education review

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Education Journal is Britain's leading monthly education magazine. It is the publication of choice for top policy makers, many of whom are also contributors. The substantial research section includes reports and original articles from Britain's leading researchers. Feature articles cover policy, leadership and management issues. The international section gives particular coverage of the Commonwealth and the USA.

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Preface

I am delighted that my first Preface for *Education Review* as General Secretary is on the theme, "It's good to talk". I believe that it is time for a meaningful, "grown up" and inclusive conversation about the aims and direction of education policy. A conversation between government and all the teachers' unions is an important first step, but it needs to go further and involve parents, pupils, governors, local government and local communities. It's good to talk and sometimes better to listen. Collectively, we have a vital interest in identifying and promoting the most effective strategies for raising educational achievement and ensuring equality of opportunity for all our pupils, irrespective of race, gender, sexuality, disability or social class.

The timing of this edition could not be better. The NUT has just launched its own five year strategy for education, *Bringing down the barriers*, which has been described as the most coherent and practical set of policies put forward by any teachers' union. The lead article in this edition is a summary of the NUT's statement as our contribution to the debate. This stands alongside an exceptional range of articles by outstanding contributors representing pupils and teachers, the Government, the DfES, researchers and educators on the theme of conversation and dialogue in education.

The Labour Party's "Big Conversation" consultation and the Single Conversation proposed as part of the Government's New Relationship with Schools initiative have acted as a stimulus for several articles. David Miliband, Minister of State for School Standards, sets out the rationale behind the New Relationship proposals, aimed at a "more intelligent accountability framework" reducing and streamlining the demands on teachers. These are very positive proposals. Colin Richards examines the inspection and self-evaluation aspects of the "New Relationship" and welcomes many of them but believes that the changes are insufficient to gain fully the respect and trust of teachers after years of punitive and "high stakes" inspections.

Robin Alexander turns his formidable critical faculties on a range of Government policies on the curriculum and assessment, particularly the Primary Strategy and personalised learning and finds major shortcomings and inconsistencies when measured against research findings.

Anne Diack writes from the viewpoint of the DfES Innovation Unit, which encourages schools to exchange views and share good practice through the online Innovation Community, a reminder that electronic communication is an important facilitator of dialogue widely used by the education world.

The NUT has always been a strong advocate of the role of schools as part of

their local communities. Kathryn Riley and Louise Stoll explore the concept of schools as professional learning communities and the need for trust as the social "glue" which holds local relationships together.

On another aspect of this theme, Jan McKenley, who has worked successful with the NUT and the National College of School Leadership on the Equal Access to Promotion programme, takes a critical look at the Government's aim of social cohesion as set out in the *Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners*. She concludes that the full engagement of black and minority ethnic teachers has a vital part to play in that aim.

Conversations about school funding can be difficult for non-specialists but John Atkins' article is a model of clarity on education funding in Wales as well as speculating on possible consequences for Wales and England.

Articles by teachers are an important hall-mark of *Education Review*. Those by Hazel Danson on the Key Stage 1 assessment trial and by Alessandra Desbottes and Tammy Nicholls on a gifted and talented pupil programme are fascinating school-based contributions which highlight the necessity for policies to relate to the needs of individual pupils if they are to be effective in application. The student voice of Becky Griffiths, alongside head teacher, Bernard Trafford, demonstrates the motivational impact of listening to and involving pupils in their own learning. Jeff Gold's article on school leadership focuses on the benefits of distributive leadership, where good communication is one of the prerequisites to success.

"It's good to talk" is a popular catch phrase with an important message. The NUT believes in open communication with its own members and with its partners in the education service, including the Government. As the largest teachers' union in England and Wales, and **the** education union, the NUT has a great deal to contribute to the ongoing conversation about the way forward for education as is demonstrated in our statement, *Breaking down the barriers*, and in this excellent edition of *Education Review*.

Steve Sinnott
General Secretary, National Union of Teachers

Bringing down the barriers – the NUT's five year strategy for education

Abstract: "Bringing down the barriers" sets out the National Union of Teachers' five year strategy for the development of education. This article examines the main themes of the strategy and outlines the benefits that it could bring to the education system.

On 15 November 2004 the NUT published *Bringing down the barriers*. It is the most comprehensive set of proposals on the future of education in England and Wales that has been attempted by any teacher organisation. It is the NUT's *Five Year Strategy* for the education service. As a vision for the future it underlines the position of the NUT as **the** education union.

A number of themes run through it. The fact is that that schools are vital to their local communities. Local authorities are vital to supporting schools in the new era of extended and full-service schools. Yet no-one has tackled before the relationship between local authorities, as distinct from LEAs, to schools. The NUT's proposals cover this for the first time.

Bringing down the barriers criticises vigorously the idea of institutional choice and urges the adoption of parents' and young peoples' rights to a good local school.

A second range of proposals emphasises how important it is for schools to innovate and draw on the professionalism of all their staff. The statement sets

out proposals for a curriculum and assessment system which encourages teachers' innovation and creativity.

A third set of proposals centers on enhancing teachers' professionalism and on how to ensure sufficient qualified teachers in schools.

Finally, *Bringing down the barriers* sets out proposals for a new system of school accountability which is both rigorous and supports schools.

The policies in *Bringing down the barriers* are practical. It is quite possible for an organisation to be visionary and have its feet rooted securely on the ground. It is a statement which recognises that education is indeed at the heart of everything we value in society.

The four key areas in the statement are:
■ an education service for all;
■ the National Curriculum and its assessment;
■ the teaching profession; and
■ accountability.

Achieving equality of access

■ Local authorities should establish local education advisory forums. They should advise on the development of extended and full-service schools and on a single conversation with schools. Their membership should include representatives of parents, teacher and governor organisations and be chaired by lead members of children's services. Local authorities should retain directors of education and social services.

■ Initiatives for the development of extended and full service schools should come from schools themselves. Local authorities should be required to cost developments and guarantee funding, including capital funding.

■ Pupil selection should be abolished. Local admissions forums would determine common admission procedures.

■ Local school organisation committees would be required to consider both proposals from local authorities and from local communities for new schools. Local authorities should combine to determine where new schools should be built. Sponsors would not be able to propose new schools.

■ Specialist facilities developed by individual schools should be available to schools in the wider community.

■ Local authorities should be given the powers and financial capacity to provide long term support to schools which are in difficulty.

■ The Government should cost the requirements it places on schools. Such cost evaluations should cover the real term costs of introducing other services at school level, including building costs.

■ The Government should set up funding review groups to cost the requirements it places on schools.

■ A separate group would examine the ability of local authorities to sustain across all services the needs of socially and economically disadvantaged communities.

■ A halt will be called to the role of the private sector in providing essential education services at national and local level. Local authorities would combine to support those which are in difficulties.

■ Local authorities would be required to retain or ensure schools have access to a range of core services, including those for minority ethnic achievement; educational psychology; tackling unacceptable pupil behaviour; and vulnerable children.

■ Local authorities would be required to maintain or have access to a range of provision, including pupil referral units, hospital and home services and special schools and units, including those for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

■ A national grant should be established for local authorities when their schools experience significant increases in the number of children of refugees and asylum seekers.

■ A funding strategy should be developed by government for creating an entitlement to high quality and affordable childcare for all working parents.

■ The Government should launch a sustained programme to ensure that all schools are fully accessible.

Schools and the National Curriculum and assessment

■ The National Curriculum is over-prescribed and overloaded. An independent review should be conducted by government of the 5-14 curriculum focusing on restructuring the National Curriculum as a broad framework.

■ The present distinction between the core and foundation subjects would be replaced.

■ The framework would describe a range of statutory entitlements, including literacy, numeracy, science and technology, the creative arts, the humanities, including a knowledge of global developments, information and communication, technology and modern foreign languages.

■ The framework would encourage new approaches to learning, such as thinking skills, environmental learning, the impact of religious and secular beliefs on society, learning about industry and manufacturing, citizenship and personal and social education, including healthy living and the importance of exercise.

■ There will be specific references to the needs of young people from minority ethnic backgrounds. The needs of children from socially and economically deprived backgrounds alongside those with special educational needs and disabilities will be integral to the new framework.

■ As part of the development of personalised learning, the Government should fund and pilot, in a group of primary and secondary schools, personal tuition arrangements for pupils which would involve enhancing the number of teaching staff in those schools.

An independent review should be conducted by government of the 5-14 curriculum focusing on restructuring the National Curriculum as a broad framework.

■ There should be a guaranteed entitlement for all pupils within the pilot. Personal tuition entitlements would include a range of experiences, including involvement in a minimum number of outdoor activities and visits to museums and galleries.

■ An independent review of testing and assessment of children should be commissioned by the Government. It should be modelled on the recent review of assessment conducted in Wales and cover the current foundation stage profile of testing and assessment in the 5-14 age range.

■ A thorough audit of the cost implications of 14-19 reform should be conducted by government. As no single government will have responsibility for implementing the post-Tomlinson arrangements, an implementation body should be established to cover the ten year implementation time of

14-19 reforms. Teacher organisations, the TUC, Learning and Skills Councils, Universities and industry alongside the Government and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority should be included in the implementation body's membership.

The teaching profession

■ Every teacher should be entitled to guaranteed time during the timetabled teaching day for professional development.

■ Each school should receive annually a minimum funding entitlement for each teacher of £1,000, at current prices, for personal professional development.

■ Each teacher should be entitled to a one term sabbatical, once every seven years of teaching, to conduct his or her own research into effective classroom practice.

■ The Government's national strategy for continuing professional development should be relaunched.

■ The Union Learning Fund should be expanded to cover teachers' professional development programmes, including leading edge developments in teaching.

■ Governments should make available through Voluntary Service Overseas and the British Council a range of opportunities for experienced teachers to work in developing countries for a year, including scholarships.

■ The Government should define the core characteristics of practising teachers. Parliamentary approval should be sought for regulations which identify the work of qualified teachers alongside separate regulations identifying the work of support staff.

■ Each school and pupil referral unit should be required to employ a minimum number of teachers. The basic number of teachers for each school should be defined by maximum class and group size limits.

■ The next government should publish legislation which sets maximum class sizes for the 3-19 age range and which reduces further class sizes for 5-7 year olds.

■ Falling roles should represent an opportunity, not a threat, and they should be used to improve class sizes, the ability of teachers to meet specific

learning needs, expand the curriculum and link up with other schools and industries.

■ The Government should establish a target annually for the total number of teachers and support staff to be employed. The target total should be costed in the annual Local Government Finance Settlement.
■ The Government should initiate a major thorough investigation into the future supply of teachers for the next 10-15 years.

Accountability in schools
■ School performance tables and national targets should be abolished.

■ In place of tables and targets, the Government should re-establish an independent Assessment of Performance Unit. It should respond to requests for national evidence on standards within schools and colleges.

■ The term 'special measures' should be abolished. It should be replaced by the term 'schools in need of additional support'.

■ Local authorities should be required to provide support, including advisers and seconded teachers based in such schools.

■ An independent Her Majesty's Inspectorate should replace OFSTED. It should be a stand-alone independent, publicly funded body and not as now a non-ministerial government department.
■ HMI would evaluate the procedures put in place by schools to assess their strengths and weaknesses and their plans for improvement. HMI would be accompanied by a small number of trained advisers drawn from teachers, advisers, parents and school communities who would advise HMIs. Each school would be able to appoint a 'critical friend' whose job it would be to provide advice to the headteacher and staff and secure additional support where necessary. The school would make the appointment. Specific grants allocated by government would fund critical friend posts.

■ HMI evaluations could cover both individual schools and collaborative arrangements involving a number of schools.

■ There should be an open and separate appeals procedure for schools which disagree with HMI evaluations. The results of appeals could lead to judgements being maintained, modified or overturned. ■

The role of *A New Relationship with Schools* in changing the way government and schools communicate

David Miliband

David Miliband is Minister of State for School Standards

Abstract: *"A New Relationship with Schools" describes a set of changes to the way central government, local government and schools of all phases will work together in the future to drive improvement in education. The changes focus on freeing teachers to teach and matching school level flexibility with smarter accountability. The "new relationship" will also simplify the flows of communication between central government, local government and schools.*

Introduction

Throughout the education system, we all share the same goal – to improve teaching and learning for every child and deliver personalised learning for all. A new relationship, with maximum legal and financial flexibility in the context of a more intelligent accountability framework, will bring us closer to realising this ambition.

The rationale for a new relationship evolved from our work with schools and feedback on how the Government and the Department for Education and Skills could improve the way we work to serve pupils better. Various aspects of the new relationship are being tested in over 90 schools in eight LEAs during this academic year – the outcomes and learning from these trials will feed directly into the policy-making process.

We will build greater capacity for school improvement at school level by further reducing unnecessary bureaucracy and making it easier for schools to access the support they require for continued school improvement without being subject to duplicative bidding, planning and accountability systems.

A simpler and more streamlined school improvement process will be put in place and a more intelligent accountability framework, which is lighter touch and less burdensome for teachers, will underpin this. Through a new relationship, we believe that we can assist school staff to improve standards even more effectively than central government has done in the past.

By stripping out clutter, simplifying the way we work, and reducing bureaucracy, we will free up more time for teachers to focus on the central priorities of teaching and learning.

We want to see schools and government, both central and local, able to have a much more direct dialogue with one another. A new relationship with schools will make a difference both to the way government and schools communicate and to the respective roles each plays in education. The role of central government will change, becoming less hands on, giving schools greater autonomy and freeing teachers to concentrate their energies on teaching and learning.

In the future we will have a more strategic centre, less concerned with specific programmes and initiatives and the individual detail of how an objective is achieved, and more concerned to create the right conditions for improvement in education by enabling schools and local authorities to achieve their desired outcomes and drive system-wide reform, rather than by trying to

drive it from the centre. There will be a reduction in the size of the DfES. By shedding a third of the workforce, and refocusing the nature of our work, we will release more resources for the front line, to go direct to schools and impact on students at closer range.

When talking about the new relationship, we are talking about government in its broadest sense, for example, central and local government and their partners and agencies; and about communication in its truest sense – not one-way traffic but genuine dialogue. By 'school' we mean the whole school and all those involved in making it what it is - heads, governors, leadership teams, parents, teachers, students, support staff, etc.

Self-evaluation

Intelligent accountability should be founded on a school's own views of how well it is serving its pupils and its own priorities for improvement. Many schools have already developed strong routines of self-evaluation. As part of the new relationship, strong self-evaluation will become common practice in all schools and become a significant element of the inspection and school improvement processes. We do not want to weigh down school self-evaluation with excessive bureaucracy – for this reason, OFSTED is replacing the current four forms with a new single self-evaluation form.

Inspection

The nature of school inspection is set to change. We believe that now is the time for a new look inspection system. In a new climate of trust, there will be much more reliance on a school's self-evaluation and its ability to know itself well. Inspections, although more regular, will be shorter, less intrusive and provide high-quality up-to-date information on key areas.

There will no longer be cause for teachers to carry out unnecessary, time-consuming preparation in advance of an inspection. There will be less lesson observation undertaken by the inspectors and schools will not have to prepare for inspections in the way they do now. Inspection reports will be shorter, concentrate on outcomes and judge schools' ability to continue to improve.

School profile

The new relationship is not just about the way government and schools communicate with each other, but also about the way we communicate with stakeholders, especially parents. A new school profile will provide high quality information about schools to parents and the general public. It will be a short, objective document, presenting the breadth of what a school offers its pupils and its community by combining standardised data with schools' own descriptions of their work.

Single conversation and school improvement partner

A new relationship with schools is about working in a new way, with fewer centrally-driven Government initiatives and better-aligned processes. By stripping out clutter, simplifying the way we work, and reducing bureaucracy, we will free up more time for teachers to focus on the central priorities of teaching and learning.

The multiple contacts schools currently have with central and local government and their partners and agencies about school development issues will be replaced with a 'single conversation'. This is not just about having one point of contact or one forum for communication, it is about having a much simpler and more focused school improvement process.

There will be fewer centrally driven initiatives, a simplified funding stream with three year budgets aligned to academic years, and support from a credible school improvement partner. The school improvement partner will work with schools to help them identify and assess development priorities and find ways to easily access the support they require.

