups but if we could overcome the phenomenon of low expectations, both in terms of pupil behaviour and academic success, I believe a very different picture of academic achievement would emerge.

Relationships with parents

In many schools teaching staff talk about the difficulty of engaging parents from minority ethnic groups. For some groups, language is considered to be the issue. For others, lack of understanding of the education system and for others still, single parent households which are said to make it difficult for the parent that lives with the child to support their child/children.

There are many strategies for engaging parents depending on the particular issues for those parents. But for many parents it is the lack of proper communication by the school about what the school expects from them or the form of communication is inappropriate and therefore misunderstood, that leads to an apparent lack of engagement.

Parents still talk about being disrespected in the way that communication occurs or about being disrespected because communication has not occurred at all. Some parents, and Gypsy Traveller parents are a good example, will not visit the school because they fear an unfriendly or even hostile reception. In some situations the reception area is difficult to find or parents are kept waiting for long periods so that the whole environment is daunting and off-putting.

In general, schools can contribute to parents' greater involvement by reflecting on the school ethos – is it welcoming of all parents and how does the school demonstrate this? Is there consistency in the way staff interact with parents? Has this been discussed and agreed? What are the school's expectations of parents and how has this been communicated to parents of all backgrounds to ensure that all are receiving the same message? What extra measures are taken to ensure that all parents understand messages whatever language they speak? What kinds of messages do parents receive about their children – are they always negative or related to discipline? What steps has the school taken to use the children's communities as a resource either to be consulted or to be involved in curriculum development?

Parents are an essential part of the triangle of school improvement – and no less so for minority ethnic parents. The starting point is to believe that parents care about their children and want the best education for them. A helpful question for schools where parents do not meet their expectations is: What is it that we are doing or not doing that may be creating this situation? It may not always be the school of course, especially where a clear policy about parents and the school exists. But it is a good place to begin.

In-service training

For staff in schools to properly serve the needs of minority ethnic pupils, there are many things that they will need to explore and to understand. Diversity does pose a challenge for many teachers and apart from the importance of initial teacher training, staff need opportunities to understand their own local situation and how that fits into the bigger picture.

Time constraints often mean that this kind of INSET is given low priority, even in those schools where there is a concern about minority ethnic pupils. But in-service training is clearly important especially when there is so much confusion about the causes of underachievement and questions are asked about the role of social class, of gender, of parental structures, languages, religion, migration/immigration status and institutional racism. Many of these factors interact for most groups. Schools need help and support to work through this complexity.

Conclusion

In this article I have deliberately avoided discussion of strategies for teaching and learning. But it can be all too easy to present an idea of ethnic difference as the fundamental thing to understand in order to meet the needs of minority ethnic pupils and to overlook what probably plays a bigger part – the needs in common. It is not ethnicity that creates problems for minority ethnic pupils in schools or elsewhere, but how ethnicity is understood and how structures as well as processes and procedures are altered to accommodate diversity.

Contrary to popular view, I believe that institutional racism does play a role in pupil achievement. Teaching and learning strategies aimed at specific groups are important – as they are for all pupils. But they are not always sustainable in a fast changing education system. What is sustainable is a whole school vision which every stakeholder can buy into and which can therefore accommodate any changes without detriment to any particular groups.

N.B. The views expressed in this article are my own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the DfES or any other organisation.

Children's attitudes to reading

Marian Sainsbury

Dr Marian Sainsbury is a Principal Researcher and Deputy Head of the Department of Assessment and Measurement at the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER).

Abstract: *This article reports on a questionnaire survey of attitudes to reading amongst nine- and 11-year-old children. Most children enjoy reading, but levels of enjoyment have declined since 1998. Children's confidence as readers, however, has improved over this period.*

RIGHT ACROSS the curriculum, teachers strive to foster their pupils' engagement with the subjects they are teaching. Students who are interested and confident are motivated to learn, and that motivation brings about further gains in understanding.[1] Learning to read is no exception to this. Children who are enthusiastic readers tend to read more, and this develops their reading ability. The enjoyment of reading, however, is not just useful in developing skills. Literature offers children and young people scope for social and emotional development. It opens up opportunities to become involved in other, real or imaginary, worlds, sharing in knowledge, relationships and feelings that go beyond their direct experience.[2]

Thus the teaching of reading has dual goals. On the one hand, children must be given the necessary skills to read effortlessly; on the other, their enjoyment should be developed so that they become self-motivated readers and participate in the broader and deeper experiences that reading can bring. The 2001 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)[3] looked at both skills and attitudes in ten-year-old readers in 35 countries, and the findings for England were strangely paradoxical. Children's reading skills were very good, coming third of all the countries. But enjoyment of reading was very poor by comparison.

It was interest in this paradox that gave rise to the present research study. In 1998, a large sample of nine and 11-year-old children in England had

completed a questionnaire survey of reading attitudes as part of NFER's evaluation of the national literacy project.[4] This questionnaire was re-administered in June 2003.[5] Twenty eight of the schools had participated in the 1998 research; a further 46 schools were drawn to give a nationally representative sample. All the children in Year 4 and Year 6 in these schools were asked to complete the questionnaire.

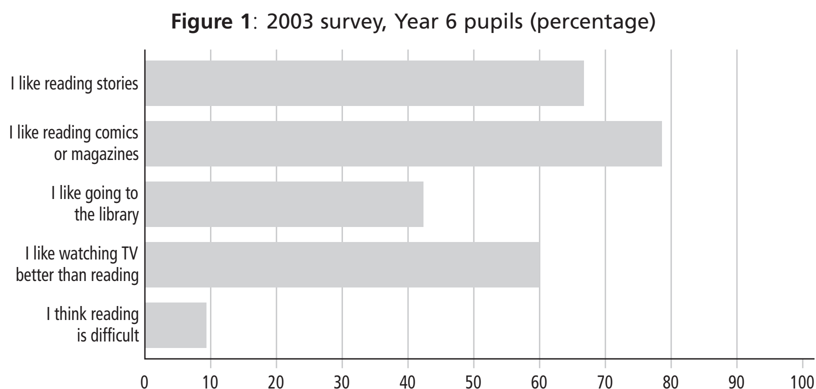
The findings reported below are in two sections: firstly, the current picture of children's attitudes to reading in a nationally representative sample of 74 schools; then, changes since 1998 in the sub-sample of 28 schools.[6]

Current attitudes to reading

The first 13 items of the questionnaire asked children to agree or disagree (with a "not sure" option) with a series of statements, both positive and negative, about their attitudes to reading. The rest of the questionnaire specifically investigated their reading at home: the frequency, and what kind of reading material they chose. Finally, three questions explored the reading help they received at home from adults and others.

Figure 1 gives the results of a selection of of these indicators for children in Year 6. Responses to the other questions on the questionnaire were consistent with the picture presented here.

Figure 1: 2003 survey, Year 6 pupils (percentage)



Based on responses from 2617 Year 6 pupils in 74 schools

The chart shows a substantial majority of these 11-year-old children enjoying reading, with almost 70 per cent liking stories and almost 80 per cent enjoying comics and magazines. Fewer of them, just over 40 per cent, like to go to the library, and 60 per cent prefer watching television to reading.

When the younger children, in Year 4, are compared with this, there are some distinct differences. The nine-year-olds enjoy reading stories rather more, and comics or magazines rather less, than the older children, resulting in

similar enjoyment ratings for both. More of them (58 per cent) like going to the library, and only very slightly over half prefer watching television to reading. Attitudes to reading are therefore slightly more positive overall amongst the younger children.

The enjoyment ratings tended to be echoed by the information about the frequency of children's home reading. Sixty nine per cent of Year 6 pupils read at home "every day" or "most days", with a slightly higher figure, 74 per cent, for Year 4. In both year groups, only a very small number, 4 per cent, "never" read at home.

In order to facilitate comparison with the PIRLS survey, the statement "I enjoy reading", which was not included in the 1998 questionnaire, was added for 2003. Ratings for this were similar to the other enjoyment ratings, with 66 and 71 per cent agreement for the older and younger age groups respectively. The children in the PIRLS survey were Year 5, which falls in between the two year groups here. Fifty three per cent of these said they enjoyed reading "a lot" and a further 23 per cent "a little", indicating broad consistency across the two surveys.

Children's reading preferences were explored in more detail, when they were asked which of a list of reading matter they choose to read at home. Once again, stories, comics and magazines are the most popular, but this more detailed analysis shows comics declining in popularity as children get older, whereas the reverse is the case for magazines. More 11-year-olds read a newspaper than nine-year-olds, whereas the younger children are much more likely to read poetry and information books than the older ones.

Differences in the reading attitudes of boys and girls are well documented, and this pattern was borne out by the current survey. In all the questions that gauge enjoyment of reading, girls' responses are significantly more positive than boys'. There is also a difference in what girls and boys choose to read at home. Girls are significantly more likely to read stories, magazines and poems than boys, whereas boys are significantly more likely to read comics, newspapers and information books than girls. These patterns hold for both age groups.

The survey also investigated the relationship between reading attainment and attitudes by collecting a teacher assessed level in reading for the pupils in the sample and analysing the questionnaire responses according to these levels. This revealed that those who enjoy reading more are generally the better readers, and there are also differences in home reading preferences. The better readers prefer stories, magazines and newspapers, whereas the lower attainers choose comics, poetry and information books.

These patterns, too, hold for both age groups. The difference may be related to the greater reading stamina required by stories, magazines and newspapers as compared to the brevity of comics and poems. Information books are rarely read from beginning to end, but can be dipped into according to interest.