Over the past few years, a range of programmes tailored to the needs of different schools has had a tremendous impact on school improvement. The Excellence in Cities and specialist schools programmes have brought about improvements in standards, promoted collaboration between schools, and resulted in better school development planning and a greater focus on school improvement.

The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies introduced in 1998 have dramatically improved the quality of teaching and raised standards. We intend to build on these successes through the new relationship, but remove much of the burdensome planning and reporting that has come to be associated with them. The effect will be to re-focus our communications so that we concentrate less on administration of specific policies and more on outcomes, and reduce the heavy workloads currently associated with planning and reporting.

The school improvement partner, working for a set number of days each year, will offer every school a professional and supportive challenge from outside in a way that is sensitive to the school's circumstances. They will cover all aspects of school development, with a sharp focus on standards, and including the Every Child Matters agenda.

The nature of the single conversation, and role of the school improvement partner, will vary for schools in different phases and circumstances. It is essential to get this right and there are undoubtedly going to be challenges in doing so, which is why we are in the process of trialling different ways of taking forward a 'single conversation' with the eight LEAs who are involved in new relationship trials throughout the 2004/05 academic year. These trials will inform policy development as they progress.

Data

Requests for data placed on school staff can be time consuming. We are reviewing the data that DfES and national education partners collect from schools, reviewing in each case whether the burden imposed on schools is justified. This process is being widened to cover other government departments which ask for information from schools.

The DfES and national education partners have agreed, through a Protocol on Data Sharing, that data will be managed on the principle of 'collect once, use many times' to reduce unnecessary burdens on schools in terms of data requests. This will be facilitated by the introduction of new methods of data collection and storage, so that school data can be collected by regular censuses that combine formerly-separate requests, and then accessed from a central warehouse, rather than by multiple requests for information via numerous surveys to schools.

Communications with schools

In the past we have tended to send schools information on anything they might be interested in. This has come to mean a huge amount of mail going to schools every week, and rather than reading all of it, probably little or none of it gets properly digested. Our intention has always been not to bog teachers down with an unrealistic amount of reading matter, but to provide useful information as required.

Sending vast amounts of paper mail to schools does not fulfil that purpose, which is why we are introducing a new online ordering system. Already live in schools in the south and south west of England, this will be rolled out nationally by the end of the year. Key documents will be highlighted and summaries of documents provided to enable people to ascertain quickly whether or not a particular item is appropriate and useful for them. Paper copies of documents will no longer be sent routinely to all schools, instead it will be for school staff to decide for themselves what information they would like to receive – and for the DfES to distribute copies as required.

As technological advances have gathered pace, we have become accustomed to using the internet much more, and increasingly use websites as our first port of call when doing research. The Government has been quick with these developments and we have developed our web resources accordingly. We are now at a point though where we need to align the range of websites we have. Demands on the websites are greater and we are in the process of making them even more accessible and making greater use of email communication with schools.

Conclusion

It is natural that relationships and the ways people and organisations work together change and develop as time goes on, and the relationship between schools and government is no different. The proposed new relationship marks a radical departure from current ways of working, modernising and improving the way we communicate. It will change our communications by affecting both their nature and the methods of communication we utilise - reducing the number of initiatives and programmes that currently operate, reducing the level of direct involvement from central government, further reducing unnecessary bureaucracy, facilitating more meaningful and effective dialogue on school development and giving schools greater freedom and autonomy to lead their own development.

Instead of administering specific policies from the centre, the role of the DfES will be in providing strategic direction and enabling schools themselves to lead the system. The new relationship will enable the centre to coordinate its support for schools and local authorities rather than spending time checking up on processes. Schools will not be forced to spend huge amounts of time justifying the way they decide to spend their funds. They will be judged on the outcomes. ∎

Excellence, enjoyment and personalised learning: A true foundation for choice?

Robin Alexander

Robin Alexander, formerly Professor of Education at the universities of Leeds and Warwick, is now at the University of Cambridge. A past member of CATE, QCA and the 'three wise men' primary education enquiry, his recent international research has won top prizes in both Britain and the United States.

Abstract: *In this keynote address to the NUT's 2004 National Education Conference, Robin Alexander looks beyond the rhetoric of two current flagship government initiatives: the Primary National Strategy and personalised learning. He uncovers ambiguous intentions and suspect evidence, and shows how the initiatives fail to address a long-standing need: a primary curriculum which is fit for the new century, which encapsulates a generous and safeguarded concept of entitlement, and which provides a proper foundation for meaningful choice at age 14. Both initiatives, too, are compromised by the unyielding grip of educational centralisation.*

Suddenly last summer … conciliation began to replace confrontation. Where teachers could do no right, now they could do little wrong. Where only standards and targets mattered, now there was to be room for what in 1997 Estelle Morris promised but failed to deliver – *fun*. Excellence was to be coupled with enjoyment, and creativity was no longer to be sacrificed on the altar of the 3Rs.

Above all, as Government and opposition jostled for what used to be called the political 'centre ground' but is now well to the right of centre, we were to be given *personalisation* and *choice*: choice of health care for patients, choice of schools for parents, and choice of curriculum for pupils.

How real is this shift? What does it mean? Are personalisation and choice just a Blairite updating of Thatcherite marketisation – that doctrine which brought us so-called consumer choice in everything from public utilities to public transport but in fact heralded a decline in their quality which was matched only by the rise in the salaries of their 'fat cat' bosses? Or is a genuinely reformist transformation (I refuse to succumb to 'step change') close at hand?

We can test the new rhetoric by looking at two initiatives, one of them a year old but still unfolding, the other just starting; the first – *Excellence and Enjoyment*, or the Primary National Strategy – is aimed at Key Stages 1 and 2, while the other – 'personalised learning' – is a recipe for the entire education system. Together, these initiatives raise important questions not just about the seriousness and feasibility of the Government's intentions but also about the kind of education which children need up to the age of 14 when, we are told, they will be fully equipped to make choices which will affect the rest of their lives.

I shall argue that *personalisation* and *choice* – today's buzzwords and tomorrow's inevitable election manifesto pledges – are meaningless without a generous concept of *entitlement*, and especially without a proper curricular and pedagogical *foundation* at the foundation stage and Key Stages 1, 2 and 3.

In June 2004, Liberal Democrat leader, Charles Kennedy argued that good local schools for *all*, not choice between good and poor schools, should be the Government's priority, especially if schools rather than the parents do the choosing. Otherwise, as John Dunford of SHA warned, we end up with 'an even steeper hierarchy of schools' with less choice, not more, for those who for social and economic reasons already have the fewest options[1]. So too with the curriculum. Valid choice between subjects, routes or pathways at age 14 requires a minimum entitlement and consistent quality in the education which children receive up to that age. Choice and personalisation will be illusory unless pupils know, understand and have sufficient prior experience of what they are choosing between.

So I shall argue that the new or not-so-new doctrine of personalisation and choice raises very old questions about the scope and direction of the curriculum, and about the values by which it is informed; questions which may indeed be old but which have been sidestepped by successive governments for decades, not least in the last National Curriculum review, in 1997-8. On that occasion the QCA, the agency responsible for the review, was told by the Government to do nothing which might deflect schools' attention from the literacy and numeracy targets and to change as little as possible.

I shall also suggest that though personalisation requires a minimum level of entitlement, and therefore national consistency, it is incompatible with the extreme centralisation to which English education has been subjected in recent years.

Blair's 'vision of transformation'

Let us start with the big picture, or the Government's overall 'vision of transformation', as set out by the Prime Minister at the NAHT conference on 1st May 2004:

■ 5 year olds should start school ready to learn.[2]

■ 11 year olds should be up to standard in the basics and engaging in a broad curriculum beyond.

■ 14 year olds should have the knowledge and skills to make effective choices about their future learning and careers.

■ 16 year olds should be qualified to go on to 6th form or modern apprenticeships, and then to higher education or skilled employment.

■ Lifelong learning – adults keeping skills updated and acquiring new qualifications as needed – should be the norm not the exception.[3]

By way of early warning, we can immediately see problems in this prospectus. Thus:

■ Can a nationwide universal system of pre-school education *really* cater for the personal needs of every child, let alone every child's parents? And who defines these needs?

■ What is the difference between 'up to standard' in one area of learning and 'engaging in' in another? Is the latter a bit like the Government's infamous invitation to primary schools to 'have regard to' the non-core subjects in January 1998, which was understandably taken to mean 'pay them lip service'? Does 'engaging in' mean, in effect, *not* 'up to standard', and indeed that nobody bothers to set standards by which the quality of engagement in the wider curriculum can be judged?

■ What knowledge and skills do 14 year olds need in order to make 'effective choices' about their learning and careers? Is getting 'up to standard' in the basics and 'engaging in' some other subjects enough?

■ Is lifelong learning really, or only, about updating skills and formal qualifications? What about broadening one's cultural, social and political horizons? What about meeting new people, developing new interests, consolidating old interests, taking on new responsibilities, modifying attitudes or fighting new causes? Are not these, equally, what lifelong learning is about?

The Blair 'vision of transformation' begs plenty of questions then, and that particular speech failed to answer any of them. But we might also care to note the way it ended. 'For years', said the Prime Minister, 'education was a *social cause*. Today it is an economic imperative.' Well yes, of course: but why can't it be both? Unfortunately, Blair's definition of lifelong learning as acquiring marketable skills and formal qualifications confirms the impression that in the brave new world of personalisation and choice the *economic imperative* is all that matters. Under Old Labour, at least, social and economic goals were never treated as mutually exclusive.

'Excellence and enjoyment': the Primary Strategy

So to our first initiative, the Primary National Strategy, which was set out in *Excellence and Enjoyment* on 20 May 2003.[4] I don't intend to do a detailed critique – I have already published one[5] – but I do need to mention three problems of the primary strategy which bear on the viability of the Government's new commitment to personalised learning. I call these the problem of *intent*, the problem of *evidence*, and the problem of *curriculum*.

1. The problem of intent – does the strategy offer freedom or does it demand compliance?

Excellence and Enjoyment variously calls itself (paras 8.14-8.17) a 'vision', the 'starting point for a dialogue', a 'blueprint' and a 'project'. It can't be both a blueprint (which is planned in advance, fixed and implemented exactly as it stands) and the start of a dialogue (which is presumably open-ended). So which is it? A dialogue about a blueprint? Another 'consultation' on something which has already been decided?

Elsewhere, *Excellence and Enjoyment* seems to support the dialogic claim:

"Teachers have the freedom to decide how to teach – the programmes of study state *what* is to be taught but not *how* it is to be taught ... the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, though they are supported strongly, are not statutory ... Ofsted will recognise and welcome good practice ... teachers and schools can decide which aspects of a subject pupils will study in depth ... how long to spend on each subject ... QCA guidance suggesting how much time should be allocated to each subject

is not statutory ... Our aim is to encourage all schools to ... take control of their curriculum, and to be innovative ..." (paras 2.4 and 2.8)

But hold on, what's this? On 5 February, at the conference for Primary Strategy leaders, Michael Barber – Blair's head of delivery, so you can't get more authoritative than that – provided this iron rule of thumb:

"Is enough time devoted to literacy and numeracy in every class? If it's less than 50 per cent then it's not enough."

And for good measure he added:

"The dedicated hours every day [i.e. the minimum of 50 per cent] are crucial but not enough. Extended writing ... needs additional time."[6]

So that's clear then: 50 per cent plus a further uspecified amount (5 per cent? 10 per cent?) for extended writing. Thus schools may 'take control of their curriculum and be innovative', but only for 40 per cent of the time, and only of those parts that the Government considers unimportant or optional. Not what I'd call taking control.

2. The problem of evidence – how secure are the strategy's claims and prescriptions?

The Primary Strategy defines an 'excellent school leader' as someone who is 'systematic and rigorous in using evidence to inform the development of teaching'. That being so, we can confidently expect *Excellence and Enjoyment* to be no less rigorous in its own use of evidence.

Let's test this by reference to one of the main planks in the strategy's platform. *Excellence and Enjoyment* argues:

"We need to embed the lessons of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies more deeply ... In the best schools, teachers are using their understanding of the principles behind the literacy and numeracy strategies ... We want a new approach that will help more schools and teachers to ... apply the principles of good learning and teaching across the whole curriculum: (paras 3.2-3.5)"

We might quibble that if the Government wants the literacy and numeracy strategies to provide the model for the rest of the curriculum then the approach is hardly new. However my concern is with the none-too-subtle way that NLNS is equated with 'principles of good learning and teaching' and the evidence on which this elision is based. Here's the answer:

> "The Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have, *according to all those who have evaluated them*, been strikingly successful at improving the quality of teaching and raising standards in primary schools." (Para 3.2)

This sweeping claim, I'm afraid, cannot be sustained. Thus, the much-cited OISE evaluation of NLNS, the one the Government itself commissioned, was at best equivocal:

> "There is considerable evidence … that *teaching* has improved substantially since the Strategies were first introduced … [but] the intended changes in teaching and learning have not yet been fully realised … [and] it is difficult to draw conclusions about the effect of the Strategies on pupil *learning*."[7]

Note that distinction: teaching has undoubtedly changed, and OISE says it has improved, but the evidence on *learning* is less clear.

Then there are the other studies. For example, after detailed analysis of the national test results from 1997 to 2002, coupled with work in schools, Margaret Brown's massive longitudinal study of the numeracy strategy concluded that:

> "The NNS had a positive but small effect on numeracy standards, but … there are many schools, children and areas of mathematics for whom the effect has been negligible or negative … The NNS has been an expensive programme of systemic reform, costing more than £400 million over the first five years and untold hours of teachers' time. Yet, in spite of politicians' claims, there is little evidence that it has been an 'undisputed success' as judged by a rise in attainment."[8]

But even the OISE claim about the strategies' impact on teaching are open to question. Thus, the recent Newcastle study, one of several which have looked at the impact of the literacy and numeracy strategies on the quality of teaching, concludes:

> "Traditional patterns of whole class teaching have not been dramatically transformed by the strategies … in the whole class section of literacy and numeracy lessons, teachers spent the majority of time either explaining or using highly structured question and answer sequences. Far from encouraging and extending pupil contributions to promote higher levels of interaction and cognitive engagement, most of the questions were of a low cognitive level designed to funnel pupils' responses towards a required answer."[9]

And of course, if that's what's happening then it's no surprise if test results have levelled out, for we know that *the quality of learning is closely related to the cognitive level of the talk through which learning is mediated*. Another reading of the evidence, then - taking the full range of the evidence, rather than being selective - is that the strategies produced initial pedagogical changes and learning gains, but have stalled because the Government and its advisers put too much faith in an untested model and paid too little attention to decades of international research evidence about the true conditions for effective teaching and learning.

I don't want to undermine the hard work that primary teachers have put into transforming literacy and numeracy teaching over the past few years, nor to deny the real gains which are clearly evident in many schools and classrooms. But we do need to understand that the national evidence is a good deal less conclusive, and certainly less consistent across schools, than the Government claims, and in particular it calls seriously into question the Government's insistence (a) that the strategies should continue to provide the model for literacy and numeracy teaching, unchanged and unchallenged, and (b) that they should go even further, and provide the template for the rest of the curriculum.

The findings about the quality of classroom interaction from the research studies of Smith, Hardman, Skidmore, Moyles, Hargreaves, Galton and myself, incidentally, are one reason why I have been working over the past three years with various LEAs, and indeed the strategy leaders themselves, to develop what I call 'dialogic teaching'. But that's another story.[10]

The other problem of evidence in *Excellence and Enjoyment* is that when you need it, it isn't there. The Primary Strategy, as we've seen, tells schools to 'apply the principles of good learning and teaching across the curriculum'. What are these principles? Here they are, on page 29:

Good learning and teaching should:
- *Ensure that every child succeeds*: provide an inclusive education within a culture of high expectations.
- *Build on what learners already know*: structure and pace teaching so that students know what is to be learnt, how and why.
- *Make learning vivid and real*: develop understanding through enquiry, creativity, e-learning and group problem-solving.
- *Make learning an enjoyable experience*: stimulate learning through matching teaching techniques and strategies to a range of learning styles.
- *Enrich the learning experience*: build learning skills across the curriculum.
- *Promote assessment for learning*: make children partners in their learning.