This analysis highlights an apparent discrepancy with the data from the

PIRLS study. In PIRLS, greater enjoyment of reading was not necessarily associated with higher achievement, when considered across different countries. Within England, however, it is the better readers who enjoy reading more, and this within-country pattern held for most of the individual countries in the PIRLS survey.

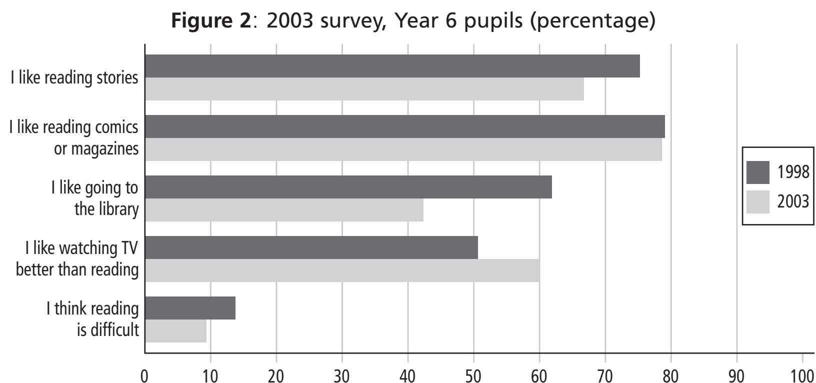
Finally, the questionnaire responses identified a small group of children who have little confidence in their own reading ability. These children say that they find reading difficult. A factor analysis showed that this response is related to preferring to read with adult help, and to having help from adults and others when reading at home.

The final response in Figure 1 gives an indication of this pattern. Amongst the older pupils, a small number, under 10 per cent, find reading difficult. As might be expected, this percentage is rather higher, at 14 per cent, with the younger age group. When these self-reported ratings are compared with the attainment levels recorded by teachers, it is very significantly more likely to be the poorer readers who say that they find reading difficult, indicating that children have accurate perceptions of their own reading ability.

Changes since 1998

There were 28 schools in the repeat sample. These were the same schools where the children in Years 4 and 6 had completed the same questionnaire in 1998. Thus the schools themselves and the ages of the children were the same across the two surveys; the children themselves were different, and there was no indication of whether the social composition of the schools had altered significantly in the meantime. Nevertheless, samples of over 1100 pupils in each year group at each point in time give a substantial basis for comparisons over the five years. Figure 2 shows the differences between 1998 and 2003 for the five indicators in Figure 1, again for Year 6 pupils.

Figure 2: 2003 survey, Year 6 pupils (percentage)



Based on responses from 1170 pupils in 1998 and 1206 pupils in 2003 in Year 6 in the same 28 schools

Figure 2 shows clearly a decline in the positive responses across the five-year period. Children in Year 6 are now less likely to enjoy reading stories, less likely to want to go to the library, and more likely to prefer watching television to reading, than in 1998. All of these differences are highly statistically significant.

There is much less difference in the ratings for reading comics and magazines, however, and this small decline is not statistically significant. Children's enjoyment of this sort of reading material has remained much the same over the five years.

Also highly significant, however, is the decline in the number of children who say that they find reading difficult. Taken as a measure of children's confidence in their own abilities as readers, this is a substantial improvement. Amongst the younger age group, the same pattern was evident. In Year 4 also, fewer children enjoy reading stories and going to the library than five years ago, while significantly more prefer to watch television rather than read. The proportion enjoying comics and magazines shows little change. But these children too are significantly more confident in their reading ability than they were in 1998.

Further analyses investigated patterns of change across different groups. These revealed that the greatest decline in reading enjoyment is amongst Year 6 boys. By contrast, the enjoyment ratings of Year 4 girls are not significantly different from the 1998 figures.

Discussion

This survey provides an up-to-date indication of children's attitudes to reading in a representative sample of schools in England. These findings are interesting in themselves, but particularly when set in context with other information.

Girls are significantly more likely to read stories, magazines and poems than boys, whereas boys are significantly more likely to read comics, newspapers and information books than girls.

The increase in children's confidence as readers can be seen alongside the national test results and the PIRLS test results, providing further evidence that the reading standards of children in England are high and have improved over recent years. Literacy has been a high government priority over this period. The National Literacy Strategy has provided training, advice and resources aimed at improving the teaching and management of literacy in all English primary schools. There are strong indications that children have become more skilled and confident readers as a result.

It may also be the nature of the Strategy, however, that has influenced the decline in children's enjoyment of reading over the same period. The initial Strategy guidance focused strongly on the teaching of skills rather than the enjoyment of literature. Children may have had fewer opportunities to choose their own reading matter, as teachers selected the texts that fulfilled the requirements of the teaching objectives. There may also have been less time for the children to browse in libraries and book corners, developing their own tastes and preferences, and less time to listen to good literature read aloud. Current guidance places more stress upon enjoyment and creativity, and the picture may already have started to change.

However, it is important to note that this survey did not in itself provide evidence of the reasons why attitudes may have changed, and the suggestions above are not the only possible explanations. The nature of childhood is constantly shifting, as children are subject to new social, technological and media influences upon them, interacting with the educational context. It will never be possible to be sure which of these influences is strongest in bringing about change.

The balance between skills and enjoyment in reading remains an important topic for teachers in their central task of developing pupils as capable, confident and enthusiastic readers. We are intending to repeat this survey in the future to track any further shifts in children's views. ■

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1. See, for example, Guthrie, J.T. and Wigfield, A. (2000). Engagement And Motivation In Reading. In: Kamil, M. L. et al (eds) *Handbook Of Reading Research: Volume III.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, p. 403-422.

2. See, for example, Appleyard, J.A. (1990). *Becoming A Reader: The Experience Of Fiction From Childhood To Adulthood.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

3. Twist, L. et al (2003). *Reading All Over The World: The PIRLS National Report For England.* Slough: NFER.

4. Sainsbury, M, et al (1998). *Evaluation Of The National Literacy Project: Cohort 1, 1996-1998.* Slough: NFER.

5. The research was sponsored by NFER's Research Development Fund.

6. The main sample of 74 schools was nationally representative in terms of school type and size, region of England and attainment at key stage 2. London boroughs and metropolitan authorities were slightly over-represented at the expense of counties and unitary authorities. The repeat subsample of 28 schools included a substantial over-representation of low-attaining schools and those in London and metropolitan authorities. However, the questionnaire responses differed little between the full sample and the subsample.

"I'm okay – I understand my feelings"

Hazel Pulley

Hazel Pulley is Headteacher of Caldecote Community Primary School in Braunstone, Leicester City.

Abstract: *Including emotional literacy in the school curriculum can have a real impact on pupils' behaviour. In this article, headteacher, Hazel Pulley, outlines the work that her school has done to encourage children to become aware of their emotional reactions and how they interact with others.*

IN JULY last year, Darren flopped on the easy chair in my office, appearing quite at ease. This was a boy who had presented challenging behaviour throughout Year 5 and 6, for as long as I had known him since becoming a headteacher at Caldercote Community Primary School. Darren used to arrive in turmoil in the morning in deep somber moods, refusing to work and hating the world, determined not to learn or become a sociable member of his class. I asked him how he was feeling as his transition to high school approached at the end of the week. "I'm okay – I understand my feelings", was the shining reply, a reply that was confirmed with a confident look.

This is one of those moments which teachers treasure. Darren appeared to becoming aware of his emotional reactions. Darren had become self-aware or at least appeared well on his way to being in a state of self-awareness. Goleman describes self-awareness as having "an ongoing attention to one's internal state" and John Mayer, a University of New Hampshire psychologist, states that self-awareness, in short, means "being aware of both our mood and our thoughts about our mood".

In our school, self-awareness is nurtured within our pupils through the high profile we give to emotional intelligence. A "special window of opportunity for emotional lessons" (Goleman) was placed within our curriculum delivery, and strategies were designed to encourage children to reflect upon their behaviour and that of others.

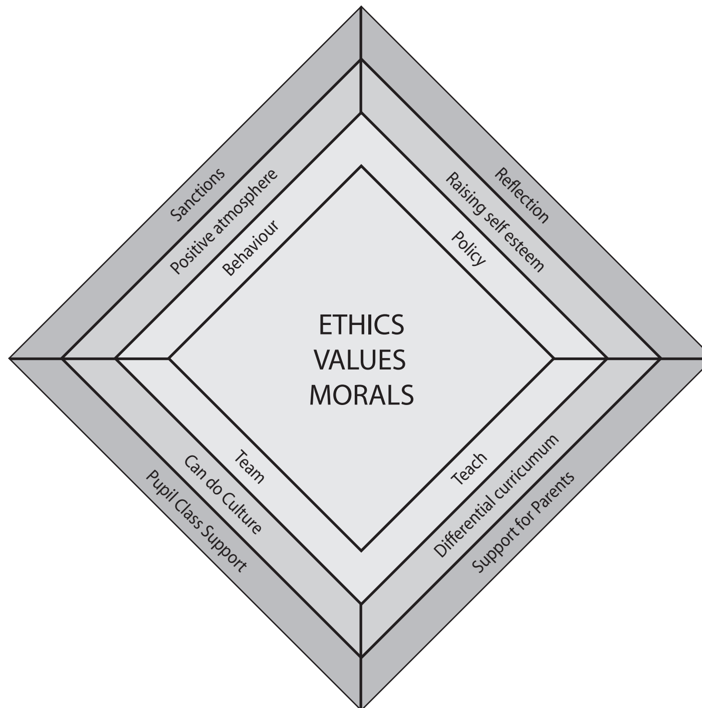
> "Children who continuely interrupt or express emotions feel frustrated. They don't understand what's going on around them. They are frequently viewed as strange, and cause others to feel uncomfortable. Without social competence, children can easily misinterpret a look or a statement and respond inappropriately, yet lack the ability to express their uncertainty or clarify the intentions and desires of others. They may lack empathy and be relatively unaware of how their behaviour affects others." D. Schilling

Our school values referenced the way forward and our supportive acronym ADA (Attitudes, Demeanours and Approaches) helped staff approach our whole work with emotional intelligence, not just for pupils, but for the whole school. Our deputy head and PHSE co-ordinator designed a whole new curriculum with PHSE as the spine, with circle time and Philosophy for Children (P4C) sessions given time-tabled weekly spots.