Where does this come from? The only one of these statements with a

recognisable evidential basis is the last, which draws on the King's College research on assessment for learning[11] – which DfES has now appropriated but transmuted into something rather different from the intentions of its original authors. The other 'principles', lacking evidence, are merely statements of belief. Indeed, they are so obvious and banal as to be hardly worth printing. What teacher does *not* want to ensure that every child succeeds, build on what learners know, make learning vivid, real and enjoyable, and so on? Do we need a 'strategy', highly-paid strategy directors and teams, LEA strategy leaders, conferences, training programmes and expensive professional support packages for that?

In fact, because the strategy's reference to applying the principles of good learning and teaching comes in the context of its claim that the literacy and numeracy standards have been an outstanding success, it is clear that the *real* principles DfES has in mind are that literacy lessons should have four parts, numeracy lessons three, and that both should end with whole-class interactive plenaries. As someone who has spent years researching teaching and learning in both the UK and internationally, I know of no evidence which justifies imposing this model on 20,000 primary schools.

Further, as I first noted in 1996 when it was heralded as the new standards panacea, interactive whole class teaching misses the point if it merely produces traditional whole class teaching dominated by the 'recitation script' of closed or recall questions, 'correct' answer-spotting by pupils, and minimal feedback.[12] Regrettably, as the Smith and Hardman research cited earlier shows, that is exactly what is happening in many classrooms as a result of the strategies' endorsement of this approach. What makes the difference, of course, is enhancing the capacity of classroom interaction to engage pupils cognitively in *all* organisational settings, not merely doing more whole class teaching.

Dare I say it: this last point was made all of 14 years ago in the previous Government's so-called 'three wise men' enquiry on primary education, one of many sources of hard evidence which the authors of the Primary Strategy ignored.[13]

Further, because it uses dogma in place of evidence, the strategy misses the evidence about teaching and learning which *really* matters. For example, we know from psychological and neuroscientific evidence that language, and especially spoken language, plays an absolutely vital part in human development and learning, especially during the first 10 or so years of life. We also know from international comparative research that we can learn much from other countries about ways of improving the quality and cognitive power of classroom talk.[14] Yet in *Excellence and Enjoyment* speaking and listening receive just one brief mention. The supposedly expert authors of the primary strategy were apparently unaware that this crucial evidence about the conditions for effective teaching and learning existed. And in their ignorance they were

prepared to dish up banal 'principles' of 'good learning and teaching' instead.

However, when I and others criticised DfES for this glaring omission they hastily jumped to plug the gap, and elevated speaking and listening to the status of top priority in the primary strategy training programme. Fine, and good that they accepted their mistake, but how much faith can we have in a strategy, vision, blueprint or project which prefers the knee-jerk change after the event to carefully reviewing the evidence before it?

3. The problem of curriculum – breadth and balance at last, or the 'basics' and little else?

Perhaps the biggest claim the Government has made for the Primary Strategy is that it ushers in a new era of curriculum breadth and balance, of enrichment and creativity. I'm afraid that the only thing rich about this is its bare-faced cheek, for it was this Government that prevented the 1997-8 National Curriculum review from securing breadth and balance at Key Stages 1 and 2, arguing that only literacy and numeracy mattered; it was this Government that in January 1998 told schools that they need no longer teach the programmes of study in the non-core subjects; and it was this Government that ignored the OFSTED study of 1997 which found that the schools which performed best in the Key Stage 2 SATs were those which were also most successful in planning and sustaining a broad and balanced curriculum, and that the schools which thought that the way to raise standards in the basics was to concentrate on the basics alone were wrong.[15]

This finding was confirmed in the OFSTED *Successful Primary Schools* study of 2002,[16] though in fact both of the OFSTED studies only repeated what we had known since the famous HMI survey of 1978, which convincingly showed that there is a necessary relationship between breadth, balance and standards.[17] You can't teach the basics, let alone secure high standards of literacy and numeracy, in a curriculum vacuum.

So, far from ushering in a long-awaited era of what the strategy calls 'children's entitlement to a rich, broad and balanced set of learning experiences' the Government is merely giving back what it took away. And it is doing so having ignored for the past seven years the evidence of inspections and surveys going back a quarter of a century.

But again, beware the forked tongue, for we've heard Downing Street's insistence on the 50+ per cent minimum for literacy and numeracy, which constrain breadth, balance and enrichment at the outset. But there's an even more fundamental problem: by constantly juxtaposing 'excellence' and 'enjoyment' in the way it does, or by contrasting 'standards' and 'engagement' as in Tony Blair's NAHT speech, it's clear that at best the Government has in mind just that two-tier curriculum which I first identified in a book published 20 years ago.[18] In this perception, which goes back to the Victorian elementary schools, the 3Rs provide the excellence and

standards while the rest of the curriculum supposedly offers enrichment and breadth. The possibility that educational quality might be about providing excellence and high standards across the *entire* curriculum isn't entertained.

If you consider my criticisms unfair, ponder this anecdote. In January 1998, I and three others went to see the then Minister of State (Estelle Morris) to plead with her not to make the non-core subjects optional at Key Stage 1 and 2, as she was at that time being urged to do by HMCI, and to take a more holistic approach to the curriculum. We also argued that holism and coherence would be difficult for as long as one part of the curriculum – literacy and numeracy – was directed from DfES itself, while the rest was delegated to QCA. At that point a senior official leant across and prompted, with consummate Sir Humphrey smoothness, 'Ah but Minister, literacy and numeracy are *standards*, not curriculum. QCA is indeed responsible for the curriculum, but we at the Department are responsible for standards.'

So it's official, then: literacy and numeracy aren't part of the curriculum. And by the same token, the notion of standards presumably has no place outside the context of literacy and numeracy. The old duality lives, then: the basics and the rest, excellence and enjoyment, standards and engagement, Curriculum I and Curriculum II.

There will be no progress on achieving a curriculum which is genuinely broad, balanced, rich, diverse and of consistently high quality across the board for as long as this mindset remains dominant in Government. None of this, I must emphasise, detracts from the fundamental importance of literacy and numeracy, especially literacy, for I am interested in one curriculum, not two, and reject the opposition of 'basics' and 'non-basics'.

Personalised learning

This is all by way of prelude to our consideration of the theme of personalisation and choice which is now being applied to the full range of public services and is intended to carry the Government into and triumphantly through the next general election.

Big idea it may be, but as yet it remains opaque, despite its many airings. One such came in David Miliband's speech at the DfES/Demos/OECD conference on 18 May 2004. He started by saying what personalised learning is *not*:

- A return to child-centred theories.
- About letting pupils learn on their own.
- About abandoning the national curriculum.
- A license to let pupils coast at their own pace.[19]

Note the swipe at child-centredness to placate the right-wingers and the derogatory equating of learning at one's own pace with 'coasting'. It's hard to take seriously an account of personalised learning which opens by dismissing

the obvious truth that children don't all learn at the same rate or in the same way. Or one which descends to the level of a tabloid parody of 1970s educational thinking (the period of Miliband's own school education, and he didn't do too badly out of it).

After this dispiriting start Miliband went on to say what personalised learning *is*:

- An educational aspiration reflecting moral purpose, excellence and equity.
- An educational strategy providing a focus for school improvement.
- An approach to teaching and learning using ICT and groups.
- A system of education that sees children as social beings with needs which extend beyond the classroom.
- Neither a new policy nor a new initiative, but a commitment to making best practice universal.[20]

Not much there to hang onto, either. Let's try the next bit. Miliband then filled out his 'vision' by setting out five 'components' of personalised learning:

- *Assessment for learning:* using data and dialogue to know students' strengths and weaknesses and diagnose individual needs [engaging pupils in their learning through shared objectives and feedback].

- *Teaching and learning strategies* which develop each learner's competence and confidence by building on individual needs [teaching, learning and ICT strategies that build on the learner's experience, knowledge and multiple intelligences].

- *Curriculum choice* which engages and respects students [choice which balances entitlement and personal relevance]:
  (Overall) Giving every student curriculum choice, breadth of study, personal relevance and clear pathways through the system.
  (Primary) High standards in the basics allied to opportunities for enrichment and creativity.
  (14-19) Giving learners significant vocational and academic curriculum choice.

- A radical approach to *school organisation*, with workforce reform as the key [using grouping and learning mentors to enhance learning, focusing on creating an empowering culture and ethos].

- *Support for schools from the local community* [tackling barriers to learning with the community; positioning school at centre of the community].[21]

This gives us a bit more to work with. However:

Assessment for learning, as defined here, misuses an important idea, grounded in research from Paul Black and his colleagues, by reducing it to target-setting and data-gathering, when its real concern is with classroom process.

As in the Primary Strategy, the recipe for effective teaching and learning is banal and pretty well meaningless. If not that then in the earlier version it simply picks up a couple of popular nostrums – ICT and multiple intelligences – while ignoring the real insights from research, inspection and experience of 'what works'.

On curriculum choice Miliband confirms the old primary curriculum dichotomy that I've just criticised. Furthermore he contradicts himself: first he says that every student will have curriculum choice, then he restricts that choice to the 14-19 group. Unless he means by 'opportunities for enrichment and creativity' at the primary stage that children will have choice outside the basics. Or possibly that teachers will have the choice whether to to develop children's creativity. And as for Key Stge 3, he doesn't even mention it. What a muddle.

The current approach to workforce reform is equated with 'a radical approach to school organisation'. But there are other kinds of workforce reform which some of us have been arguing for (relating, for example, to primary schools' capacity to deliver the whole curriculum, with the necessary expertise and without the pressure of time which makes that delivery so difficult to achieve).

The curricular foundations for personalised learning

This takes us to the heart of the matter: the kind of curriculum, and the kinds of teaching, which translate personalised learning from political rhetoric into something which is viable as everyday classroom practice. In exploring this we need to confront two fundamental truths which so far no government seems capable of understanding.

First, as I've already shown, the primary school curriculum in England is, and from its inception nearly always has been, not one curriculum but two: the high-priority basics and the low-priority trimmings. This is not how many teachers want it to be, but it is how circumstances and deeply entrenched public and political attitudes have compelled it to be.

The polarisation was reinforced in the first National Curriculum's sharp distinction between – 'core' and 'other foundation' subjects, though there at least there was a clear commitment to entitlement across the full range of subjects; in the national curriculum test regime (in a climate of maximum exposure of test outcomes schools inevitably concentrate on what is to be tested); in the Dearing National Curriculum manageability review of 1993 in which Dearing managed to echo the Newcastle Commission of 1861 (Dearing

1993: 'The principal task of the teacher at Key Stage 1 is to ensure that pupils master the basic skills of reading, writing and number.' Newcastle Commission 1861: 'The duty of a state in public education is to ensure the greatest possible quantity of reading, writing and arithmetic for the greatest number.'); in the 1997-8 National Curriculum review ('literacy and numeracy are standards not curriculum') and the Government's decision to get primary schools to concentrate on the basics at the expense of the rest; in OFSTED inspection requirements; and in the TTA/Ofsted teacher training requirements.[22]

Second, I have argued, and HMI and/or OFSTED have in three separate studies convincingly demonstrated, that there is a necessary relationship between standards in the basics and the rest, and that the wider curriculum isn't just an optional extra. Breadth and balance is not just a curriculum issue, nor even just an entitlement issue, but also – and fundamentally – a *standards* one. Standards aren't, as that DfES official told the minister, literacy and numeracy alone, they are the whole curriculum. That's an empirical statement, not an ideological one. By failing to understand this, governments of all complexions have not only compromised entitlement, but they have also compromised their own standards agenda, thus shooting themselves, spectacularly and repeatedly, in the foot.

Here then, are some alternative principles for personalised learning. They can be set alongside the five offered by David Miliband, but only if Miliband's third principle is modified.

■ *A curricular foundation for choice.* Key Stage 1/2/3 education must provide a proper curricular foundation for subsequent educational choice. Without that foundation, meaningful and informed choice is impossible. At Key Stages 1, 2 and 3, therefore: (i) curriculum breadth is essential; (ii) all aspects of the curriculum deemed necessary to this foundation must be accorded if not equal time then certainly equal seriousness and professional commitment and skill. The old - and still-current – CI/CII formula of 'basics plus trimmings' must be abandoned, for it denies entitlement and thus reduces choice.

■ *An intellectual foundation for choice.* Going beyond the primary strategy's woolly 'principles of learning and teaching', personalisation demands that teaching must, generically, provide a proper *intellectual* foundation for making and expressing choice. Whatever else it achieves, teaching should develop pupils' abilities to attend and listen; to discriminate, compare and evaluate; to reason, argue and justify.

■ *Professional expertise for choice.* Every school (and especially every primary school, for it's here that the issue of subject expertise is most problematic)

should contain sufficient depth and breadth of professional expertise for its teachers to be able to recognise and foster a wide range of individual pupil interests, talents and capacities. (What one does not oneself understand one may neither value nor be able to recognise in others, let alone nurture and develop).

■ *Balancing personal and collective need.* At the same time, the curriculum, and teaching, should strike a just balance between personalisation and the pursuit of common goals and common values, and between the development of individual and collective identity. This principle is important in two contexts: the classroom and the wider society.

In the classroom we need to understand that children are indeed individuals but they also have much in common. The Piagetian idea of the child as 'lone scientist' has given way to the Vygotskian view that learning is fundamentally a social and interactive process.[23] So there is a teaching principle here, grounded in the kind of research evidence that the Primary Strategy has ignored.

But also, for our society's – and the world's - future we need to understand the consequences, especially in Britain and the USA, of rampant individualism, materialism and self-gratification (or personalisation in its more extreme form) and the consequent loss of the nurturing of the senses of collective identity and responsibility and of interdependence which give individuals a sense of who they are and where they belong and which are also necessary for social cohesion and human survival. Individuals have needs, certainly, but so do groups, communities and societies. A curriculum needs to be responsive to them all. This is something many other cultures, especially the more holistic and less egocentric cultures of Asia, understand clearly.

■ *Rethinking the primary curriculum.* With these first four conditions in mind the primary curriculum should be radically reviewed with an eye to identifying a more appropriate and generous curriculum core and an expanded concept of 'basics'.

Rethinking the primary curriculum

Let's pursue the last principle, for it is my central contention that the possibilities for choice and genuine personalisation at Key Stage 4 depend critically on the quality and range of the curriculum up to that point. So I would argue that after the disappointment of the first National Curriculum and Dearing, and the downright dereliction of duty of the 1997-8[24] National Curriculum review when this Government instructed QCA to change as little as possible, next time we should be prepared to be more radical. Thus, to revive a

proposal which I made in 1997-8 but stood no chance then because it was off message (though it gained wide support among educators), we need to move:

■ From curriculum renewal by increasingly unmanageable 'bolt-on' accretion (science, D & T, ICT, MFL, PSHE, citizenship ….) to renewal by radical re-assessment of the whole.

■ From the 3Rs concept of 'basics' to one which acknowledges the primacy of literacy yet also reflects a fresh analysis of what is 'basic' to individual empowerment and to social and economic progress in the 21st century.

■ From a view of talk as about 'communication skills' and 'the development of confidence' to a recognition of the neuroscientific and psychological evidence of its unique status as a *sine qua non* for all learning, especially during the first 10-12 years of life.

■ From a small number of *core subjects* to a more broadly-conceived core *curriculum* which draws on a wider spectrum of knowledge, understanding and skill.

■ From a concept of Key Stage 1/2 curriculum conceived mainly as preparation for Key Stage 3/4 to one which also addresses the learning and developmental needs and imperatives of early and middle childhood.

■ And at the primary stage from a staffing model which was originally designed and financed to deliver a minimal curriculum as cheaply as possible, to one which is commensurate with the professional demands of genuine curriculum breadth and balance.

Conclusion

What, then, do these two initiatives add up to? The Primary Strategy as published is riddled with inconsistencies and contradictions, displays a cavalier attitude to evidence, and papers over a struggle between the timid liberalisers in DfES and the control freaks in Downing Street. The accounts of personalised learning so far published raise, I have suggested, important questions about the extent of personalisation and choice which is possible or indeed desirable, and about the curricular basis at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 which is necessary for choice at age 14 to be genuine and informed.

I do acknowledge, though, that the Primary Strategy as it is now evolving is in some respects different from the published specification. In criticising the kneejerk elevation of speaking and listening from afterthought to priority I am not objecting to the elevation as such - far from it - but to the fact that the Strategy's

authors displayed such culpable ignorance of the true pedagogical conditions for educational excellence while expecting the nation's teachers unquestioningly to comply on the basis of who produced the document rather than what it said.

For members of this and other teaching unions, these initiatives therefore raise a further question: what do they tell us about how the Government views the nation's teachers? Here, again, the signs are not encouraging. Probe the teacher-friendly language of documents like *Excellence and Enjoyment* and you find this much harsher judgement from Downing Street - first voiced in 2001 and since then recycled at various conferences in the UK and indeed in those several countries whose governments still subscribe to the antiquated view that their opposite numbers in London are interested in truth rather than myth or spin:

> "Until the mid-1980s what happened in schools and classrooms was left almost entirely to teachers to decide ... Almost all teachers had goodwill and many sought to develop themselves professionally, but, through no fault of their own, the profession itself was uninformed ... Under Thatcher [i.e. after the 1988 Education Reform Act and the introduction of the national curriculum and national testing at 7, 11 and 14], the system moved from *uninformed professional judgement to uninformed prescription*."[25]

Note how heavily professional ignorance features in this historical pathology, and how it is presented as an inevitable concomitant of professional autonomy. To be free to decide how to teach is to be uninformed. If you were teaching before 1988, you might care to ponder what those sweeping phrases 'the profession itself was uninformed ... uninformed professional judgement' say about your competence. It sets things up nicely, of course, for the transformation achieved by New Labour and the Utopia which is now in sight:

> "The 1997-2001 Blair government inherited a system of *uninformed prescription and replaced it with one of informed prescription* ... The White Paper signals the next shift: from *informed prescription to informed professional judgement* ... The era of informed professional judgement is only just beginning ... The era of informed professional judgement could be the most successful so far in our educational history ... It could be the era in which our education system becomes not just good but great."[26]

This, of course, is as distorted and politically partisan an account of recent educational history as one is likely to find. Quite apart from its disparaging view of the competence of anyone teaching before 1997, its claim that before that date there was an absence of information on which teachers and the

system could draw is patently absurd: remember HMI inspection reports and national surveys; national enquiries like Plowden, Newsom, Bullock, Cockcroft, Warnock and Gulbenkian; the regular test programmes of NFER, LEAs and the APU and, from 1988 to 1997, the SATs; the evidence from public examinations, which were no less rigorously managed then than they are now; not to mention schools' and teachers' own knowledge, experience and information systems and of course the evidence from independent research.

It suits the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit to claim that teachers, governments and the system as a whole were uninformed until the arrival of Tony Blair not just for the obvious reason that it makes claims about what Blair has 'delivered' all the more impressive. More insidiously for the education professions, by dismissing the entire information base of education up to 1997, Downing Street is in effect saying that the only valid educational intelligence is what the Government defines as such. 'Informed professional judgement', then, means not the autonomy ostensibly offered by *Excellence and Enjoyment*, but *compliance* with the educational prescriptions of DfES: the strategies, the prescriptions, the pathologies, the graphs of educational standards which government interprets one way but expert independent analysts view rather differently, the rhetoric, and the officially-sanctioned and published versions of 'best practice' and 'what works'.

Thus whenever we probe what seems like a relaxation at DfES of the familiar macho educational rhetoric of basics, standards, targets, underperforming schools, tough new initiatives, step changes and all the rest, we come up against the reality of Downing Street holding unswervingly to the view that at the primary stage the 3Rs are all that matters, and far from being offered freedom to exercise professional judgement in the vital areas of curriculum and pedagogy, teachers must continue to do as they are told.

For all these reasons, then, I suggest that meaningful personalisation and choice in education are not only intrinsically problematic – and I have tried to show how and why, and the kind of foundation at the primary and indeed lower secondary stages on which choice at age 14 depends – but they are also incompatible with the degree of centralisation and tight political control to which the public education system of England is now subject. ∎

Notes and references

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3. Quoted from the press version of the Prime Minister's speech to the NAHT conference, 1 May 2004.

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20. This more positive definition comes from Miliband, D. (2004) 'The rationale for and definition of personalised learning', *Human Scale Education News*, Spring, p 2.

21. Miliband, D. (2004) 'Choice and voice….' (see note 17) pp 4-6. The versions within brackets come from the *Human Scale Education News* article, also cited above.

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26. *Ibid*.

Inside-out and outside-in: why schools need to think about communities in new ways[1]

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Abstract: *This article focuses on schools and communities. The authors have been drawn to this topic by two different strands of educational debate and investigation: one which examines the internal professional learning community and the other which explores the external community context in which schools operate. Their starting point is learning: schools' raison d'être. The impact of dramatic global changes is felt in schools on a daily basis. Information is infinitely more accessible through technological advances than hitherto and both parents and school staff struggle to make sense of the tantalising array of interactive entertainment offered on a daily basis to young people. Within-school communities seek to come to terms with the implications of global changes on learning and families, and local communities with the range of influences which shape children's lives. The basis of the argument presented here is that in both struggles, both communities are inextricably linked.*

Inside-out

Many schools today ask themselves: How can we share our learning with each other? How can we create a *professional learning community* which is collaborative, learning-centred, enquiry-oriented and development-focused and which strives to improve learning and teaching for everyone in the school community, most especially pupils?[2] The notion of professional learning communities is an important one and the word 'community' - key. It suggests a focus not just on individual teachers' professional learning but on learning within a community context and has implications for staff and for school leaders.

However, the concept of a professional learning community is not unproblematic. A school's internal professional community is one in which all teachers and other staff belong. Membership is voluntary. Teachers have 'opted in' by dint of their taking up employment in that school and the prevailing ethos in the staffroom is typically one of solidarity – a positive force when it means that teachers co-operate to provide mutual support. But it can have a negative side if it entails unblinking loyalty to colleagues who are not pulling their weight.[3]

Being a member of that professional community should mean that you have a right to try and influence it, and some might say even a responsibility. But what responsibility do teachers have to challenge the low expectations of their colleagues, or to question the dismissive and negative attitudes of a small minority of disaffected teachers? How should teachers react if the appointed leaders of the school turn a blind eye? At present there are no effective mechanisms by which staff can challenge the attitudes of colleagues who are letting down both the external and internal communities. Does solidarity need to be tempered with a more critical collegiality?

We also need to give some thought to how to develop professional learning communities: how to grow a learning culture which nurtures trust and relationships and encourages collaboration and teamwork and in which staff take responsibility for their own learning, both formal and informal. The school leader's role in this is to:

■ *Make connections:* Professional learning communities are most likely to thrive where people and ideas have plenty of opportunities to connect. Schools can be very fragmented places, divided by subject and Key Stage barriers. Within some schools, different subjects have greater status than others, creating power dynamics that can work against cross-curricular collaboration. The physical layout of some schools also inhibits collaborative activity, and teaching has a history of being a private activity carried out within a Western culture that is far more individualistic than many societies in the East. Added to all of this, schools are often faced with

disconnected initiatives and a common leadership response is diffusion: adding more without trying to make coherent links based on key priorities.[4]

■ *Go deeper:* Changing practice is extremely difficult and a lot of the evidence suggests that much of the change in learning and teaching has been relatively superficial, partly because insufficient time is made available to what needs to be an ongoing process of observing peers, giving each other feedback and coaching each other, engaging in action research, trying out and practising new strategies within particular school and classroom contexts, reflecting seriously on how they work with different pupils, learning from these reflections, and adapting and refining them as necessary. *Time* is critical. Serious enquiry appears to be a feature of more mature professional learning communities,[5] but this is more likely to occur in a climate of *trust* – both within schools and at a national level – where people feel safe to take risks and subject their own practice to serious scrutiny. We will return to the issues of trust later.

■ *Ensure sustainability:* In some ways, this can be the most demanding challenge, because school improvement is notoriously hard to sustain, particularly in locations where pupil and staff mobility work against a continuity of focus and the building of shared values and beliefs. While sustaining continuous learning may be an oxymoron, it is necessary to the survival and growth of professional learning communities.[6] This requires a mind shift: schools as a workplace need to become seen as a site for adult learning; not just the learning of children and young people. Ensuring sustainability also requires revisiting beliefs and values on an ongoing basis, while recognising that newcomers will have different perspectives to offer to it.

Outside-in

In today's world any professional learning community also has to focus on the external community. Heads and school leaders have a particular role to play here. Their job is to go beyond the school gate, to reach out and 'read' and interpret the external community context, connecting this knowledge and understanding to the school's internal community. Information about the local community has to be gathered, assessed and then put to use. The leadership of the school must oversee these processes and ensure they work, even though they may be largely informal discussions, or an item on staff meeting agendas. This can be through the *art of the strategic conversation*, the purposeful dialogue which can appear so effortless and yet which requires much planning.

Teachers can make a real difference by taking steps to understand more about where the children have come from, and draw on their knowledge and

experience.[7] Understanding diversity is the first step towards establishing mutual respect and dealing with behaviour. It can influence how teachers work with children in the classroom. For example, traditional text-based teaching approaches can be unhelpful to pupils who are bilingual but who have English language and literacy skills below the national average. They are much more likely to respond to a range of methods, often visual, and to shorter bursts of learning.

Valuing children's knowledge and skills: enabling them to teach their class-mates – e.g. how to say good morning in Amharic; an Islamic prayer; a poem in Jamaican patois – reinforces respect and acknowledges differences. Valuing the richnesses of children's lives in this way is not new but helps counteract intolerance and ignorance in a national climate which can be hostile to refugees, or to other faiths.

..the prevailing ethos in the staffroom is typically one of solidarity – a positive force when it means that teachers co-operate to provide mutual support.

There is an important caveat. Knowing the pupil community is not just a matter of learning about newcomers and ethnic minorities and non-Christian faiths. It must also involve understanding the longer-standing families in the community – the white working class. Of course, there has often been a tension – frequently a very creative tension – between the attitudes and values of teachers who are largely middle-class (by profession if not by origin) and their pupils who are largely members of the working-class.

It is wrong, however, to assume that these groups are as they always have been. They are evolving too, responding to newcomers and to the many other societal changes. The local labour market, for instance, has a crucial impact in London. Schools in west London, for example, report that the local youngsters don't value learning because they know they can easily get reasonably paid jobs as baggage handlers at Heathrow Airport.

The main outcome of the process of positive engagement is sensitivity on the part of staff; empathy with the horrific experience of refugees; making allowances, when homework is late, for overcrowded homes; recognising the different cultural and religious assumptions. But sensitivity can be difficult to define. Few would argue with celebrating religious festivals such as Eid and Diwali, but how many teachers telling the Christmas story to primary pupils explain that baby Jesus is regarded as the son of God by one religion and as a prophet by another?

Another element of reaching out is networking with other schools, or

forming collegiates: a strategy which widens each individual school's possibilities of responding to challenges by bringing more minds to bear on a problem.[8] It prevents insularity and colleagues in different schools can act as each other's critical friends to help each school with its self-evaluation. Competition between schools developed as a result of marketisation within education can be a significant barrier but some of the intractable problems facing inner city educators require what Michael Fullan describes as moral purpose writ large: people working together beyond their school boundaries for the benefit of all students.[9]

Schools also need to connect to the local communities they serve by developing more systematic ways of understanding the nature and complexity of those communities which are often diverse and changing rapidly, particularly in urban areas. Where staff do not live locally, they may be unaware of these changes. But once they have done this, once schools have taken steps to 'read' the local community, how should they use what they know? Our work suggests there are at least three possible responses to this information gathering exercise.

What is the 'super glue' which binds communities together? In our view, the answer to this question is trust.

■ *Response I - Evade:* This is the attempt to weaken the links of the school with its immediate catchment area, which is seen to be too problematic, and to attract more middle-class pupils into the school to help push up test scores. It is not uncommon and can have some benefits to the local children remaining in the school, but not to those denied access.

■ *Response II - Ignore:* This is the attempt to insulate the school from the community. There are probably two versions: the *fortress model* (favoured by some secondary schools) and *the bubble* (a nursery favourite). Both models are motivated by worthy intents – to provide children and young people with space, opportunities, safety. Both models have their success stories but there are also downsides. Children can feel torn between two cultures and communities which never meet.

■ *Response III – Engage:* The third response is an attempt, not only to reach out to understand the complexities of community, but also to bring the school and the community into closer alignment, understanding each other and reaching an agreement (based on trust and mutual respect) about how they will work together. Heads, teachers and other schools staff need to become more engaged with the local community and, far from this being a

burden – another add-on to what they already have to do - it will make their lives and their pupils' lives easier.[10]

Bringing it all together: Inside-out and outside-in

It does not make sense to separate thinking and discussion about *how* professionals within a school's community can work best together as a professional learning community, from *how* those professionals can work most effectively with the local communities which their schools serve. It does not help children and young people. It does not help their families and it does not help the professionals who are working with them.

But how do you bring communities together – within and across schools, and with local neighbourhoods? What is the 'super glue' which binds communities together? In our view, the answer to this question is *trust*. This is not a new notion. A number of contributors have pointed us in the direction of the elusive idea of social trust for some time.[11]

Trust does not appear out of the ether. It may emerge from respect for a profession (medical), or a calling (a priest or Imam), or a role (tenants' leader) but, even then, it is dependent on relationships which people have with those individuals. However, in our complex and fast changing world, trust can not be assumed. It has to be created. And it has to be earned. *But*, unless people within a school have information about their local community (which they turn into knowledge and understanding), it is hard to build mutuality – a shared affinity and allegiance about the education needs of young people which is the basis of trust (see Diagram 1).

Diagram I: Building trusting relationships between schools and communities

Information

Trust   **Knowledge**

Mutuality   **Understanding**
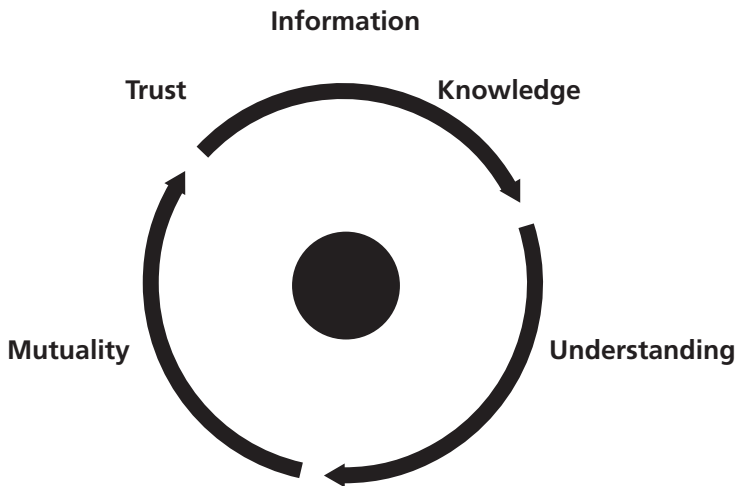
It is through that mutuality, that signing up to common goals, that schools and their communities build trust. But it is hard to expect teachers to develop that mutuality and trust with the external community, if they don't have it within their school community. ■

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Towards respectful inspection – a critique of proposed arrangements for school inspection and self-evaluation

Abstract: *This article examines the changes to school inspections set out in the Government's "A New Relationship With Schools". Although there are some welcome improvements on present practice, the whole purpose of inspection has not been satisfactory defined and still does not achieve the partnership with schools essential if inspection is to provide an "intelligent accountability framework".*

A new relationship?

In a typically self-congratulatory way the DfES and OFSTED are trying to

establish a new relationship with schools, without in any sense acknowledging the limitations of their existing and past relationships. The document, *A New Relationship with Schools* (DfES/OFSTED)[1] sets out changes for the future of school inspection based on what it terms "cutting-edge proposals" (p.1) This article attempts a balanced appraisal of their strengths and weaknesses.

From the outset I need to acknowledge that revisions to the OFSTED inspection regime are welcome, even though they are at least five years too late and not as fundamental as they need to be to retrieve the respect and trust of the teaching profession in the process of school inspection. The proposals do, I believe, represent some faltering steps in the right direction.

The DfES and OFSTED aim to provide what they describe as "an intelligent accountability framework" (p.1) though not one which I think Onora O'Neill, the originator of the term "intelligent accountability", would wholeheartedly endorse. In *A Question of Trust*[2] she argued for a sensitive form of accountability which avoids "distorting the proper aims of professional practice and….damaging professional pride and integrity". The arrangements outlined in *A New Relationship with Schools* go some way, though not far enough, to support that practice and that integrity.