Time for reflection

The Behaviour Management Diamond (see below) provided many opportunities for "emotional lessons" facilitated by the behaviour mentor primarily but also by all the staff in school.

Caldecote Community Primary School
Behaviour Management



Green

Green cards Time out cards
Parents meetings
Zero tolerance re fighting
Support Assistance

Behaviour Mentor

Scott's room – open door
Issuing of Gold Stars/Cards
Monitoring of Green Cards
Behaviour Management
Induction for all new staff
Leading Red Hats Play Leaders
'Friends'
Behaviour Groups
Time out Bay
Praise postcards
Modelling & Scripting
Parent meetings
Support Group Meetings
Core Group Meetings (SS)
'Co-operative Kids'
Behaviour IEP/SENCO
Reflection for pupils & Staff
Teacher/MDS/TA Support

Golden

Gold stars
Gold cards
Golden Time
Circle Time
Weekly certificates
Peer mediation
Red Hat Play leaders
'Friends'
Praise postcards home
Behaviour Groups
Corridor Bands
Lunchtime sports
Mid Day Manager
Trained Yellow Coats MDS
School Council
Trained TAs
Co-operative kids sessions
Nurture Group
Scripting
ADA
Drinking water available for children all day
Philosophy Group
Music for Learning

Particular elements within the diamond design provide specific opportunities for pupils to understand their emotions, for example, the usage of time-out cards by pupils and staff. Time-out cards indicate that a pupil needs time away from the classroom. The cards specify either five or ten minutes and we are looking at offering another of 20 minutes later this term. A pupil may be issued with a time-out card by their teacher or they may choose to issue one to themselves. By using a time-out card a pupil is able to indicate that they need time-out away from the classroom for calming and reflection.

By using these cards important choices are encouraged by pupils and staff. By leaving the classroom and sitting with the behaviour mentor for the requisite time, pupils have guided time to reflect on a mood, reactions or recently displayed behaviour. The behaviour mentor helps the pupils to understand these feelings and impulsive reactions, leading a path for the pupil towards self-awareness.

When the time is up the pupil is ready to return. The staff member in the classroom greets the child on his or her return showing pleasure that the child has changed his or her behaviour and that all are ready to move on. These cards are well used by both pupils and staff and a child is praised for using them, and for choosing how long out they need, rather than storming off, kicking furniture or even worse hurting themselves or others.

Using "chances"

Each day children in our school have six chances to make the right choice moving away from a wrong choice. Following a first verbal warning, a card is issued once more "chances" are being used. These cards act as a prompt to children encouraging them to look at their behaviour/mood and ask for help to understand their behaviour or to change it themselves. If they continue to use up their "chances" their names are underlined and help sought for them by the member of staff. This may necessitate the behaviour mentor being called to class, as a time-out card is issued. At all times the pupil is praised where the right choice is made.

In homes and schools where emotional intelligence is nurtured with the same concern as IQ, children tolerate frustration better, get into fewer fights, and engage in less self-destructive behaviour.

Through conducting classroom context questionnaires we have carefully monitored how children in our school view our emotionally intelligent climate. Through circle time, school council and P4C we are able to provide the children with a time where they feel listened to and valued. Fairness is also a strong feature of our work and there is intense weekly monitoring of rewards and sanctions per pupil and class. In a large primary school, it is often a dilemma for a headteacher when implementing initiatives as to how fairly and cohesively they are used and delivered by staff out in the school environment. Regular monitoring ensures fairness, and results are displayed on a special board in the corridor for pupils, parents and staff to view.

The presence of a nature group (Sealife Room) within our school provides a context from where emotional intelligence flows. The Sealife Room accommodating 12 Key Stage 1 children for 0.7 of the week allows the room to be used by the rest of the school for another two other sessions enabling children to experience viable relationships with the Sealife Room staff and for co-operative behaviour to be promoted through specific play activities. A focus on raising self-esteem is also a strong feature of this room within our school.

I am sure that if Darren had experienced the Sealife Room and an emotionally intelligent whole-school context in his earlier school days he would have become "self-aware" much earlier on and he possibly would have been learning to his full potential. Presently Darren is three-four years behind in attainment, BUT I feel confident that his attainment and achievements will gain momentum now, I just wish it had happened earlier.

As Schilling so aptly states,

> "In homes and schools where emotional intelligence is nurtured with the same concern as IQ, children tolerate frustration better, get into fewer fights, and engage in less self-destructive behaviour. They are healthier, less lonely, less impulsive, and more focused. Human relationships improve, and so does academic achievement." ■

Further reading

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Towards inclusive education: Inter-professional support strategies within and across schools and school services

Gerda Hanko

Gerda Hanko is an education consultant and professional development tutor with wide experience in teaching and teacher training. Her publications (see www.caspari.org.uk), initially developed under the auspices of a London Institute of Education associateship when she was Head of Education of a teacher training institution, promote collaborative problem solving approaches among teachers and other professionals working with children. She can be contacted at 3 Templewood, London W13 8BA.

Abstract: *In response to the Government's proposals for integrated children's services (Green Paper "Every Child Matters" and subsequent Children Bill[1]) this article explores the extent to which school-based support strategies for teachers, focusing on inclusion, can also address multi-professional issues as an integral part of a teacher's remit.*

Inclusive professional development within schools

What does it take to create an inclusive school culture, which, by implication, focuses on understanding all its children's learning needs in all their diversity? To achieve, and to apply, such understanding under the current social contexts requires, as Mittler[2] highlights, not only a personal commitment by every

teacher, but also an institutional obligation to enable its teachers to meet that commitment.

Recent studies of school based support strategies have again shown these to be effective if they:

- address classroom difficulties as well as curricular issues (remember Elton's[3] "affective curriculum"?);
- thereby raise awareness of both diversity and the commonality of children's learning needs, highlighting how children's diverse social and emotional realities can be used as a fertile source of new learning experiences for all; and
- enable teachers to address difficulties jointly so "that no teacher or support staff feel isolated and alone in their teaching tasks".[4]

Observing schools as interactional systems, these studies highlight that in order to create a good learning environment in which to meet the needs of all children, the needs of those who work with them must also be addressed. Often stressed and disillusioned about having to cope with constantly changing priorities which they experience as conspiring against their professional competence, teachers clearly respond positively to support strategies concerning with restoring and enhancing their professional skills.

Thus the joint problem focused approach has been welcomed by teachers in many parts of the country.[5] Apart from enhancing their professional competence in teaching children, its second aim is to convey how to support and enable others similarly in a problem solving framework of collaborative consultation which can liberate each other's expertise. This implies asking questions in such a way that the problem which is being explored (eg, a current concern about a specific child, or problems that may yet arise) can be looked at anew, with people assisting each other in finding their own workable alternative solutions. Such questions need to genuinely explore, be non-judgmental and supportive.

To begin with, a group of colleagues may be invited to ask themselves inter-related questions like:

- Why do children behave as they do?
- What more can we do as teachers to help them learn?
- How can we use our joint expertise more effectively?

Joint exploration of questions like these can be geared to throwing light on the nature of the teacher-pupil relationship and on colleague to colleague interaction, while it enhances participants' knowledge and the skills needed to

teach inclusively. Commenting on their experience of such consultative support groups, teachers confirm that it can indeed further their inclusive awareness as it:

- deepens their understanding of the power of collaboration to develop insight into how profoundly social and emotional factors can influence the quality of any child's learning;
- re-activates their abilities to respond across the curriculum to those basic social and emotional realities experienced by all children; and
- helps to enhance their sharing skills in contributing to their colleagues' and their own success, job satisfaction and sense of professional well-being.

Inter-professional development across school services

Significantly, these support group teachers also found that their enhanced within-school partnership skills were equally valuable with professionals external to the school, such as guidance, welfare, and education support services. These are the very services which the Government's workforce reform proposals now envisage as working together to share information about the children with whom they work "to ensure that every child can fulfil their potential".[6] Aware that there are barriers to effective multi-agency information sharing, the Green Paper "Every Child Matters"[1] asks for our views on how best to remove them.

Teachers will be better teachers if social workers help them to appreciate what it means to grow up in care; and social workers need help to consider the effect of frequent placements on children's educational performances.

Such barriers are quoted as:

- the time it can take to improve liaison between the professionals;
- the difficulties in fostering the attitudes and relationships within schools and across the services' boundaries which will promote collaboration;
- warnings about "territorialism [as] rife within education, healthcare and social work", while misunderstanding about practices and language used do not support the objectives of joint working.[7]

Is there, therefore, any space for individual professionals, working in a system that has favoured the existence of such barriers, to help overcome them as an

integral part of their own professional task? Well, none of these barriers seemed insurmountable for the teachers in the consultatively trained groups. They become aware of the extent to which problems, which are themselves, multi-professional, such as tensions between a child's social worker and his/her teacher, can be more effectively dealt with if they know how best to share their awareness across professional boundaries. Teachers will be better teachers if social workers help them to appreciate what it means to grow up in care; and social workers need help to consider the effect of frequent placements on children's educational performances. These teachers showed how their training in partnership skills helped them to work effectively and to mutual advantage with psychologists, social and health workers. They were able to do so, not by usurping a social worker's or psychologist's job but by conveying respect for the validity of professional boundaries on the one hand, yet, on the other, by attending to adverse multi-professional issues which they understand as an integral part of their own professional remit; as did, for instance, Jeanie's and Len's teachers (and the many others whose work is described in detail in (Hanno [5], chapters 5 and 7).

"Jeanie" found herself torn between two "mums" – a caring foster mother and an equally caring but alcoholic mother refusing to consent to adoption – and two well-meaning but hotly disagreeing professionals: teacher and social worker. Her unhappy situation was resolved by an inspired application of the collaborative skills in which the school's staff were being trained. The training process had included a better understanding of the child's "irritating" behaviour for which the two professionals originally had insisted on different "remedies". Using her skills to achieve a solution to which both sides could amicably agree, the teacher then also helped to reassure a caring foster mother's worry about her effectiveness as Jeanie's carer. Above all, it helped Jeanie to cope more resiliently with her day-to-day learning ([5], pp. 34-36), perhaps exemplifying Rutter's[8] and Quinton's[9] findings on the effects of positive school experiences beyond a child's troubled childhood.

In the case of "Len", the school managed to prepare the ground for much needed additional professional help, by overcoming his grandmother's seemingly insurmountable prejudice against "that lot" (the guidance service), and by alerting the guidance staff to the reason for their efforts.

None of the dialogue which this required took more of the teachers' time than their professional task would allow them to put in. For the time it had taken to ease the inter-professional problem, there was clearly a reward in less strain with multi-professional problems separately and less successfully.

Achieving a common core of knowledge and skills

As members of the largest workforce concerned with children, and of the only workforce in touch with every child of school age, Jeanie's and Len's teachers

were able to redeploy at a multi-professional level the skills they were being trained to use with their own colleagues, to the benefit of all involved. In view of the barriers to joint working experienced by the services, could the teachers' strategic position be a starting point for pooling their professional know-how as equals?

Encouraged by recent official documents such as "Professional Development for Teaching and Learning – a consultation document",[10] "Promoting Children's Mental Health",[11] and "Inclusive Schooling",[12] schools are already offering their staff professional development sessions geared to inclusive teaching skills. Initiated by their SENCOs, pastoral and counselling colleagues with staff development responsibilities, and enabled by external supporters from the psychological and behaviour support services, they include such collaboratively insight generating knowledge and skills as outlined here – as yet with mainly intra-professional objectives.

But there are many examples of the fraught feelings and entrenched positions that can develop out of the different professions' conflicting perceptions. Most of these relate to the poor decisions which are made on the basis of such feelings but which appear to the decision makers as made in the child's best interests. The example of Jeanie's teacher for instance contained the whole gamut of feelings from rivalrous and harmful competition to empathetic appreciation of each other's experience and expertise. What helped the teacher to "get there", was that element of the school's joint problem focused course which took account of the negative, competence impeding effects which children's emotional, social and behavioural disturbances can have on those, across the professions, who work with them. Mere "information sharing" about the practices of different professions is thus insufficient, on its own, to address problems which are themselves inter-professional. This requires a problem focused framework for complementary enhancement of insights and skills that crosses professional boundaries, to ensure vulnerable children's resilience on their pathways to adult life. Might attention to such a framework from an educational base be another example of "teachers as [non-hierarchical] champions"[13] and so be promoted by the proposed directors of children's services? ■

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Homophobia: An issue for every pupil?

Tim Lucas

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Abstract: *Schools must work towards promoting a learning culture that enables every pupil to thrive. This article examines the consequences of homophobia and the steps that schools can take to promote equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender pupils.*

DEBATE AS to the merits, or otherwise, of separate education have long taken place about the schooling of a number of advantaged and disadvantaged groups, including the offspring of parents willing to pay, each gender, those with special needs, those of minority ethnicity and/or religion and, relatively recently, those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (lgbt)[1].

For those cases where a consensus has become established, the conclusion is not always the same for the different issues. While the battle for inclusive education (for those with special needs) seems largely settled, the debate regarding minority religious schools, for example, may be going in the opposite direction. Strangely, however, there does not seem to be any thought being given to the education of those who find themselves within more than one group (if such allegiances are evident), and where the separate answers may conflict, making a nonsense of the argument. However, the Union's policy on comprehensive education is well known and I do not need to rehearse it here.

Different approaches

The NUT has long argued that lesbian and gay equality is "an issue for every teacher" and in its publication with that title pointed to the consequences of homophobia for pupils including truancy, substance abuse, prostitution and suicide.[2] The purpose of this article is to examine how we might seek to end such discrimination.

It might seem, just as for the groups mentioned above, that one possible way forward would be to establish separate provision. In the US there is a very small number of such schools for lgbt pupils who have removed themselves or have been removed from mainstream institutions. Only recently, the first to be funded by a school board was opened in New York.[3]

Whatever estimate of the lgbt population one is prepared to work with, isolating up to ten per cent or more of the school population using this criterion is hardly a practical proposition, even if we could be unambiguously identified.

Staff and pupils generally understand and agree that racist behaviour is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. It is just as necessary to extend that understanding and agreement to homophobic behaviour.

More widespread, and arguably more effective, has been the emergence of safe school programmes such as that in Massachusetts and the establishment of Gay/Straight Alliances (GSAs) to encourage acceptance and promote equality of opportunity.[4]

Additional provision is another model and there have been good examples of "homework clubs" such as in Manchester and by the Youth Service in some areas of the UK offering "safe spaces" for lgbt young people.

In terms of pupils who are lgbt, much of the debate has focussed on the question of protecting them from being the victims of homophobic/transphobic bullying.[5] I suggest that this is too simplistic, for a number of reasons:

- Those who are often described as "questioning" and are perhaps aware that they are "different" from their peers but have not defined what this means to themselves, and certainly not to anyone else, are left out of the equation;
- There is increasing acceptance that many of the perpetrators of such bullying are worried either about their own sexual orientation, or the perception of them by others, which leads to a need to "prove" that they are both heterosexual and/or accept their assigned gender. (Other ways are to become pregnant or father a child);
- It is the perception of being lgbt, ie the conforming to a stereotype, rather than the fact of one's different sexuality or gender identity, which can lead to being bullied. In this respect, homophobic and transphobic bullying can

be different from, for example, racial harassment. DfES advice is that "just being different can be enough"[6]; and

- In the real world everyone, whether they realise it or not, is going to live and work alongside people who are lgbt. Although schools do not always replicate society (sometimes for the better!), we need to ask why they should pretend to be different in this respect and too often act as if no one in school could possibly be lgbt? The recent removal of "Section 28" from the Statute Book[7] has taken with it one of the main excuses behind which too many have hidden. Certainly, dealing with reality is consistent with the theme of this volume of "Educating the whole child".

Changing school culture

My conclusion (unchanged from 1996)[8] is that, just as with racism and disability discrimination, all schools must work towards a cultural change that enables every pupil to thrive. This cannot be other than their duty (and may well be implicitly acknowledged in schools' now ubiquitous "mission statements"). Those that fail in that duty to their lgbt pupils should not be surprised when compensation is sought.[9]

The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003[10] intended to give effect to part of the recent European Employment Directive, extend protection to employment and vocational training. Where secondary school students receive part of their education in FE institutions, for example, it may well be that they benefit from the Regulations' provisions, even if they are not so well off at school.[11]

With regard to employees, the same Regulations now provide the redress sadly lacking previously[12] for everyone employed in our schools where discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation takes place. Crucially, as School's Out! has highlighted[13], this also points to the need for a change in the culture of many of our schools: all of them will need to address homophobic behaviour by pupils and colleagues towards staff, or risk compensation claims from that direction too.

Perhaps the most oppressive manifestation of homophobia is the "official silence about all kinds of sexuality in the vast majority of mainstream schools in (A)nglophone countries."[14] The invisibility of the sexual orientation of the vast majority of otherwise celebrated figures in the curriculum marginalises lgbt members of school communities and this needs to be redressed. Equally, information about homophile organisations such as lgbt information services ("switchboards") needs to feature alongside posters for Childline, Pregnancy Counselling Organisations, etc. Due recognition should be made of every group that was persecuted by the Nazis in events to mark Holocaust Memorial Day.

Strategies for tackling homophobia, model policies[15] and training[16] are now

widely available and, of course, these are important. There is a wealth of material available if you know where to look – the list below provides a selection. I suggest, however, that even more important is the confidence of schools as collective institutions, and of individual members of all a school's staff, to react to homophobia, but even better to pre-empt it.

As Perrotti and Westheimer say: "We have learned to value the small steps: putting up a gay-positive poster, speaking up against an anti-gay comment, adding one new book to the library, having two parents attend an after-school forum, starting a GSA with three members, merely raising the topic of gay and lesbian students. These actions are revolutionary." [4]

Dealing with all forms of discrimination

Staff and pupils generally understand and agree that racist behaviour is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. It is just as necessary to extend that understanding and agreement to homophobic behaviour. There is no logic in ignoring discrimination against a female pupil or member of staff on grounds of her being (perceived as) lesbian, while proscribing discrimination because she is black. We have begun to understand the concept of institutional racism. We need to extend this understanding to that of institutional homo- and trans-phobia.