The nature of inspection

Nowhere in that document is the nature of inspection clarified, though this clarification is essential if the limitations (as well as the strengths) of inspection are to be appreciated – a necessary pre-condition for a new productive relationship. Inspection involves observing work in schools, collecting evidence from a variety of sources and reporting judgements. But inspectors are not simply the equivalent of value-less cameras or video-recorders providing snap-shots of schools and classrooms.

Inspection involves the use of a conceptual framework to direct and help make sense of observations and judgements. Centrally too, inspection involves fallible human beings making judgements as to the quality of what is being observed, collected and reported.

These qualitative judgements need to be informed by a conscious awareness of the inspectors' and the schools' own values implicated in such judgements. Such judgements are inevitably subjective to a degree. There can be no such thing as totally objective inspection. However, there can be professionally subjective but rigorous inspection which offers inspectors' interpretations as a basis for dialogue with those who have been observed and who will have their own interpretations, values and priorities. Will the proposals in *A New Relationship With Schools* lead to this?

To contribute to intelligent accountability, inspection has to take due account both of the proper demands made on schools by government, parents and the wider society but also schools' own aims, values and priorities. Neither the current nor the new arrangements do this to a sufficient degree. The place

accorded school self-evaluation in the new proposals falls short of being a fulsome endorsement of schools' priorities and professional integrity, especially when school reports are to be complemented by profiles dominated by "a carefully defined set of performance measures" – reflecting "official" values and priorities.

The new proposals

Aspects of the new proposals are very sensible. To be intelligent (and therefore responsive to the inevitable changes affecting schools) inspection needs to be regular and reasonably frequent for all institutions – the proposal that this should be every three years is probably about right. Such frequent inspections cannot be as long as current ones without over-burdening both schools and inspectors. The proposal that inspections should be no longer than two days seems appropriate in the circumstances.

Within such time limitations inspections cannot be wide-ranging; they will have to be focussed, to use a medical analogy, more in the way of a health check rather than a full-body scan and internal investigation. What is promised is a "focus on core systems and key outcomes, informed by lesson observation and other indicators of pupils' progress". This suggests inspection dominated by "measures" of pupils' achievement and progress (without their limitations being acknowledged) and by paper-based management systems – with a severe diminution of first-hand evidence related to the *quality* of pupils' experience. I am concerned, but not convinced, about OFSTED's contention that, "direct observation will always remain important, but it may not predominate to quite the same extent in the new era."(p.16)

I agree that there needs to be an irreducible minimum common to every inspection; I would want to include sampling the quality of teaching but not just in the core subjects (as I suspect OFSTED intends). Beyond that, if the self-evaluation is truly to be at the heart of an inspection, the individual school should have some say (but not the only say) in the elements inspected. Perhaps that focus should be provided by scrutiny of, say, two elements from the school's own self-evaluation document, one chosen by the school and the other by the inspectors themselves. In the event of the "health check" revealing "morbid" conditions the school should, I believe, be subject to a full inspection within a short period , not, as being proposed, a first follow-up visit by HMI four to six months later

How valid is the claim made by the DfES and OFSTED that self-evaluation evidence will be "at the heart of the inspection" (p.6). Under the new arrangements schools are expected to complete a single self-evaluation form and to keep it up-to-date annually. "This will be a standard form that captures data about the school that inspectors can use to inform their inspection visit. It will be for schools to develop their own process of self-evaluation" (p.7) but

OFSTED and the DfES are promising "guidance on how schools can judge whether they are doing it well"(p.7).

These procedures could represent a dangerous encroachment on professional freedom of policy and action. A "standard form" implies standard evidence on standard systems and standard outcomes, prescribed in a standard way by OFSTED who "will make clear guidance available for its completion" (p. 19). This does not square with what I consider to be a defensible concept of school self-evaluation which should be informed substantially (though not, I would argue, completely) by a school's own values and priorities.

Schools are to be required to "inspect" themselves using criteria they have had no part in devising - in a sense doing OFSTED's work for it. As totalitarian regimes have demonstrated, the most effective and insidious form of surveillance is self-surveillance using an external authority's criteria but internalised by those engaged in that surveillance.

The proposed reporting arrangements contain some long-needed improvements, especially the intention to publish reports within three weeks of the inspection. However, the status of the reports is to remain unchanged. For accountability to be intelligent and to respect professional integrity the practice of issuing a supposedly authoritative uncontestable report needs to end.

There should, I would argue, be three elements published following the inspection: a summary of the school's own self-evaluation, the inspector's commentary on that self-evaluation, and, very importantly, the school's response to that commentary. All three elements could be published by OFSTED within three or four weeks – thereby demonstrating its commitment to respecting the professional integrity of those inspected. In the event of a full inspection the same three elements need to be published by OFSTED except that a fourth element (more along the lines of a "normal" inspection report) would be added.

The issue of what notice to give schools of an impending inspection is a difficult one. Too much notice can be counter-productive in promoting and prolonging stress and in promoting excessive pre-inspection preparation; too little notice can cause undue panic. Intelligent inspection needs to reduce, even though it cannot remove, the inevitable stress of an external evaluation.

The decision to reduce drastically the notification period to less than a week is breathtakingly naive in its belief that this will reduce stress (and bureaucracy). It will in fact compound inspection trauma with schools remaining in a continuing state of defensive inspection readiness unless adequate notice (perhaps a fortnight or three weeks) is negotiated with schools and unless teachers feel that inspection is being done with them, rather than to them.

OFSTED is almost certainly ingenuous in suggesting that HMI will have "some involvement" in all inspections. What does " some involvement" mean

in practice? HMI may well lead many secondary inspections but their involvement in the very large number of primary inspections is likely to be less hands-on and much more managerial – operating at some distance from the schools themselves.

To provide parity of HMI involvement between primary and secondary inspections would require a large increase in the number of HMI who would lead the inspections and the disappearance of many of the contracted inspectors who operate the current system. That increase could be recruited in large measure from those contracted inspectors whose expertise and judgement have been demonstrated under the current regime. There are many such inspectors. OFSTED should have no difficulty in recruiting people of quality. However, there is no suggestion in the proposals that this will take place. As a result, primary and secondary schools are likely to be treated very differently – reflecting a long-standing assumption within the DfES and OFSTED that the former are less important and simpler to inspect than the latter.

The decision to reduce drastically the notification period to less than a week is breathtakingly naive in its belief that this will reduce stress (and bureaucracy).

There is an issue too about the arrangement whereby only one inspector is to be involved in the inspection of the smallest schools. This runs counter to a long tradition whereby an individual inspector's judgements have always been moderated by at least one other. This has helped protect the integrity of the inspection process as well as safeguarding the school against an individual inspector's particular preconceptions or hobby-horses. OFSTED urgently need to rethink this arrangement – perhaps by dividing the inspection time among at least two individuals who need not be in the school on the same day, thereby relieving the school of undue attention and the individual inspectors of undue responsibility.

The proposals in *A New Relationship With Schools* fail to acknowledge, or provide for, the support schools need after an inspection. They do not, for example, broach the possibility of attaching someone (a fellow head, an LEA adviser, or someone else of the school's own choosing) to the inspection team with a brief to work with the school on its post-OFSTED action planning drawing on the evidence base for the inspection.

The need to review the purposes of school inspection

I commented at the very beginning of the article that the review of the school

inspection process has not been fundamental enough. There is an urgent need to debate publicly the purposes of school inspection beyond the uni-dimensional model in *A New Relationship With Schools*. Among possible, defensible purposes are those related to:

1. checking on whether and how far schools are complying with relevant statutory requirements and to ascertain and report back to central government any problems or issues arising from attempts to comply (or to avoid compliance);

2. evaluating and reporting on the progress made, and the problems encountered, in introducing particular initiatives;

3. evaluating and reporting on the effects of central or local government policies on policy and practice in schools;

4. offering possible explanations of how particular outcomes have been achieved in particular schools and disseminating that information to other schools and interested parties;

5. offering tentative, broad-brush judgements as to how far individual schools appear to be meeting their own aims and values or the aims and values of school education in England if these were ever to be agreed;

6. offering tentative judgements as to how well lessons are conducted and on pupils' observable responses to teaching;

7. offering broad, tentative judgements about the quality of pupils' performance in particular subjects compared with those in schools in roughly comparable contexts;

10. offering inspectors' interpretations of activities they see as a basis for dialogue with those who have been observed and who may have differing interpretations;

11. validating schools' processes of self review.

A fundamental review involving the professional associations would consider which of these purposes are desirable, which are possible, which are best served by a short inspection model similar to that being proposed in *A New Relationship With Schools* and which are best pursued through other inspection methodologies.

Respectful inspection?

Schools do need to be held accountable (as does OFSTED itself) but in a way which preserves both accountability and humanity and recognises the complexity, elusiveness and value-laden nature of teaching, learning and inspection. Children, teachers and parents deserve intelligent, respectful and enabling inspection. That kind of inspection is needed if a new, more positive, relationship between the DfES, OFSTED and the teaching profession is to be established and to prosper.

The arrangements outlined in *A New Relationship with Schools* promise to be an improvement on current policy and practice but a more sensitive, far-reaching and equal *partnership* with schools is needed to prevent what Onora O'Neill[2] describes as, "defensive teaching"(p.50)`and the undermining of both "professional judgement and institutional autonomy"(p.54). Intelligent, respectful inspection is still some way off. ∎

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Innovation and personalised learning

Abstract: *"Personalised learning" is the concept of placing the needs of the individual learner at the heart of education. This article describes why this is so important in today's society and illustrates the many ways in which the DfES Innovation Unit is working to promote the concept and disseminate good practice among schools.*

Personalisation is spreading

From coffee chains to leading food chains, from banking services to personal selection of programmes on multi-channel TV, personalisation is increasingly common in many areas of our lives.

Aided by the development of smart technologies, both public and private sectors have the ability to customise their services to make an increasingly closer match with our needs, to put us right at the centre of their offer, whether we are citizens, customers or viewers. And the availability of information via the internet has empowered us, enabling us to make more informed requests to ensure services are being shaped to our particular requirements.

It is not easy to see how the education sector could remain unaffected by these developments, but even if it were to remain untouched, it is hard to argue that would be a satisfactory state of affairs.

Some students, for example are gradually taking ownership of how, when and where they study for GCSEs – as the increasing number of hits on the BBC's online Revisewise, or other websites not attached to traditional schooling, testify. Often these students are also exchanging ideas about their online work with their peers via webcams or texting. While the intellectual content of revision activities may be formally structured, being in control of the technology and being able to use it for "just-in-time" revision, may, when

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combined with "learning to learn" skills, empower these students to take full advantage of this knowledge economy later.

Ensuring that all our students have the necessary general intellectual skills to be able to fashion their futures in an increasingly technological world presents all of us as educators with a huge challenge. We need to ensure that high quality teaching and learning reaches every classroom and every student – that excellence truly thrives along with equity right across the curriculum. And that students are confident in their own ability to learn and make decisions in self-directed ways. For those who cannot participate in our increasingly technological age, with its rapid pace of change, may be more likely to end up on the wrong side of the knowledge/digital divide. And all of us would surely argue there is a clear educational and moral case for trying to ensure that no school student is disenfranchised in this way.

Politicians[1] and writers[2] have made strong arguments for the power of personalisation within the public sector, particularly education. And our experience in the Innovation Unit has shown that there are school leaders with good school results, who have been developing personalised approaches within their schools. By building upon the entitlement already ensured by the National Curriculum and the National Strategies they are managing to raise standards even higher.[3]

So in the rapidly changing age which we are now living, where information is potentially available at the click of a mouse, or through a word spoken to the computer, or in the future maybe via a thought directed towards some new kind of machine, there would seem to be a very powerful case for all of us to strengthen and deepen the personalised approach to learning for all our students and help them have the skills to be lifelong learners in the future.

Personalised learning and schools

Personalised learning has been characterised as tailoring education so that all learners can reach their full potential. David Miliband in his 2004 speech to the North of England Conference, described it as:

> "High expectations of every child, given practical form by high quality teaching based on sound knowledge and understanding of each child's needs….it means shaping teaching around the way in which different youngsters learn; it means taking the care to nurture the unique talents of every pupil."

In other words, it means shaping the system to the learner and not the other way round. Many schools have worked hard for many years to take account of individual needs and development with much success, and are now taking their work further. And from dialogue with informed practitioners combined

with policy and academic intelligence, five elements have been identified that would seem to be essential in developing personalising learning.[4]

1. Assessment for learning

Any attempt to personalised learning would have to depend on really knowing the strengths and weaknesses of individual children and young people. One particular approach has proved to be particularly powerful in that respect - Assessment for Learning. Evidence from the body of research on general AfL techniques[5], impact measures from schools such as Seven Kings in Redbridge and emerging data from the National Strategies which have been developing this work across primary and secondary schools, demonstrate the power of this approach to involve and motivate learners and to improve their performance.

Many school leaders have found that addressing organisational issues in their schools has created the opportunity to develop their existing expertise still further..

2. Effective teaching and learning strategies

As well as Assessment for Learning, any system promoting excellence and equity needs to ensure that the best teaching and learning strategies are reaching every learner. Many teachers are highly adept at judging which method to use when and which pupils respond best to what kind of strategies.

At Cramlington Community High School in Northumberland teachers help students identify and develop their learning skills, and then structure their lessons according to how students will most effectively learn. And many other schools who are developing personalised learning are bringing the intricate skills of high quality teaching to the fore as they encourage pupils to stretch their repertoire of learning skills.[6]

3. Curriculum entitlement and choice

So far we've looked at *how* students learn, but clearly any system of personalising learning must consider *what* they learn, and offer curriculum entitlement and choice that also delivers a breadth of study, personal relevance and flexible learning pathways.

The National Curriculum offers a basic foundation for all 5 to 14 year olds. The development of new GCSEs in subjects like Engineering, ICT, Health and Social Care is widening what is on offer, and the Tomlinson Working Group holds the potential for wider reform at 14-19.[7] Some primary schools are using

existing curriculum flexibility and have combined high standards in the basics with enrichment and creativity, such as Westbury Park Primary School in Bristol, which holds regular curriculum-focused weeks, such as arts, science and book weeks. In the 14 -19 sector some schools are working together to extend curriculum choice – like at the Central Gateshead Sixth Form Consortium, which offers a common prospectus, a wide range of academic and vocational courses and a choice of movement for students across participating institutions.

4. School organisation

Extending the personalisation agenda more widely, many school leaders have found that addressing organisational issues in their schools has created the opportunity to develop their existing expertise still further and to ensure that pupil performance together with pupil welfare are mutually supportive.

The Innovation Unit seeks to create spaces where policy-makers and practitioners together can explore solutions to the challenges facing the education system

At Tidemill Primary School in Lewisham the benefits of workforce remodelling and increased planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time for teachers has, in the school's view, been the main reason for their dramatic school improvements. At Lynn Grove High School in Norfolk, a 'virtual school' provides online materials and support that are used extensively by students outside normal hours. At Ninestiles School in Birmingham there is a clear and consistent policy on 'behaviour for learning' to create an environment in which all students feel safe and secure and can flourish as individuals,. And academic mentoring, advice and guidance, and school design have all featured in the work done by the Innovation Unit Headteacher Personalised Learning Group.

5. Partnerships beyond the school

It is hard to see how a genuinely personalised approach to learning could ignore the experience outside the classroom. Many schools have found that strong partnership beyond the school involving parents and carers in their child's learning not only seems to improve attendance and behaviour, it also has an impact on a learner's performance. For example, The English Martyrs Primary School in Sefton runs regular workshops with parents, carers, teachers and children so that they can collaborate to increase participation and

progression. The Green Paper, 'Every Child Matters', (currently the Children Bill) integrating children's services by bringing family support, social care and health services together with education to help support all children, and in particular those with additional needs, will have a major impact in this area. Extended schools, such as King's Park Primary in Bournemouth and Dyke House School in Hartlepool are offering services for adult learners as well as children. Some schools, like Kirkley High School in Lowestoft, are providing tailored services for older pupils to work in local businesses where they can start to shape their future careers.

The Innovation Unit and personalised learning

The Innovation Unit currently has a number of strands on personalised learning.