The models provided by other equalities issues show what can be done when the will is there. Unequivocal support from national and local politicians, local education authorities, parents, school governors, senior management and pupils themselves are essential pre-requisites to this way forward.

In this regard, the commitments of Charles Hendry MP, former shadow minister for young people made at the Union's 2003 Pride in Education Conference are most welcome[17] alongside the Government's commitment to end all bullying in our schools.[18]

I have argued that schools (and, by extension, LEAs) should be working for lgbt equality simply because it is right so to do. The evidence is that the majority at best have not recognised the moral imperative and some have colluded with oppression.

Schools, LEAs and their insurers therefore have a choice. Whether the carrots (reduced truancy, reduced incidence of self-harm, better pupil self-esteem and improved performance) coupled with a presumed desire for a favourable OFSTED assessment of schools' policy and practice on bullying of all kinds[15], or the big stick (financial compensation payments, particularly as the potential of the Human Rights Act is explored and developed) will be more effective in achieving the aim of lgbt equality in our schools, remains to be seen. ■

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2. The NUT has issued a number of publications giving advice to members on lgbt equality in education. These are available from the Education and Equal Opportunities Department or from the Union's website (http://www.teachers.org.uk/topichome.php?id=39&PHPSESSID=ea5eb8e7d60132648fa48c1194fee980). Those wanting to refer to primary sources for evidence of the prevalence of homophobia in our schools and its effects can find these in the Resources List below and reference 5.

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11. Guidance on the new Regulations has been produced by ACAS and is available on their website (http://www.acas.org.uk/). Many trade unions have issued their own guidance, as has the TUC. NUT guidance is available to download from the Union's website: www.teachers.org.uk/resources/word/EESORegs.doc. Other sources include

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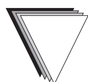

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Citizenship and PSHE – opportunities, responsibilities and experiences

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Abstract: *This article explores the relationship between citizenship and physical, social and health education (PSHE) and their complementary roles in preparing pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life.*

CITIZENSHIP and PSHE help young people to be personally effective, socially responsible, healthy and active members of their communities. They are both about educating the whole child, and both prepare pupils for life in the real world.

The National Curriculum clearly states that education must promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and prepare all pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life. No other part of the school curriculum fulfils these requirements as fully as citizenship and PSHE.

Background

In 2000 new national frameworks for PSHE and citizenship at Key Stages 1 and 2, and for PSHE for Key Stages 3 and 4, were introduced, alongside the revised National Curriculum in schools. Although these frameworks are non-

statutory, they contain statutory elements of sex and careers education, include areas of health education, and address statutory policy areas such as behaviour, equal opportunities and race relations. Two years later citizenship became a National Curriculum subject at Key Stages 3 and 4.

Citizenship and PSHE are related but different. Each has an essential, but distinct role in promoting the personal and social development of pupils, through planned, co-ordinated and evaluated provision. Their introduction provided school managers with challenges and opportunities. They needed to review their provision, to ensure that the values, aims and purposes of the school curriculum were carried through into teaching and learning activities that would be appropriate, relevant and meaningful to the pupils in their particular school community.

Differences between PSHE and citizenship

PSHE relates to planned learning opportunities provided by a school in order to promote the personal and social development of its pupils and their health and well-being. It can be provided through discrete lessons as well as through opportunities provided by the subjects of the National Curriculum, assemblies, the tutorial programme, circle time, special projects and other events that enrich pupils' experiences.

PSHE is concerned with qualities, attitudes, knowledge, understanding and behaviour. It promotes abilities, competencies and skills in relation to oneself and others and deals with issues of social responsibility and morality, including respect for the differences between people. It leads to the fostering of self-esteem, self-confidence, independence and empowerment, and promotes informed and effective decision-making. Through it, pupils learn about career and education opportunities, personal finance, health, safety, relationships and lifestyles.

Citizenship also contributes to pupils' personal and social development, but goes further. Citizenship education aims to equip all young people with the knowledge, understanding and skills to participate effectively and actively in society as informed, critical, socially and morally responsible citizens, convinced they can have an influence on, and make a difference in, their communities (locally, nationally and globally).

Citizenship can be provided as a discrete subject with separate lessons, through whole year, class and school activities and through activities in the wider community. Aspects of citizenship can also be addressed through other subjects, school assemblies and school activities.

In citizenship pupils engage with political and public policy issues that affect communities and society. They learn to think about, discuss and debate social, moral and cultural aspects, but also the legal and economic dimensions of everyday issues, problems and events. Citizenship knowledge is

underpinned by key concepts and principles such as power, authority, justice, fairness, rights, responsibilities and the common good.

In addition, and perhaps most importantly, citizenship develops young people's ability to engage as active citizens through skills of participation and responsible action. They are taught to think about and explain views that are not necessarily their own, negotiate and take part responsibly in school and community based activities, and reflect on their participation.

Some common ground

Both citizenship and PSHE address contemporary issues of relevance and importance to young people and should involve pupils actively throughout the learning process, recognising them as partners and decision makers in education, rather than merely as recipients.

Teachers of both citizenship and PSHE need the ability to develop a secure learning environment where mistakes are tolerated, risks can be taken and relationships are supportive, but appropriately challenging.

Both subjects benefit from separate lesson time, as well as teaching across the curriculum, and through activity in wider school and community life. They require all involved to have high expectations of what pupils can achieve; the standards in citizenship and in PSHE should equate to those in other subjects.

Citizenship and PSHE have in common the need to provide opportunities for pupils to participate in and learn from situations with relevance to their lives, now and in the future. Prejudice, discrimination, bigotry, and human rights, including, for example, the plight of refugees, are explored; pupils learn about stereotypes and what skills are necessary to challenge them.

QCA's "Respect for all" website (www.qca.org.uk/ages3-14/inclusion/301.html) gives teachers a range of activities that are designed to foster a greater awareness and understanding of values, cultures and practices, as well as practical help in dealing with tensions that may arise in the classroom as a result.

Some topics have the potential to support both citizenship and PSHE. For example, issues such as crime and drug use and misuse can be approached from the point of view of health and personal responsibility and can also be approached as political and public policy issues where there are consequences for communities and an impact on resources. Simply put, PSHE has a personal focus, while citizenship's focus is public.

Both subjects have in common the need to engage pupils actively in the learning process. They both enable them to develop the skills to work co-operatively with a wide range of people, to deal with changing relationships in widening social contexts, to explore issues, problems and events that concern them personally, socially and as members of communities and to take responsibility for their actions, and those that affect others. There is an unparalleled breadth of opportunities for pupils to participate in real events in the community, rather than restricting learning to the school environment.

Engaging pupils with wider perspectives from society can involve working with external contributors. As well as improving links with the local community, this can bring a new perspective to a subject or topic. External contributors can support teacher-led activities with their specialist knowledge and real-life experiences. For example, when looking at legal and human rights within citizenship, lawyers, police and consumer rights organisations can help communicate their own experiences and ideas, while local councillors and MPs can contribute to the delivery of government and public services classes.

Responding to pupils' needs and priorities

When planning or reviewing the curriculum for PSHE and citizenship, the needs and priorities of pupils should be considered. These include the characteristics of the school community, local crime statistics, community safety, health issues (such as teenage pregnancy and drug misuse), school data on behaviour, bullying and racial harassment. In addition, the views of pupils themselves, together with those of parents, teachers, governors and the wider community, should be taken into account.

Schools may place particular emphasis on those aspects of PSHE and citizenship that address their pupils' specific needs and concerns. This does not remove the requirement to address all statutory requirements, but does provide scope to go into more depth where topics or issues are of particular relevance or to use approaches that best capture pupils' interest.

Equipping young people with essential skills

Developing skills and learning to use them, whilst learning about political, social and economic issues and problems, is an essential requirement in citizenship and is found in best practice. Schools should plan active citizenship experiences, to ensure that all pupils receive their entitlement to develop and practice these skills within the school and the wider community. They include:

- communication skills - listening, discussion, debate, presentation, lobbying, providing information to others including peers;
- thinking skills - especially critical thinking skills needed to weigh evidence and substantiate arguments;

- research skills – investigation and enquiry, asking questions;
- analytical skills - evaluation, analysis, interpretation, reflection;
- decision making skills - group and individual;
- negotiation and problem solving skills;
- creativity skills - generation of ideas/solutions/suggestions;
- key skills especially the wider key skills - improving own learning and performance, working with others, problem solving; and
- advocacy and representation skills, acting on behalf of others.

An example of how skills can be developed is illustrated by a group of pupils whose research and analytical skills needed improving. In citizenship lessons they were taught how to plan and undertake an investigation. Step by step they were supported in investigating the types of crimes committed in their local area; they collected statistics, interviewed police and magistrates, researched local newspaper stories and were shown how to analyse and interpret the information, discuss their views and present their findings to others. The group reflected on the skills they had developed and undertook self and peer-assessment.

In a PSHE lesson later in the term they referred to the skills learnt and used them to research the effects of smoking on health. This time they worked in groups, reminding each other of the skills and approaches previously developed and transferred them to the PSHE investigation.

Challenges for teachers

Few of the teachers delivering either citizenship or PSHE have received relevant initial teacher training. Although PGCE courses in citizenship have been offered since 2001, most of the training for the new subject has been the responsibility of schools that received Standards Funding to resource this.

Teachers need to be supported in developing knowledge and understanding related, for example, to government, the economy and the law. These are the areas that were neglected prior to the introduction of citizenship as a National Curriculum subject and they remain the areas about which teachers report that they feel least comfortable. PSHE teachers have different requirements; they need secure knowledge and understanding related to health issues such as sex, relationships and drug education, for example.

Teachers of both citizenship and PSHE need the ability to develop a secure learning environment where mistakes are tolerated, risks can be taken and relationships are supportive, but appropriately challenging. Training should address ways of:

- consulting pupils and planning teaching that responds to learning needs and styles, existing levels of knowledge and skills, the attitudes they hold or encounter;

- establishing ground-rules – enabling pupils to discuss, negotiate and agree rules for working together;
- responding to spontaneous issues raised by pupils, perhaps in relation to a topical issue or event;
- challenging prejudice and discriminatory language and behavior; and
- managing discussion about sensitive and controversial issues.

The role of the teacher in PSHE and in citizenship is frequently that of facilitator and supporter rather than instructor. Training should promote an understanding of how active learning cycles work, so that pupils plan activities, participate in them and review them afterwards to establish what happened, what was learnt and how the learning can be applied to future situations.

Training should also help teachers to develop confidence in using participatory teaching and learning approaches such as discussion and debate, enquiry, role-play and simulation.

Teaching sensitive subjects such as sex and relationships, drugs, alcohol and tobacco can present teachers with some difficult issues. Fortunately, there is plenty of advice. QCA has published curriculum guidance on drug, alcohol and tobacco education for pupils at Key Stages 1 – 4 (www.qca.org.uk/ca/subjects/pshe/drug_alc_tob_ed.asp).

It has also produced exemplification materials at Key Stages 2 and 3 that use real examples of students' work to show what citizenship looks like in practice, as well as schemes of work for Key Stages 1 – 4, guidance on assessment, recording and reporting and a glossary of terms used in citizenship teaching. The Department for Education and Skills' Teachernet site (www.teachernet.gov.uk/pshe) offers a range of classroom resources and teaching tips, while the National Healthy Schools programme provides support through local schemes and a national lead through its website and publications (www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk).

Conclusion

Together citizenship and PSHE make a major contribution to the personal and social development of pupils, helping to prepare them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life.

By recognising their importance, clarifying their roles and planning rigorously for each, schools can provide a curriculum that is valued by pupils, because it is relevant to their lives.

Putting sex in context: sex and relationships education in schools

Anne Weyman

Anne Weyman OBE is Chief Executive of fpa (Family Planning Association) and a member of the Independent Advisory Group on Teenage Pregnancy, which advises the Government on its strategy to reduce teenage conceptions and support teenage parents. She is also Vice Chair of the Independent Advisory Group on Sexual Health which monitors the implementation of the Government's National Strategy on Sexual Health and HIV and advises on its progress.

Abstract: *This article addresses the importance of sex and relationships education in schools and describes its contribution to young people's development and the prevention of teenage pregnancy.*

What is sex and relationships education?

"Sex and relationships education is learning about sex, sexuality, emotions, relationships, sexual health and ourselves. The term represents learning in all settings, including home, care, community, youth, secure, school and other educational settings."[1]

This definition can be extended further. At fpa (Family Planning Association), we believe sex and relationships education (SRE) is a lifelong learning process that should begin in the home, continue through primary and secondary school and into post-16 education services. It provides skills for life that can make a real difference to individual lives and can help make inroads into the inequalities that currently exist in young people's sexual health.

We have long argued that age-appropriate formal SRE should start at nursery level, and that SRE should be compulsory within the National Curriculum from Key Stage 1 onwards. When located within the broad framework of personal, social and health education (PSHE), it provides the opportunity for

schools to support children and young people by providing the skills they need to make informed decisions about their personal lives and helps them take responsibility for their well-being.

Controversy

Studies show that over 90 per cent of parents support school based SRE[2], and over half of parents in a 2002 survey said they believe children in school are provided with too little information about SRE[3]. Yet SRE in schools has always been a contentious issue. The subject is frequently portrayed in the media in the most extreme terms, with schools placed as some kind of moral battleground for the hearts and minds of children and young people.

The recommendation last year by the Independent Advisory Group on Teenage Pregnancy which said that the Government should make PSHE a core part of the National Curriculum at all key stages was caricatured by the media as "sex lessons for five year olds", a gross misrepresentation of the truth. This kind of hysteria creates an atmosphere where work around SRE becomes problematic, and understandably leads to caution on the part of some schools in implementing a full programme.

Schools that provide SRE and PSHE encourage students to take responsibility for their physical and emotional health and in doing so raise levels of achievement and drive up academic standards.

Teenage pregnancy

It also provides an insight into why the UK has such high rates of teenage pregnancy and rising rates of sexually transmitted infections, especially among young people. British culture shows a marked ambivalence towards sex and young people receive very mixed messages about it. Issues around sex and relationships form the bedrock of "soap" storylines, advertising, films and music. Yet in general, society expresses widespread disapproval when young people show an interest in or experiment with sex. Without guidance from parents or carers and other sources such as teachers, youth workers and health professionals, such an atmosphere leads to confusion and misunderstanding which can have devastating consequences for individual lives.

Britain has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in Western Europe; twice that of Germany, three times that of France and six times that of the Netherlands.

Despite the fact that the rate of teenage pregnancy in the under 18s has fallen by 10 per cent since 1998, the sexual health of our young people remains poor. The risk of becoming a teenage parent is highest among those who have grown up in poverty or disadvantage, have achieved little at school and have low expectations of employment. Conception rates among teenagers in the most deprived areas of England are up to six times higher than those in the most affluent areas.[4]

Yet this situation is not inevitable. The Government's Teenage Pregnancy Unit has set in place national and regional strategies, with the target of reducing conceptions in the under 18s by 50 per cent by 2010 and aims to minimise the social exclusion experienced by teenage parents. Teachers have an essential part to play in this process as young people say that schools are the main source of information on sex and relationships.[5]

Research has shown that high quality SRE, when linked to easy access to confidential sexual and reproductive health services, delays the age of first sex.[6] In addition, school based SRE has been found to contribute to meeting government public health priorities, such as achieving a reduction in teenage pregnancy rates and the prevalence of sexually transmitted infections.[7]

Schools that provide SRE and PSHE encourage students to take responsibility for their physical and emotional health and in doing so raise levels of achievement and drive up academic standards. This can lead to improvements in students' behaviour and self-esteem. The National Healthy Schools Standard, jointly funded by the DfES and Department of Health (DH), provides a useful framework for SRE and PSHE and the opportunity to review existing provision against nationally agreed criteria. All local education authorities are now involved in this accredited education and health partnership.

When to start

Children are absorbing messages about sex and relationships from a very early age. SRE at primary level provides emotional and social skills which are the building blocks for further development throughout a pupil's school life. It provides an opportunity to challenge stereotypes and to reflect on behaviour and relationships. To have the maximum effect, SRE should begin well before the onset of puberty and the changes it brings. Research shows that if it is to reduce unwanted pregnancy, SRE should be initiated early before patterns of sexual behaviour are established.[8]

OFSTED has set out clear learning outcomes for SRE to ensure the topics covered are appropriate for each age group. For example, by the end of Key Stage 1, pupils are expected to know and understand the names of body parts and know that humans produce offspring.

SRE should be child-centred, taking account of what children and young

people already know and what they want to know. It also needs to recognise the views of governors, parents and the local community.

Key components of SRE

Young people often report that the SRE they receive is "too little, too late and too biological".[9] They want to learn about relationships and emotions as well as the facts about sex. An effective school programme provides a balance between the acquisition of:

Knowledge

- Puberty, reproduction, fertility, pregnancy, contraception, abortion, STIs, information about sexual behaviour and sexuality, the law.

Skills

- Negotiation, communication, assertiveness, resisting peer pressure, problem-solving and decision-making skills.

Values and beliefs

- Exploration of values and beliefs and how we are affected by them. Understanding of difference, tolerance and the relevance of this knowledge.

Attitudes

- Understanding emotions and the appropriate expression of feelings, promoting self-esteem and self-respect.

All SRE programmes must be inclusive to meet the diverse educational and emotional needs of a wide range of pupils, including those with special needs. Emphasis on self-esteem and respect for others can help support young gay and lesbian people in the development of their sexual identity.

The role of parents

Successful SRE is a partnership between parents or carers and schools. The confidence of parents and carers can be gained if they are closely consulted about the role and content of SRE within the school.

OFSTED's 2002 report[10] into SRE acknowledged that young people would like to be able to talk to their parents about sex, and vice-versa, but that embarrassment frequently prevents any open discussion from taking place. However, young people from families that openly discuss sex and relationships tend to delay the age at which they first have sex and are more likely to use contraception when they do have sex.[11]

Many parents received little SRE themselves at school and do not feel confident in discussing the subject in the home. They need to be supported in this important task and given the importance of this factor in helping to reduce teenage pregnancy rates. There are now a number of new initiatives in this area such as fpa's Speakeasy project. This works through schools and

community groups to provide free courses to parents that enable them to talk to their children about sex and relationships.

Training

To be effective in meeting public health objectives and to ensure young people's interest and involvement, SRE needs to be taught using active and experiential learning techniques.[12] It needs to be provided by teachers who are keen, motivated and able to deliver relevant and dynamic lessons that engage young people. Those teaching SRE need a special interest in handling sensitive and controversial issues, managing emotions, setting a climate of trust and respect, and in using a variety of participative and reflective teaching methods.

In acknowledgement of the expertise required and the need for teachers to be supported in providing SRE, the DfES and DH have established a national PSHE certification programme with an SRE module. Over 700 teachers have already taken part and a further 3,000 will be recruited during 2004/5, primarily from schools with more than 20 per cent of pupils eligible for free school meals.