Many of the schools mentioned above have been working with the Innovation Unit – some of them through the Personalised Learning Headteachers Group which was set up by the Unit, and whose work can be seen on the Innovation Unit website. These headteachers have been involved in new visualisation tools called *Planning for Personalisation*[8] to help to take ideas forward. Over the coming months they themselves will be using the materials to work with other groups of heads in their local areas. These local events will culuminate in a high-level question and answer session, planned for December 2004, in which participants will have the opportunity to present their ideas directly to a minister. More details will be available on the Innovation Unit website.[9]

The Innovation Unit has developed *Planning for Personalisation* in conjunction with the National College for School Leadership and the think-tank Demos, and it has already been trialed with heads and teachers[10] very successfully. The tools are based upon FutureSight – a methodology itself developed from the OECD Schooling for Tomorrow project which encourages heads to use both data and their professional imaginations to take thinking and debate forward.[11]

As well as producing the publications already noted, the Innovation Unit has also contributed to the DfES booklet, "A National Conversation about Personalised Learning"[12] and the linked Personalised Learning website[13] which acts as a portal for different strands of personalised learning activity. The Unit also runs an ongoing discussion about Personalised Learning within the very lively online Innovation Community which is open to all teachers and headteachers,[14] and which we warmly invite readers to join. And the Unit also has a number of other ongoing projects on Personalised Learning on student perception, academic group mentoring and the curriculum.

One of the basic tenets of the Innovation Community is that we want to use our collective intellectual collateral to undertake some Innovation

Development and Research, some of which may impact on personalised learning. One project we are starting is the mapping of substantial "virtual schools" in order to understand what mutual learning there might be both with other "virtual schools" and also other infrastructures such as the Open University and the University for Industry. We are particularly interested in looking at "blended learning" and ways of analysing e-dialogue, and we would be very pleased to hear, via the website, from any schools who wish to join us on this work.

The Innovation Unit seeks to create spaces where policy-makers and practitioners together can explore solutions to the challenges facing the education system, and we invite you to join our Community to do this. The DfES booklet, "A National Conversation About Personalised Learning", also invites you to discuss how we can all take these ideas forward and create an offer that genuinely makes learning personal and powerful for every student. Wherever you choose to engage with this debate to shape the offer, we look forward to working with you. ∎

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A rich resource: the career development of black and minority ethnic teachers

Jan McKenley

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Abstract: *After describing the Equal Access to Promotion Programme, this article gives a critique of "The Big Conversation" as it relates to a culturally diverse society supported by a dynamic education system. Professional development opportunities are failing to reach black and minority ethnic teachers although their place and progress in the education system is essential.*

The Equal Access to Promotion (EAP) programme is a joint collaboration between the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) and the NUT. EAP is a career and leadership development programme targeted at black and minority ethnic (BME) teachers aspiring to middle and senior leadership in schools.

Feedback on the ethnic profile of teachers applying for National Professional Qualification for Headship, Leading from the Middle and other senior and

middle leadership programmes present a worrying picture of low take-up and engagement by BME colleagues in the College's generic leadership programmes. It appears that there is some truth in the rueful reflection of one young black male teacher that there is a lot of professional development about but little personal career development. The EAP programme seeks to cover both these bases as well as giving BME colleagues an insight into the behaviours and activities that ambitious, aspirational leaders demonstrate, so that they too can make informed career choices.

Over the past three years, 140 teachers have completed the programme, which comprises an initial two-day residential seminar, an in-school enquiry and the follow-up residential some 4-6 months later. As lead facilitator of the programme I work closely with a team, which has included serving BME headteachers who act both as consultants and visiting tutors on the programme.

One of the key behaviours of ambitious leaders is their capacity to locate, from relatively early in their careers, their particular subject or phase specialism not just within a vision of the school but beyond to how it fits into a wider national policy framework. That requires the EAP to be regularly reviewed and updated to reflect the dynamic education agenda. So this summer we've been reflecting on the *Five Year Strategy for Education for Children and Learners*[1] produced this summer by the DFES as the Department's response to the challenges outlined in the Prime Minister's *Big Conversation*[2] document issued by the Labour Party in November 2003. These are critical documents designed to promote a more meaningful dialogue between Government, teachers and schools.

In these pre-election months the Government's education policies can look like a teacher's worst nightmare – competing policy priorities resembling a class of 30 pupils with personalised learning plans demanding equal attention.

The *Big Conversation* document seeks to engage with the Labour Party's vision of a 21st Britain delivering excellence and fairness for all. It provides a compelling vision of a multi-ethnic diverse and vibrant British economy whose success will be constrained only by the barriers of increasing inequalities, which threaten to block our path and dampen our ambitions, if they are not addressed. The gauntlet has been thrown down – narrowing the gap between the most advantaged and the least remains the country's greatest challenge.

A key responsibility for school leaders at all levels, is to help themselves, their pupils, parents and their colleagues to make sense of the dynamic, chaotic, forever changing times that we live in. That this is a national project is becoming increasingly clear to those of us whose job is to develop and train the next generation of school leaders and managers. The *Big Conversation* is the Labour Party's attempt to present its current understanding of where it wishes Britain to be positioned economically and socially. Yet it appears to have had very little coverage in the education press, although in its clear presentation of the brutal facts, it provides an important rationale for the Government's social and political project since coming to power in 1997.

> "Our world is getting bigger and smaller at the same time…..Businesses operate across national boundaries with increasing ease and they will continue to place work where it can be undertaken most competitively."

In these pre-election months the Government's education policies can look like a teacher's worst nightmare – competing policy priorities resembling a class of 30 pupils with personalised learning plans demanding equal attention – it is not clear which of the policy priorities jostling in the DfES will survive the post-election period, nevertheless it is important that BME teachers understand the ecological environment in which the debates will be taking place this academic year. The *Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners* covers education from the cradle to the grave, but for the BME teachers who participate in EAP, the focus is on compulsory education. The relevant headline messages for the programme are:

Early years
The Government will continue its commitment to intervening early in the foundations of a child's learning and development. It seeks to build on its Sure Start policy by developing Children's Centres – one stop shops offering early education, childcare, family support and other health and welfare services to parents. It wishes to increase the notion of personalised childcare packages to provide integrated more flexible 'educare' to support working parents. Every local education authority is expected to establish a Children's Trust to have oversight of the needs of children and their families in each area bringing together all the agencies including Connexions, Youth Offending teams and the Primary Care Trust. This is an aspect of the 'new localism' as a way of conceptualising the delivery of national policies.

Primary education
Building on the primary policies outlined in *Excellence and Enjoyment*, the Government wishes to see the extension of the national strategies to enrich the

wider curriculum to include a more creative approach to increasing children's experience of the performing arts and sports.

Secondary education

The Government wishes to raise the quality of teaching and learning in secondary education and to widen the range of choices and types of schools across the system. It wants to rebuild the secondary school infrastructure through its Building Schools for the Future programme and an increase the number of specialist schools and academies.

A more flexible and diverse curriculum is also a policy goal with alternative pathways, Young Apprenticeships and a real push for personalised learning plans for all participants in education which it wishes to extend into the domain of Adult Learning, whether in Further, Higher or Vocational Education in the workplace.

The Prime Minister has set out his stall; so too the DfES. But like all good conversations, particularly one between the Prime Minister and the Government, it helps if the dialogue is more than just two-way and more voices are drawn into the mix. So how should black and minority ethnic teachers respond? Two key paragraphs jump up at me from the *Big Conversation*.

> "We are a nation of net immigration. Many of our major urban centres display a rich diversity of cultures and people. That is a great strength but it can also bring tensions. It requires us to respect and honour difference while maintaining cohesion and the solidarity that must underpin universal services and a healthy society."

> "Britain's future depends more than anything on the strength of its education system, the motor driving both opportunity and prosperity. That is why we have made education our top priority in government and why it must continue to be. The hard work of pupils and teachers has delivered significant progress, particularly in our primary schools, but there remain big challenges. Most OECD countries have ambitious programmes to raise standards, increase choice and diversity in schooling and expand higher education. Competition will also come from China and India, which are rapidly raising their skill levels. We must keep pace."

The importance of education cannot be overstated in this changing economic context. Education, Education, Education continues to resound in economic policy. The DfES Five Year Strategy conveys that message clearly. However the agenda, although comprehensive, is deracialised in its desire to be inclusive. But if it is to have meaning in localities as diverse as Oldham and Surrey, it will

have to be deconstructed, contextualised and made meaningful on the ground. BME teachers should be playing a key role in these debates locally. Opportunities for all staff to engage with the Government's transformation agenda is a school leadership issue as the concluding paragraphs of the Five Year Strategy states:

> "An effective workforce needs good leadership. As we put more emphasis on those in the system leading reform, we will increasingly need leaders (and leadership teams) who can combine the ability to manage people and money with the creativity, imagination and inspiration to lead transformation."

The urgent tone serves to remind us of the consequences for social cohesion and national wellbeing, if we do not take what is perceived to be our rightful place at the top table. The business case for diversity in the work place is becoming clear in many companies. In a recent article in *The Independent*[3], journalist Kate Hilpern reported that, 'Ethnic minorities make up eight per cent of the UK population and by 2009 they will account for half the growth.'

In the working age population diversity at graduate level also leads to customers' needs being better catered for. It's not just in the British market that globalisation is relevant. Hilpern quotes Sandra Kerr, national director of Race for Opportunity, a diversity lobby group, 'Many companies in other countries will no longer even come to the table unless they know they'll be dealing with a diverse team.'

Recent research on the career histories of BME school teachers[4] reveal a profession in which career enhancing development opportunities (involvement in teachers research, delivering and participating in whole-school initiatives) are less available to, or not taken up by BME teachers. An analysis of the responses by ethnic minority teachers to the GTC's MORI poll conducted in November 2002[5] found that minority ethnic teachers were less likely to be involved in the professional development of colleagues or to participate in school-based research/project teams.

Minority ethnic teachers are significantly less likely to be in positions of head teacher or deputy head teacher than their white counterparts. They also found that 55 per cent of minority ethnic teachers have ten or less years' teaching experience; are motivated by a stronger desire to give something back to their communities and were more likely to stay in teaching.

The education sector is booming and the importance of diversity in the school's workforce is similarly important as indicated in a recent report on Ethnic Minorities in the Labour Market produced by the Performance and Innovation Unit of the Cabinet Office[6]. Many of the BME teachers in our schools, because of their history of migration, commercial and family links

across the major continents, are already living the inter-connected globalised lifestyle and have the mindset which the Government is encouraging all of us to develop. BME staff have the potential to provide important insights, knowledge and experience – a rich resource that schools and employers should be drawing on more systematically to build a more culturally intelligent education system. ∎

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Cutting through the funding fog: the Welsh experience

John Atkins

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Abstract: *This article sets out to summarise what the Welsh Assembly Government has done in terms of explaining the allocation of funding for services. It gives an outline – necessarily incomplete – of how local government funding in Wales works. It concludes with some first thoughts about the consequences of this new clarity for the future funding of education in Wales – and in England.*

Introduction

The way in which education is funded in England and Wales is famous for its complexity – and those who regard it as an interesting subject are rightly treated compassionately by their colleagues. Needless to say, however, it is at the same time an area of vital importance, particularly as the range of strategies available to learners and their teachers (and their cost) continues to increase. It is ever more important that education receives the fairest share of public expenditure – more than its fair share, if we can get it – so that the young people whose learning we support have every opportunity.

Of course the champions of other areas of public spending – health, social services, law and order, etc – are also keen that their own areas receive adequate public expenditure too. If for any reason education is not receiving its entitlement, they cannot necessarily be expected to point out the fact.

Some understanding of the way in which resources are allocated to local authorities to spend on education is therefore required of all of us who work

with or in schools. Accordingly, the National Union of Teachers in Wales, NUT Cymru, commissioned me to undertake a review in order to see what transparency could be brought to bear on the current level of understanding of school funding in Wales, and whether a clearer understanding of how education is funded in Wales could be reached.

Now there is a particular reason why such a study in Wales is timely. The Welsh Assembly Government has just published an account of how (from their point of view) the local authority funding allocation mechanism works. In doing so, they have also provided an indication of how – at least in the minds of elected members – the resources allocated to local government in Wales might be divided between the different functions (including education) that local government funds. Thus, it might be felt, the Assembly should at a stroke have cleared away much of the "funding fog" that previously hampered our understanding of where school budgets come from.

Although the discussion below applies strictly to Wales, and was commissioned by NUT Cymru, the arrangements in England are believed to be broadly similar. I say "believed" because (unlike their colleagues in Wales) the Westminster Government does not yet publish details of its local authority funding calculations.

The funding of local authorities: raising the funds

In theory, local government services (including education) were originally meant to be paid for through local taxes. For most of us, this means council tax. But businesses also pay a "non-domestic rate" assessed and set in its own, different way.

For many years, however, the direct link between council tax/non-domestic rates raised locally and local government expenditure has been lost. This is for two reasons.

..but one might reasonably ask what that local authority's own methodology is, and suggest it should be explicit rather than implicit.

First, although council tax and non-domestic rates may seem high when we have to pay them, in fact they do not nearly cover the costs of local government services. In Wales in 2004/05 council tax income covered only 18.8 per cent of local government expenditure and non-domestic rates a further 15.7 per cent[1]. Put another way, if council tax and non-domestic rates were to be sufficient to pay for local government services, we would need to

pay nearly three times as much of them.

Secondly, however, a moment's thought will show that a system where local taxes paid for local services would be iniquitous – at least in terms of how we in Britain define public services. For in any country some local government areas are likely to be more prosperous than others. These areas will raise more revenue *per capita* than others, but will have no greater a need (and usually a lesser one) for most local government services. If levels of service are therefore to reflect need, rather than local tax-raising ability, some redistribution between local government areas is required.

The Standard Spending Assessment system "solves" both these problems, and works (very broadly) as follows. First, central Government makes a calculation of the "taxbase" that individual local authorities would be able to raise from council tax if they applied a standard, nationally-decided set of tax figures to the different bands.[2] This does not *oblige* individual local authorities to raise these amounts – indeed, the *Guide to Standard Spending Assessments* states that all LEAs "budget to collect less than their full taxbase"[3].

Subsequently, central Government collects in all the non-domestic rate income from authorities.

Finally, from its own national resources the Government adds a sum of its own. This is the "revenue support grant" and in 2004/05 will amount to 65.4 per cent of the total it intends should be spent – a sum of around £2.8bn out of the total of £4.3bn that makes up the "standard spending assessment".[4] This sum represents what the Welsh Assembly Government is able, and prepared, to invest in local services given the other pressures it faces. As is well known, the Assembly does not have tax-raising powers of its own, but is limited in its budget to the sum it is allocated from Westminster.

The funding of local authorities: allocating the funds to services

Of the £4.3bn total just referred to, £3.8bn is available for local authorities as their standard spending assessment.[5] £314m needs to be spent on the capital programme, leaving £3.5bn SSA for revenue (day-to-day) expenditure.[6] The question for the Assembly is how to allocate this sum across local authorities in as fair a way as possible.

The answer is – at least in its generality – fairly simple. First of all, the Assembly identifies a number of particular programmes in local government it wants to "pay for", and how much it wants to invest in each, and lists these as "actuals". For example, the first in the list of 2004-05 actuals is "infant class size reduction scheme": the Assembly wishes to spend £11.3m on this in 2004-05.[7]

When this is done, £3.3bn remains. This is allocated among a set list of "service categories" which are intended to cover all aspects of local authority

activity. The list is arranged by function, not by authority department – since the Assembly does not take account of how local authorities are organised – but it is not too difficult to select from the list the categories of activity that a typical education department might carry out. There are over 50 service categories in total: the selection likely to be found in an education department is in the box below.

Service categories relevant to education

School based
Pre and primary school teaching and other services
Infant Class Size Reduction Scheme (this is an "actual", as just mentioned)
Secondary school teaching and other services
Special education
Teachers' pensions (another "actual")
Teachers' performance management (another "actual)
Teachers' workload agreement (another "actual")

LEA based
Primary school transport services
Secondary school transport services
School meals
Adult and continuing education
Adult and continuing education transport
Youth services
Youth services extra resources
Education administration

The way the allocation is performed is to look at what each local authority spent in 2001-02 (being the most recent data available) on the 40 or so "non-actual" service categories, and allocate this year's funds across the service categories in the same proportion. This gives a total amount to be spent on each "non-actual" service. Thus for 2004-05, the amount allocated to "pre and primary teaching and other services" is £730.5m.