A similar certification programme is currently being piloted for school nurses. This initiative should help meet the recommendation of the Independent Advisory Group on Teenage Pregnancy that by 2006 there should be at least one specialist teacher in all secondary schools who holds a PSHE certificate. Moreover, new standards incorporated into initial teacher training mean that all new teachers receive basic training in both PSHE and SRE and school inspection reports include a subject paragraph on the quality of PSHE teaching and learning.

On-site health services

SRE can be effectively complemented by confidential sexual health services. Young people can find it difficult to access health services, which are often not geared to their needs. The provision on school premises of advice services for young people, staffed by health professionals and counsellors, ensures that young people can get advice about whatever concerns them including sex, relationships and contraception, and provides a positive introduction to obtaining reliable information from adults other than parents or teachers.

The great advantage of providing advice services in school is that barriers to access are minimal and the reason for seeking a consultation need not be obvious. On-site access helps to normalise these services for young people and, together with SRE, contributes to the promotion of positive sexual health and well-being.

Conclusion

SRE should be considered an educational entitlement for children and young

people rather than an optional extra as at present. To date the Government has stopped short of making PSHE a statutory part of the National Curriculum. However, fpa believes that all school pupils should have equal access to a standardised, compulsory programme that focuses on their emotional needs, helps redress inequalities in health and provides essential skills for life. We will continue to drive forward the sexual health agenda in schools and press for change until this aim is achieved. ■

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Book reviews

GETTING THE BUGGERS TO THINK

Sue Cowley

Continuum ***£12.99*** *ISBN 0826472524*

This is another in Sue Cowley's series of advice for teachers, which began with the strikingly titled *"Getting the Buggers to Behave"*. Now that "thinking skills" appear in the National Curriculum, she has jumped in to offer her practical suggestions on how teachers can engage their pupils in moving from engagement with a particular subject to the level of meta cognition.

The principal value of the book is identification of particular skills and useful suggestions of real activities which support them. Experienced teachers may be gratified to recognise that much of what they incorporated into their professional practice can be identified as getting their charges to think. However, its claim to cover the whole primary/secondary spectrum across the curriculum is questionable.

Sue Cowley is an English and drama teacher and that is the standpoint from which the lesson suggestions derive. Teachers of English, drama, PSE and RE will recognise many of the activities as part of their stock in trade. Whilst it is the case that the principles she outlines can be applied more widely, it would be up to, for example, primary maths or secondary modern language teachers to restructure the ideas for their particular lessons.

Perhaps the best use of the book would be as part of a staff development library. In explaining how the various types of thinking can be encouraged, the author shows how experienced teachers are always building "thinking skills" into their lessons. Much of what she identifies as "thinking" would be recognised by teachers as just sound pedagogy, and that is a valuable perception for a profession who may worry that "thinking skills" will be yet another burden to be fitted into an already bulging curriculum.

The book's layout is clear and easy to access. The eight chapters each address a specific aspect of thinking and give examples of classroom activities to support their development. The approach is straightforward and direct – certainly not taking a lofty tone. In fact, those wishing to read more widely may regret the lack of any references at all to the growing literature on "thinking skills" (a review of research in the field is forthcoming on the London Institute of Education's EPPI website).

Sue Cowley makes an interesting point in suggesting that, although "critical thinking" is the most highly valued of the "thinking skills" in our educational

system, in her view, developing "creative thinking" is, "one of the most important things we can do", for children.

Her final chapter abandoned her original plan of suggesting cross-curricular applications of her various categories of thinking. Instead, she invites teachers to email her with their own exercises in "thinking skills" in particular curriculum areas. She will include them in the second edition of the book and send each contributor a free copy of that edition; an indication that Ms Cowley has applied her own "thinking skills" to come up with an original suggestion.

JANET STURGIS

LEADING AND MANAGING CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT – DEVELOPING PEOPLE, DEVELOPING SCHOOLS

Peter Earley and Sara Bubb

Paul Chapman 2004, ***£18.99*** *ISBN 0-7619-4322-6*

"Course answered questions that I never knew I should ask", said one satisfied participant following a recent NUT CPD *teacherstogether* workshop. This timely book does something similar with regard to CPD. It asks and answers important questions about effective professional development.

It is written for those who lead and manage CPD in the hope that it will lead to "even better practice" than currently occurs in schools. It will also be of interest to all teachers, governors and others involved in schools who want to understand the why, how, and "should do" of good practice in professional development.

The book is in two parts. In the first, Earley and Bubb use evidence from research to show how CPD can be made effective and how such effective CPD can lead to school improvement. Throughout, there are case studies and examples which will be of practical use to CPD co-ordinators, headteachers, and other school leaders.

CPD does not just happen. Nor is there a blue print for every member of staff. In focusing on the identification of needs for professional development, Earley and Bubb take account of issues such as learning styles, workload, and well-being; as well as focusing on different approaches such as coaching, mentoring and performance management.

In chapters on meeting CPD needs and monitoring and evaluating its impact, the authors propose a range of learning opportunities and suggest how the value to participants and their schools can be maximised. Checklists and other tools and instruments are generously included to make this a genuinely useful publication.

Graham Handscomb, as guest author, provides a chapter highlighting the benefits of collaboration between teachers – that is, engagement in dialogue

with each other about teaching and learning – and giving teachers opportunities to research their own practice. As NUT's Teacher**2**Teacher programmes have shown, learning collaboratively can re-energise teachers and rekindle the deeper aspirations which initially led them into teaching.

In the second part of the book the authors focus on the specific learning and development needs of particular groups in the school community. There are chapters on support staff; involvement in initial teacher training; newly qualified teachers and their induction; supply and overseas-trained teachers; and leadership development at various stages.

There is also a chapter emphasising the importance of Early Professional Development during the first four years after NQT induction – a key stage for teacher learning which schools are advised to continue despite being short-sightedly torpedoed by Government funding cuts just as its importance was being recognised widely.

Overall, Earley and Bubb bring together, in a very accessible way, theoretical and practical aspects of CPD and suggest how leadership and management can be applied in this vital area of staff and school development.

Read through and/or used for reference this book will help co-ordinators and school leaders to develop their most important resource – the people who work with them. CPD today requires much more than *"anyone interested in this course?"*

RICHARD STAINTON

RELIGION AND LIFE

Victor W Watton (Third edition)

EDEXECEL/Hodder and Stoughton: ***£9.50*** *ISBN 0 340 80184 0*

Having read this book, I felt much better informed on the basic tenets and attitudes of the major world faiths on key issues of the modern world. A few of the topics covered being family life, divorce, the media, and racial harmony.

I can see students finding this an invaluable source of clear and concise information as they prepare for GSCE. The inclusion of sample examination questions was most helpful, giving the reader the opportunity to refer to the text to check for accuracy of recall and understanding.

On a different level, I think many teachers would find this a most useful guide which would inform their own approach to these difficult issues in specific lessons and in general classroom discussions whatever the age range taught.

MARJORY HAMMOND

A PRACTICAL GUIDE – OBSERVING CHILDREN

Carole Sharman, Wendy Cross and Diana Vennis (Third edition)

Continuum ***£12.99*** *ISBN 0 8264 7238 9*

I found this a most constructive and positive book. It was easy to read and to locate the relevant information. It was very informative on the alternative ways of undertaking observations of very young children of all abilities and of recording these succinctly and purposefully.

The inclusion of practical advice on how to apply the observations to promote learning made the whole process meaningful.

I can see students finding this an invaluable source of clear and concise information as they prepare to undertake such activities.

I think many early years' teachers would find this a most useful guide both to Foundation Stage profiling and in assessing and clarifying their judgements on the work of early years trainees.

MARJORY HAMMOND

GETTING THE BUGGERS INTO MODERN LANGUAGES: HOW TO MOTIVATE STUDENTS TO SPEAK, LISTEN, READ AND WRITE IN A MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Amanda Barton

Continuum 2003, ***£12.99*** *ISBN 0-8264-7170-6*

At a time when many teachers of modern foreign languages feel increasingly under threat, this slim volume (136 pages) may seem like a welcome helpline. Produced as a result of research for a doctoral thesis into boys' underachievement, this book aims to present a range of effective strategies focusing on boys' learning styles, which can be easily applied in the classroom.

This is not to say that it does not have anything to offer the teacher in a mixed-sex or all-girls' class; it will, of course, benefit all language learners, not least because an effective learning environment is of benefit to all. Too often inspectors have commented on the adverse effect of low-attaining boys on general progress in MFL: this book aims to help address that issue.

The opening chapter looks at the problem and aims to give an insight into pupils' attitudes to the subject and to the teaching and learning styles favoured by boys and girls. The following chapters, based on the four skills involved in language learning - speaking, listening, reading and writing - set out to analyse some of the problems and then to propose strategies which though aimed principally at boys, should also be applicable to some girls. These are followed by two chapters on "Teaching and learning styles", and "The Teaching and

learning environment" which discuss some of the key isssues such as the experiments in setting in single-sex groups.

Any MFL teacher who has been involved in training or Inset over the last decade, and more, will doubtless recognize many of the ideas and strategies discussed here, but the value of this book is that they are gathered together in a readable and slim volume which should give support over the coming days, months, years when the place of modern languages – especially at Key Stage 4 – will be fiercely debated in the staffrooms and management offices of our schools.

RITA MORRIS

PERFORMANCE PAY FOR TEACHERS – THE EXPERIENCES OF HEADS AND TEACHERS.