An important virtue of the system so far is that it does not "impose" the Assembly's wishes on local authorities – instead it is based on estimates of the actual costs of delivering services (for the "actuals") and mirroring earlier patterns of local authority spending (for the "non-actuals"). It is thus driven, at least in large measure, by local authorities' activities themselves.

Allocating funds to local authorities

The total assigned to each service category then needs to be divided between local authorities. This is done by using a range of indicators devised by an independent review carried out by the University of Swansea and Pion Economics in advance of the 2001-02 allocation. The indicators used, and the formulae chosen, were largely based on statistical modelling methods, but moderated by what the *Guide to Standard Spending Assessments* refers to as "informed judgement".[8] Full details of each formula are given in the *Background Information* but it may be useful to look at an example here – since the method is not entirely intuitive.

The idea is to share the resource available between authorities *pro rata* to need. So what percentage of the resource should any particular local authority get? For education, one might share out most of the resource *pro rata* to the number of pupils, but some other resource might be shared out in different ways.

For the service category "pre and primary teaching and other services" referred to above, the formula used[9] is

■ 81.5 per cent shared out in proportion to the numbers of primary school pupils and nursery school pupils (this is £595.3m out of the total £730.5m available)

■ 8.7 per cent in proportion to the number of primary school pupils entitled to free school meals (this is £63.6m)

■ 9.8 per cent in proportion to the number of residents (not pupils) who live in settlements of less than 1000 people[10] (this is £71.6m).

Cardiff, for example, has 10.62 per cent of the primary/nursery school pupils in Wales, 10.86 per cent of the primary school pupils entitled to free school meals, and 1.62 per cent of the residents of Wales who live in settlements of less than 1,000.[11] The calculation therefore gives it 10.62 per cent of £593.5m plus 10.86 per cent of £63.6m *plus* 1.62 per cent of £71.6m, or a total of £71.2m for this service category. This is known as Cardiff's "indicator based assessment", or IBA for short.

Similar calculations are carried out for all 50 plus remaining service categories, for each authority. This gives a IBA total for Cardiff of £353.5m. But this total only covers *current* expenditure (see above). Cardiff is then allocated a further £29.0m in capital debt financing to yield a total IBA of £382.4m.[12]

Of this £382.4m, Cardiff is *expected* to raise £80.0m through council tax income (though it may not do, and as already stated Welsh authorities typically do not). So the grant it actually receives from the Welsh Assembly Government is the difference – £302.4m.[13]

Implications for the funding of local education authorities

Those still reading at this point may congratulate themselves that they now have an informed understanding of local government finance in Wales. But this was only one reason behind this (rather lengthy and complex) discussion. There are two other major points to make now.

Transparency

First, the above discussion has (one hopes) proved that – armed only with material freely available on the Web – anyone can replicate the methodology by which revenue support grants for local government expenditure in Wales are calculated. This means that anyone can express an *informed* opinion as to whether they think the outcome is "fair". Questions one might ask (based on the examples above) include:

■ The methodology only allocates eight and a bit percent of the expenditure on teaching in primary and nursery schools on the basis of free school meals – is this reasonable? [It might have been what Pion and the University found at the time, but has the time come to revise it now?]

■ What was the calculation that led to £11.3m being allocated for infant class size reduction?

These questions, and questions like them, are clearly reasonable (if a little arcane) subjects for public debate. Yet they *cannot be asked in England* at the moment, since the Westminster Government does not make available a similar SSA breakdown, nor could they have been asked in Wales before April of this year.

Use of funding by local authorities

The second point will already have occurred to many readers. Not only does the SSA methodology above explain why individual local authorities receive the grant they do, it also seems to express an opinion on how the authorities might subsequently spend that grant (and indeed their Council Tax receipts). "Should" Cardiff plan to spend £71.2m on "pre and primary teaching and other services" in 2004-05? If it plans to spend more, what does this mean? If it plans to spend less, what does *this* mean?[14]

More reasonably, perhaps, one can go through the tables and pull out Cardiff's IBA allocations for each of the service categories in the box set out earlier. If you do so, you will get a total of £166.6m.[15] Is this what the Assembly "thinks" the education budget of Cardiff LEA should be? What view now should be taken if Cardiff plans to spend more, or less?

Now the Assembly is quite clear on its view of these figures. The *Guide to Standard Spending Assessments* states that:

"Authorities' elements of the individual service areas are 'unhypothecated' – they are notional figures which serve as building blocks for the overall SSA; **they do not represent spending targets for individual services or are in any way meant to be prescriptive.**"[16]

But the *Background Information*, a sceptic might allege, somewhat gives the lie to this statement by compiling summaries/subtotals of service area IBAs for education; personal social services; transport; fire service; other services. These subtotals are not at all required for the calculation. At the very least, the authors of *Background Information* have anticipated that readers of their document will want to work out these subtotals for their own authorities and/or their own services, and have saved them the work involved in doing so.

A neutral approach to this question might be to agree with the Assembly's position that any one local authority is completely free to spend its revenue budget – SSA plus local council tax receipts – in any way it chooses and its elected members approve. However, if an authority chooses to diverge from the figures suggested in the SSA methodology then that authority is implicitly replacing the Assembly's methodology (with its collection of indicators and percentages) with one of its own. It is entirely within its rights, and could even be encouraged, to do so, since it understands local needs best – but one might reasonably ask what that local authority's own methodology is, and suggest it should be explicit rather than implicit. In particular, one might not take "reflecting historic patterns of expenditure in this authority" as a complete explanation of future plans.

Funding from central government to school level

One final point needs to be made. By publishing the full account of the SSA methodology, the Welsh Assembly has completed (at least as far as Wales is concerned) the causal and allocational chain from central government to the level of the individual school. The amount allocated nationally in Wales to support local government revenue is published in the documents, and can be discussed and challenged through the democratic process at national level.

The way in which the revenue support grant is allocated to local authorities is also now public, and can also be discussed and challenged. Moreover, the allocation methodology comes, one might say, with a "starter allocation" to individual services: this forms a basis for a critique of how local authorities allocate their resources to LEAs and elsewhere, which can then be discussed and challenged through the *local* democratic process. Finally, the LEA's formula for the funding of schools ("fair funding") is also a matter of public

record, and can be discussed and challenged within the LEA.

There is, therefore – and for anyone with the patience to follow it through – an unbroken logical progression from the £2.8bn the Assembly decides to invest in supporting local authorities, through to the allocation made to each local authority, through to the allocation made to education within that authority, through to the allocation made to any individual school. The "funding fog" – that is, the difficulty that has persisted for many years in trying to see where money allocated (apparently) to education actually goes – is now, at least in theory, dissipated. It remains to be seen what effect this new clarity will have on the future funding of education in Wales; and whether England will be spurred to the same publication of SSA documentation, and the same clarity, in future. ■

Notes

These notes consist largely of references to the original documentation, for readers who are interested in exploring the SSA and IBA calculations further.

1. These figures are taken from the comprehensive documentation on SSA provided on the National Assembly for Wales website at http://www.wales.gov.uk/subilocalgov/ content/finance/revenue/rev-settlement-0405-e.htm *(URL address correct at time of writing). The website also contains various other documents of interest to a student of local government finance in Wales.*

2. It is slightly more complex than this, and involves converting the number of domestic in an authority to a notional number of "band D" properties, for which the national rate is set. See the document "Guide to Standard Spending Assessments", on the website with the above URL, for fuller details.

3. *Ibid*, page 2.

4. As noted, this account has simplified matters somewhat in the name of readability. In particular, the sum of £2.8 bn includes "payments to specified bodies" and specific police grants, which are technically not counted as part either of the standard spending assessment or of the revenue support grant. Without these two elements, the total standard spending assessment is £4.072 bn and the total revenue support grant is £2.591 bn. See pages 4 and 5 of *Background Information* for Standard Spending Assessments", at the above URL.

5. For those following the tables, the actual figure is £3.863bn, and is arrived at from the original total of £4.286bn by deducting £212.1m specific police grants, £2.6m payments to specified bodies, and £209.0 m for the police service (non-specific).

6. £3.548 bn is the exact figure. See *Background Information*, column 1 total no. 3.

7. *Background Information*, page 2, first column, first line of section 2. In fact, of course, local authority council tax receipts will contribute to this: it is not a "pure grant".

8. Paragraphs 13 and 14, page 4.

9. In *Background Information*, page 13. Slightly simplified.

10. The definition of this last indicator is not stated in *Background Information* but can be deduced from other Assembly publications. This is of course a measure of "sparsity". See for instance http://www.wales.gov.uk/subilocalgov/content/dsg/120901/dsg26-e.htm

11. *ibid*, pages 108 (firs two items) and 109.

12. These three figures are on pages 75, 76 and 77 of *Background Information* respectively. Incidentally, Cardiff has only been chosen as an exemplar because it falls conveniently at the foot of every page of the detailed tables.

13. *Ibid*, page 8.

14. Again, I would stress that Cardiff is only being used as an example to make the argument more concrete.

15. Indeed, the *Background Information* conveniently does this calculation – the answer, for education, is given on page 70 with subsequent sectors being summarised on the following pages.

16. Page 2, original emphasis.

The rush to leadership – slight complications

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Abstract: *The illusive nature of leadership in general is explained in this article before focusing on characteristics of distributive leadership in schools. While this style challenges historical and hierarchical patterns, the author argues that harnessing the perspectives of all stakeholders is an essential way forward.*

If Government reports are to be believed, leadership rather than management is the key to enabling performance improvement in all sectors of the economy. For example, the Council for Excellence in Management and Leadership, finding a deficit in both management and leadership skills[1], suggested that the pressures of less hierarchical structures, the pace of change and greater public scrutiny put particular emphasis on leadership abilities. Similarly, the Performance and Innovation Unit[2] identified leadership as the key requirement to improve service delivery and effective co-operation.

Good leadership, their report claims, influence around 70 per cent of the organisational climate needed for good performance. Further, as public sector organisations face pressures from technological change, greater organisational complexity and consumer expectations on service delivery, leaders are needed who can 'see the whole picture and create a common vision', offering 'compelling narratives to their managers, staff and the public' (p11)[2].

A key image conjured up is that leaders transform organisations.[3] By contrast, managers just transact administrative and operational issues,

controlling and directing others. It is the transformational leader who sets the vision which is projected in such a way so as to empower others to take responsibility for achieving it[4]. One consequence is that leadership, especially of the transformational variety, is invoked in institutional developments such as the National College for School Leadership, the NHS Leadership Centre, the Leadership Academy and the Centre for Excellence in Leadership.

However, there remain some slight complications in this rush to leadership and the development of leaders relating to the meaning of leadership employed and the evidence, especially relating to the impact of leaders in schools. What I hope to do in this short paper is examine some of these complications with reference to some key school research.

What is leadership?

There are many answers to this question and it is beyond the scope of this article to attempt to provide a coverage of the competing versions of what leaders do, the theories that explain what they do and development programmes that purport to give an answer to how to do it. One eminent commentator, Peter Senge[5] has even suggested, 'There's a snowball's chance in hell of redefining leadership in this day and age' (p.81). Even the Performance and Innovation Unit referred to above (PIU 2000) found little agreement on the qualities required for effective leadership and the impact of development programmes on organisational outcomes.

As part of their work for the Council for Excellence in Management and Leadership, Perren and Burgoyne[6] tried to set out management and leadership abilities from well-known texts and frameworks as well as primary data; the result was 83 management and leadership abilities. It is little surprise therefore that even if we were to ask those in leadership positions to explain what they do and how they do it, we would be unlikely to find a shared meaning or understanding about leadership.

I quite like the following quotation that continues to appear on the website of the National College for School Leadership:

> "There is a magic about a fine leader in action which the College cannot bottle. Strangely, even the best leaders can find it difficult to describe what they do; they work through intuition, drawing on the depths of their human experience and combining it with strategic vision and a sure grasp of the technologies of teaching and learning, old and new."

What I like about this quotation is, that it accepts that it is in action where leadership occurs rather than on the training course or in the books. There have been various attempts by researchers to capture some of the magic of leadership in action.

As part of my work tutoring leadership seminars for the NUT, I have tried to summarise some of the research with the following diagram:
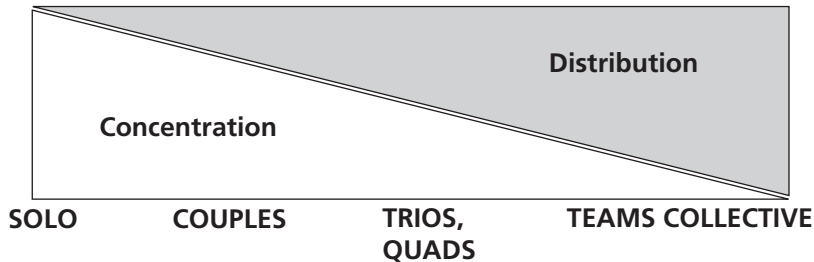
I suggest that leadership can be understood in different ways along a dimension of responsibility and influence. Towards the left pole, there is concentration in a single leader and this seems to account for most studies of leadership and most of the development programmes on offer. However, there is also recognition of the importance of leadership couples or trios which begins the move toward the right pole, where responsibility and influence become distributed.

At the extreme of this pole is a view of leadership which rejects the focus on individuals or even senior management teams and gives attention to a collective idea of distributed leadership. What is important, is that recent research has begun to give more prominence to this phenomenon and I want to give a flavour of some of this research.

Towards distributed leadership

The first is an evidence-based study reported by Bell et al[7] which sought an answer to the question, 'What is the evidence of the impact of school headteachers and principals on student/pupil outcomes?' After an initial search of databases, over 100,000 references were returned but eventually 27 studies were reviewed from which eight were chosen for further analysis.

All eight indicated evidence that leaders in schools impacted on student outcomes, however the impact is not direct. Instead it was mediated by intermediate factors such as the work of teachers, school organisation, student/pupil attitude formulation and relationships with parents and the wider community. It concluded that 'distributed leadership is efficacious' (p.48) and that a top down approach was less likely to be effective and might even be negative where it had the consequence of an absence of staff involvement.

Secondly, Alma Harris[8], drawing on studies of leadership in schools facing challenging circumstances, identified that distributed approaches to

leadership were important, especially in problem solving and decision-making. Whatever the circumstances, involving and consulting with staff, parents and pupils was consistently applied. Harris uses the idea of 'Teacher Leadership' as a manifestation of distributed leadership and links this with a school's capacity for change and development. Four dimensions of teacher leadership are identified (p.78):

- Brokering - The way staff translate the principles of school improvement into practice in classrooms and other locations within the school. Links between everyone are secured and opportunities for learning and development are seized and maximized.

- Participating - Staff are empowered and given ownership for particular changes or developments. Everyone feels they have a part to play in change. Collaboration is sought and work is directed towards a collective goal which everyone has had a part in setting.

- Mediating - Everyone potentially is a source of expertise and key information. It is possible to draw upon additional resources and expertise if necessary and to seek personal assistance.

- Relationships - There is mutual learning through close relationships between staff. Learning is the source of school improvement. Professional learning and development are distinctive within the school. There is work to build the capacity of everyone to help manage the school.

The link to change and school improvement is particularly important because of the shift of thinking implied, away from the attributes or behaviour of a single appointed leader or senior management team toward the unit of a whole school. As Bennett et al[9] point out, distributed leadership is 'a way of thinking about leadership' rather than as another technique. As such, the focus switches to actions and the performance of tasks by many people in school who are able to exert an influence.

At this point it worth mentioning some of the theories of distributed leadership. Writers such as Gronn[10] and Spillane et al[11] make use of activity theory. This is a theory which takes a collective unit of activity – such as a school – as the focus of attention and considers how individuals and groups carry out their tasks, working towards a particular outcome. Much of work requires people to work together, using different specialisms and varying amounts of discretion. Leadership occurs through the exertion of influence in specific situations and the response to exertions.