Ted Wragg, Gill Haynes, Caroline Wragg and Rosemary Chamberlin

RoutledgeFalmer 2004 ***£24.99*** *ISBN 0-415-32417-3*

This book is based on a three-year research programme examining the introduction of performance related pay in schools in England. The evidence was collected from classroom observation and the views of over 2,000 teachers and headteachers were sought.

The authors provide information on the history of performance related pay and on the policy process that led to its introduction in England. Other chapters include the views and experiences of headteachers, the views of teachers who were successful and unsuccessful when applying for threshold and the role of external agents such as trade unions in the policy process.

The book provides an extremely rich source of information on the views of teachers and headteachers towards performance related pay. What may appear to be a dry academic subject is brought to life by the interesting way in which the authors discuss the issues and present the evidence collected.

The Government believed that performance related pay would provide teachers with a financial incentive to evaluate and change classroom practice. Measured on this criteria the policy was a failure. Only 2 per cent of teachers said that performance related pay had improved classroom practice "a lot" while 53 per cent said it had exerted no influence at all.

The failure of the Government to consider properly the introduction of the policy is also demonstrated through the discussion of what percentage of teachers ought to progress through the threshold. Many heads were told during training courses that only a small number of teachers should progress to the higher scale. This was followed by press reports that half of applicants would be successful.

The shifting policy ground and uncertainty of the Government is shown by the fact that in the end 97 per cent of teachers applying for threshold

payments were successful. The book also touches on the impact that performance related pay had on the 3 per cent of teachers who were unsuccessful.

The book has wider implications for policy makers beyond the remit of simply performance related pay. The book touches on the failure of command style policy making to achieve uniformity of implementation at a school level. The book is both an accessible and interesting read that will be informative for both teachers and policy makers.

RHODRI THOMAS

EDUCATION STUDIES: A STUDENT'S GUIDE

Edited by Stephen Ward

RoutledgeFalmer 2004 ***£17.99*** *ISBN 0-415-32119-0*

Stephen Ward, Head of Education and Childhood Studies at Bath Spa University, risks excluding thousands of potential readers in sub-titling the book "A Student's Guide." While aimed at teacher training students and others on education studies degree courses, this book has powerful resonances for all of us in schools: NQT, seasoned teacher, governor and headteacher alike.

The 18 contributors, each of whom lectures in Education Studies at Bath, have created an absorbing sequence of chapters which serve to remind us of the paramount importance of education far beyond the humdrum pressures of SATs, league tables, OFSTED action plans, performance management targets and the like.

Rising above the routine, the book sets education in its rightful place as a powerful agent for global change. It renews and revitalises our sense of professionalism, accords teachers the status they deserve and lifts us out of the mundane, offering a vision of education as intellectually challenging, interesting and deeply meaningful.

The first section covers education in Europe, the USA and the Pacific Rim, human rights in education, and cultural plurality. There are detailed assessments of global trends in climate and environmental change, poverty and economic growth, conflict, social justice and equity, and sustainable development.

The second section analyses government policy for education; in particular the greater levels of state control over the curriculum, management and finances of schools through statutory instruments, open enrolment and external inspection.

Important questions are raised about the very foundations of our educational system and the extent of state control is examined. Should education be a public service or market force driven? Is it necessary for the

state to direct teaching methods? Should the curriculum be designed to produce a skilled workforce for industry or has education a greater and nobler cause to serve?

Within this section are equally stimulating chapters on what makes an effective teacher, the importance of early years provision, inclusion and special needs, and an excellent piece of research on gender differences. A further chapter challenges the whole concept of traditional schooling and offers some radical alternatives.

The final section: “Knowledge, Learning and the Curriculum” is much more than a compendium of tips on subject teaching. Each of the chapters, addressing science, ICT, maths, language, creativity and the humanities, lifts those subjects out of the mere mechanics of imparting knowledge.

It rises above pedagogy and explores the real meaning of learning; urging us to see the true importance and relevance of education; not as the state’s mechanism to match employment needs with employee skills, but as the only means to build a global society which cherishes and nurtures the differences between people.

Stephen Ward’s book is a must for everyone on the brink of, or considering working in, education. It helps us to come to terms with the complexities of 21st century existence, and helps teachers (aspiring or surviving) to a heightened perception of their role in influencing future generations to value and respect each other and the planet, which sustains us.

DAVID DEWHIRST

A TEAM APPROACH TO BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

Chris Derrington and Barry Groom

Paul Chapman Publishing/Sage Publications, 2004; ***£16.99*** *pbk: 1-4129-0035-2; hardback: 1-4129-0036-0 paperback*

This 154 page training guide and reference book was developed for SENCOs in primary, secondary and special schools who manage the work of teaching assistants but is a valuable resource for other teachers or advisers who provide training in behaviour management. It is based on courses delivered by the authors who lecture at the University College at Northampton.

The book is divided into eight units, each dealing with an aspect of behaviour management. Each unit consists of notes for the trainer, masters for overhead projection slides or handouts and activities, which together provide a structured and reflective approach to understanding pupil behaviour. There is a “pre-session” and “post session” activity for each unit and useful references for further reading. The over-riding message is the importance of a positive, pro-active, consistent, whole-school approach.

Unit one establishes the foundation of the course. “Knowing our whole-school behaviour policy” focuses on the school's own policy, culture and ethos. It expects participants to examine the policy carefully and, among other things, asks whether it portrays a safe, ordered, positive, inclusive environment and talks about a learning community.

Unit two explores specific tasks and roles: “Understanding our role as teaching assistants in supporting behaviour”. It discusses the personal qualities and professional skills needed. It uses a problem-solving approach in an atmosphere of positiveness and consistency.

Unit three’s title asks “Are we a listening team?” It covers five different types of listening, using practical exercises to explore the purpose and value of each.

“What can we do to raise pupil self-esteem?” is the self-explanatory topic of Unit four. It starts with a definition and its relation to motivation and classroom behaviour, then identifies the characteristics of high and low-esteem, finishing with approaches to enhancing self-esteem.

The relatively new concept of “Emotional literacy” is the focus of Unit five, which starts with a useful definition, then explores the personal and professional skills needed to understand and manage emotions as well as communication about feelings.

Having raised the issues mentioned so far, Unit six deals with “Raising our confidence in managing behaviour”. It approaches the topic by discussing empowerment and being assertive, including a clarifying search into the concept of assertiveness compared to passivity and aggression. There is the chance to rehearse techniques of assertiveness.

A logical follow-on from this is the self-explanatory Unit seven: “Developing strategies for effective behaviour management”. It starts with the impact of the behaviour of staff on pupil behaviour then goes into the different styles of behaviour management, including the need for its planning. It finishes with developing positive verbal and non-verbal communication to avoid arguments.

In conclusion, Unit eight focuses on the need to know whether what you are doing is successful, through the topic “Setting targets for success”. Like all targets, they must be achievable through small steps, need to be expressed in positive language and need to involve the pupil. There is a useful exercise in setting SMART targets.

Additional resources are appended listing 26 useful websites and 17 journals.

This is an extremely useful training package: schools which have no such up to date resource available should buy this one.

IAN T RIX

A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE? COMPARING LEARNERS ACROSS EUROPE

Marilyn Osborn, Patricia Broadfoot, Elizabeth McNess, Claire Planel, Birte Ravn and Pat Triggs with Olivier Cousin and Thyge Winther-Jensen

Open University Press 2003 ***£19.99*** *ISBN 0 335 21101 1*

This tripartite study of education provision in England, Denmark and France follows on from previous comparative studies made by Broadfoot and Osborn in 1992 and Broadfoot again in 2000.

In realising the past history of the project, it is no surprise that much of the first part of this book discusses the merits and limitations in the methodology used, such as questionnaire, pupil and group interview. The ENCOMPASS research team, predominately from the Graduate School of Education at the University of Bristol, chose to analyse one of the major limitations in assessing the process of education, namely the cultural influences in their respective countries.

Its remit then, as now, is to document pupils' everyday experiences of early adolescent views on schooling, outside interests and opinions, as well as teachers' perspectives on the role of learning. To this end, the study tries to demonstrate the overriding values that each country sees as its main educational concerns. The added examination of policy documents is crucial to the book's central theme in analysing the struggle between what is right for education in a national context and the effect of that rather nebulous concept, globalisation, upon educational policymakers. Therefore, it tries to tease out attitudes to educational change amid the cultural differences, and tease is very much the operative word of this study.

Moreover, the reason why attitudes are important to this study are because the ENCOMPASS research team believe that all comparative studies are radical by their very nature and subsequently require a radical solution to each individual country's education problems. To understand the background to these formative attitudes, it is important to come to terms with the differences in relation to history: the laissez-faire and liberal English education system, the French Republican ideal reflected in its whole class teaching approach and the communitarianism of Denmark with its emphasis on local democracy and social consensus.

However, as is acknowledged in the study, differing attitudes may well change with local need, as an effect and not a result of globalisation. For example, the research team recorded a change of emphasis in the traditions of Danish schooling as a result of the perceived need to find ways of responding to the new challenge of integrating immigrants in the larger cities.

The mention of immigrants here highlights one area of consolidation that for all the intra-national differences is something the three countries had in

common, that is, with low-achievers, and this is despite the various treatments for education policy.

As the conclusion to the section on pupil experience and learning identity makes clear, those most marginalized and excluded within each system may share more in common than higher achieving and more privileged pupils who are more likely to reflect the differing priorities mediated to them through the school system. This is where the imbalance lies because market forces always mean priorities come from the top down and low-achievers are less able to adapt to change.

GORDON PHILLIPS

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