One of the most interesting features of an activity theoretical study is to

consider how influence is working across an activity and the means used to achieve this. For example, apart from the skills and talents of individuals, a study might also consider the way history exerts an influence. In a school, the rationale for certain actions may be tradition – 'we've always done it this way'. Acceptance of tradition can stretch influence from history over a situation. History can also covertly prevent new ideas being accepted. For example, traditional ideas about headship, such as '*Leadership starts at the top, likened to a pyramid*', can work against views to empower staff.

influence can be exerted by many people in a school, including many whose voices are seldom heard, e.g. cleaners, midday supervisors, parents and the 'lollipop lady'.

Other factors considered in a study of influence include the structures that attempt to define responsibilities and relationships, the norms, rules and values that affect working as well as physical and ideational resources that everyone uses. It is also important to note that distributed leadership implies a 'deromanticisation' of leadership[10]; that is, influence can be exerted by many people in a school, including many whose voices are seldom heard, e.g. cleaners, midday supervisors, parents and the 'lollipop lady'. Working out and tracking influence is a good way to start thinking distributively.

Finally, activity theory predicts and expects disturbance and disequlibrium which cause tensions between people. These can come from outside the school such as new guidelines on the curriculum or new technologies but also from within through the influence of history and the differences between people arising in everyday situations. A key feature of activity theory is to reveal and give meaning to confusions, tensions and difficulties; the importance of these is that they provide opportunities for collective problem-solving and learning allowing an extension of distributed leadership.

I intend to finish this article by identifying some of ways such an extension may occur, drawing on some of my own research in schools.

Thinking distributively and extending leadership

The first requirement perhaps, is to see in order to believe. Distributed leadership represents quite a challenge to traditional views of leadership. To those who are *appointed* as leaders, they still have to bear overall responsibility for school performance, reinforced by traditional hierarchies and demarcations and pay-scales. On paper, at least, those at the top have the power which, if they follow the ideas of distributed leadership, they may be required to

relinquish to others. This is challenging to authority and ego and can expose vulnerability. It may be easier to retreat into traditional hierarchies. However, as a way of thinking, distributed leadership is seen as inevitable, raising awareness of the social, historical and cultural context of leadership where leadership becomes school-wide and a shared attribute of everyone. As Peter Gronn (2000) has suggested, 'all the indications are that distributed leadership is an idea whose time has come' (p.333).

Even if, based on the research evidence, distributed leadership is accepted as a way of thinking in schools, there is still the danger of re-specifying leadership in distributive terms. For example, the head and management might translate distributive leadership as a way of delegating responsibilities. For example, in a school I studied, management had embraced a policy of 'leadership for all' where 'no one person has all the knowledge or expertise, everyone has something to contribute towards the effectiveness of our school…'. New responsibilities are identified for individuals within the school, with support for the sampling of 'parts of jobs' to be provided by 'mentors'. However, as in all such initiatives, culture and history can work to support and constrain. Attempts to exert influence can be met by counter influence. For example, in this school most staff had traditional views of leadership:

> "A successful leader can rouse…..with enthusiasm, excitement and example – allowing all to participate willingly in a strong team".

To prove their existence, leaders 'at the top' must show *'guidance, support', 'be visible'*, act as a *'role model'* to staff and children alike. Failure to meet such expectations results in a:

> "lack of real respect from staff who often feel undervalued, under supported and demoralised".

Paradoxically, through such views, staff may fail to notice their own influence that preserves traditional status positions. The crucial move is to understand leadership practice as a social process concerned with thinking and action *in situ* and here the cultural and historical context supports the definition of a relationship between staff and appointed leaders. It is necessary to study and track the working of influence and the way culture and history mediates the sense people make of their work and lives.

Finally, I would suggest that a study of distributed leadership is also, and indeed has to be, an opportunity for school improvement or 'capacity building' as it is referred to. Such a study, and managers may need outside help, has to include the voices of everyone in the school. For example, my research sought the views of teachers, NTAs, dinner staff, midday supervisors,

governors and cleaning staff. This could be extended to children, parents and the local community. However, the crucial feature of such a study is allow voices to be heard and tensions to be revealed. Very often such tensions will remain hidden and 'plastered over' but will resurface from time to time under the heading 'poor communication'. The opportunity here is for collective understanding through the sharing of different views of the activity of educating children. This allows priorities to be set and actions agreed.

But this is not the end of the matter; further tensions can be expected, even where action plans are agreed. Distributed leadership requires a consideration of day-to-day interactions and interdependencies, often spontaneous and unplanned – and this includes attempted interventions from outside. A school where distributed leadership is studied and understood is also an improving school and better able to respond to challenges. In my own research, after a year-long study, I found that more staff were aware of their 'influence as leaders *with support*', the 'positive impact on self-esteem from the recognition of expertise' and the importance of 'finding solutions together'. ∎

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Notes

i   These quotations appear in: National College for School Leadership (2003) Leadership Development Framework. Conclusions.
    http://www.ncsl.org.uk/index.cfm?pageid=college-publications-ldf-conclusion

ii Readers may interested in the work of the Distributed Leadership Study at
    http://dls.sesp.northwestern.edu/

What is the impact of cross-phase, cross-curricular learning on gifted and talented pupils?

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Abstract: *The identification process of gifted and talented pupils poses its own problems but opportunities to develop independent learners, creative thinkers and alliances of intellectuals can be created. This paper explores one cross-curricular, cross-phase project, involving six primary and one secondary schools, aimed at developing gifted and talented students' existing talents while exploring new skills in a unique social setting.*

Developing a gifted and talented policy has been a necessity for most secondary schools in recent years. Our school was no exception and a Gifted and Talented Working Party was set up to address the issue. It was not, however, to be easy. Identification of pupils was a difficult enough problem, but to decide the opportunities provided for such students would cause even more arguments. There were concerns with who was gifted and how those pupils were to be identified. Indeed, argued one member, all pupils are 'gifted' in one

area, why were we only choosing certain pupils? This posed a valid question. Does a particular CAT score mean pupils are automatically gifted or able in a particular area? We were almost certain this was not the case, but there had to be a definitive cut off for a G+T group of pupils and, to some extent, CAT scores were the easiest option. Our G+T Working Party had many discussions and a draft policy was introduced. As a group, however, we were never truly satisfied with it and eventually hope to set up an inclusive teaching and learning policy to cover all pupils including G+T and SEN.

As Advanced Skills Teachers part of our role is to do out-reach work with other schools. We wanted to do a project involving primary feeder schools and our Key Stage 3 children. Because we have different specialisms (maths and English), which are not normally considered compatible, we wanted to choose a cross-curricular activity allowing pupils of different talents to work together.

Masquerade was a book written by Kit Williams in the 1970s. In it a series of puzzles has to be solved. The challenge for the reader was to solve the puzzles in the book to find a bejewelled hare (worth a substantial amount of money) in the English countryside. We thought that the children creating their own puzzle books would allow all pupils with different talents to work to their strengths, including those doing the writing, those creating logic puzzles and the artists illustrating the texts. We were also interested in allowing pupils complete ICT access throughout the project so they could create their books on screen allowing collaborative redrafting throughout the process. This would allow ICT experts to have input too.

We wanted the pupils to be completely autonomous and for teacher intervention to be minimal. We saw ourselves as facilitators rather than teachers during this period.

Teachers acting as facilitators

In our G+T Working Party group we had discussed the idea of multiple intelligences as defined by Gardner. Our aim was to cater for as many of these as possible while using Vygotsky's peer learning ideal. We wanted the pupils to be completely autonomous and for teacher intervention to be minimal. We saw ourselves as facilitators rather than teachers during this period.

We provided materials and offered support only when asked, but each day we did have an introductory session where pupils set out their aims for that day and a plenary session where the pupils had to report back what they had done and how they felt their learning had progressed over the project.

Initially this was problematic for students as they had seen us traditionally in a role providing answers rather than allowing space for thought. At the beginning of the second day one teacher had to sit down and storyboard one group's work so they could see how the final piece would look. Until this point the group believed they could go no further with this work, but once it was done, they worked steadily to achieve their goal.

At the beginning of the project it was perhaps easier for us to see our changed role than for the students who were confused initially as to why we were not 'telling' them what to do. This quickly changed, however, and by the end of the first day pupils were not expecting us to teach, they were using our expertise where necessary.

Establishing the groups

The project itself involved six primary feeder schools with whom we had previously worked. Primary schools were involved in the planning stage to discuss feasibility of such a project. When we finally decided what we wanted to do, we chose to do the project on four separate full days so that pupils made their own way to the school and we were not responsible for transport.

We chose to use six pupils from each year group in Key Stage 3. These were the top two students in terms of CAT scores for verbal, non verbal and quantitative. We were lucky in the fact that the boy and girl mix worked out fairly without manipulation, but we would have had to think differently had there been an imbalance in gender.

We then asked primary schools to send us two or three representatives from their school, telling them of our criteria for selection and allowing them to choose their own methods. Some primary head teachers did ring asking for clarification, but we just asked for their brightest students, ideally a mix of boys and girls. We then took our Key Stage 3 pupils and put them in either Group A or Group B so that each group had one student with the highest CAT score for verbal, non verbal and quantitative from each year group. Students from the primary schools were split between the groups randomly but so that both A and B groups had representatives from all feeder schools.

For the first week we choose a 'group leader' (someone we knew could cope) to steer the group through their activities, but after that pupils had to choose their own leader each week. This was interesting as often the older pupils encouraged other pupils to take on this role so they were not seen as substitute teachers. The groups did respond positively to the group leaders; hierarchy did not exist according to age and because all participants were able, no one thought they would be seen as a 'swot'.

On the first day we set different breaks and lunch hours from the rest of the school so the primary students would not feel intimidated. However, in the following weeks we allowed the pupils to set their own timetables and they

chose to have breaks with the main school. This allowed effective integration into the whole school of pupils who may well have felt under pressure to fit in (due to their high ability) when starting in Year 7. The lessons took place in a computer room so there was complete ICT integration.

Getting started

On the first day we wanted to create an environment where pupils could mix freely and quickly integrate into their larger group. We did this through some brain gym activities and by asking them to complete some puzzle challenges. This allowed groups to gel effectively and they worked well from the start. Once we had done this, we explained the concept of *Masquerade* itself and that we would like them to produce their own version. The first day did feel, at times, chaotic with some pupils doing very little and few really understanding that we would not be there to discipline or organise their time. However, by the end of the plenary on the first day, pupils seemed much happier and clearer as to the nature of the task.

By allowing students to organise their own time and giving them the freedom to work at their own pace, without the boundary of a timetable and in an area they felt they excelled in, we created a very positive working environment. Pupils often chose to work through their breaks and spontaneous meetings were held at particular junctures involving healthy debate as to what should happen next. Pupils felt a great sense of achievement in their completed texts as it was all their own work and we had no real input. Indeed, at one point, students created a website of answers and taught the other members of the group how to do this. The teachers also joined in this lesson as they did not know how to create a website themselves!

Such peer learning happened frequently; one puzzle involving simultaneous equations was explained to a Year 6 pupil by a very able Year 9 girl, probably more effectively than if a lesson had been designed to teach this skill. This contextual learning was of great benefit as the interest was generated by the puzzle and the difficult mathematics was just a way of finding the answer. It was not a set subject to be taught for its own sake. This is something that can rarely be done in a 'normal' classroom environment.

Confidence grew throughout the project and some unexpected students started to take a more active role in the procedure. Students who had felt isolated for being 'too clever' gained from the social aspect of the group work and alliances were made that are holding strong long after the work finished. When the books were completed (they were professionally published to be sold), pupils organised and led their own book launch with no teacher input (apart from buying the wine!).

Other benefits of this project were seen throughout our time with the groups. The freedom they were given increased their motivation to succeed. Working in

cross-phase cross-curricular groups was a very different opportunity for most and seeing teachers from different faculties working closely gave a different perspective on what education means: different faculties were not in competition, they could work alongside each other effectively and creatively in an enjoyable context. Their view of us as teachers also changed as they saw us as more 'human', not god-like - and unable to write websites!

There were some negative aspects with this work. Some students were not suitable, despite having a high CAT score and a very small minority did very little work and allowed the group to cover for them. Equally some students tried to dominate groups at the beginning, but this was quickly resolved by the group members themselves. Because the pupils worked in specially created Internet folders, some pupils abused this privilege and we had to close down the files quickly. The selection process meant that we had missed other students who may have benefited more than those who took part.

There were implications for covering our lessons as we do not get full days off for our AST time and had to have several lessons covered. This cost the school in terms of supply teachers, meant our classes were not taught by their own teachers and we had to set and mark this work.

Overall we were trying to create a peer-learning environment which sought to break down the traditional teaching expectations of pupils. We had water available throughout the day, although we had to buy bottles after the first day as the fans needed to keep the room cool caused water to be blown over which damaged some pieces of artwork in the early stages. We also brought fruit for each break so that pupils had something healthy to eat while working on the project. They found this unusual, but really enjoyed it and allowing an afternoon break (something we don't have in our usual school day) helped tremendously.

The fact that pupils were hydrating themselves frequently (and much research is taking place into using water to help learning) meant that they often worked through their breaks and very few left to buy fizzy drinks. We are not able to prove this, but we felt that keeping pupils' sugar levels high through fruit and the fact that they did not consume fizzy drinks during their breaks, made the pupils much calmer. They did not return from lunch on a sugar high that deflated after 30 minutes and their focus was much greater, especially in the afternoon sessions, than we would normally expect.

There are a number of reasons we would recommend a project like this to colleagues.

■ Pupils have the opportunity to work on a project which was very different from their usual school life.

■ The space provided in such a project allows the freedom to exceed what pupils felt they could achieve.

■ Cross-phase, cross-curricular grouping allowed pupils to gain new strengths: those normally unwilling to write essays took an active part in the story-writing aspect of the book and pupils who did not necessarily like maths wanted to work out the puzzles. This contextualised learning made all aspects of the work interesting and meaningful, something some pupils do not find in isolated lessons.

■ Pupils developed skills to make them independent learners and creative thinkers. Constraints were taken away (in terms of time and a set aim to each lesson) and the pupils thrived and ensured they achieved their own goals.

■ Primary students felt confident when starting at secondary school and were able to show their peers around the school when they started in Year 7.

In conclusion, the pupils and teachers saw 'the big picture'; we were able to de-compartmentalise subjects and break down the boundaries schools have to create. It leaves us wondering if such benefits would be seen by all students and we are considering using similar techniques with SEN students this year. ■

The Key Stage 1 assessment trial

Abstract: *The author compares the experience of Key Stage 1 testing with this year's trial and finds some improvements for teachers and pupils. There are, however, many inconsistencies in the Government's position on testing which are irreconcilable with diagnostic "assessment for learning". The article concludes that a review of the assessment system in England is vital.*

Hazel Danson

Hazel Danson is a Key Stage 1 teacher and member of the NUT's National Executive.

I n May 2003, Secretary of State, Charles Clarke, announced reforms to the national tests for seven year-olds, admitting that, at seven, there is a role for more teacher assessment in the process. He also made it clear that the tests would not be scrapped but that the Government was open to ways of making them less stressful.

The need for change

It was one of those moments that a teacher never forgets, not the warm glow of pride when a child succeeds or the sense of satisfaction when 'the penny drops', but the sense of guilt and anger when you are made to do something that you know is educationally damaging. It was May 2001 and my small cohort of Year 2 children were sitting in silence taking the level 2 reading test. Despite my best efforts at keeping things as low key as possible, they realised things were not as they should be. The alphabet chart had been covered over; they were not sitting in their usual seats and there was silence! This was definitely not our normal way of working. A hand went up, "I can't read this word". "Just have your best go at working it out," I replied.

The little boy who had asked for help looked almost hurt by my reply. He had just achieved a level 2 in the task and so he had to be entered for the test too. The longer the test lasted the more anxious he became. He tried his best and achieved a 2c but the damage had been done. He thought he was a 'rubbish' reader. All the work we had been doing over the year to build up his confidence and enjoyment of reading had been undone in less than an hour.

The only information the test provided that I didn't already know was that Angus didn't perform well in tests.

There are too many of such anecdotes and whilst they may not represent rigorous, evidence-based research into the effects of stress, they should not be dismissed because for Angus, and others like him, the damage has been long lasting.

It is clear to teachers that the current assessment system is riddled with problems.

The emphasis placed on 'core' subjects has undoubtedly caused a narrowing of the curriculum. This is compounded by the 'high stakes' nature of our current testing regime, the main purpose of which is to provide summative and comparative data for accountability purposes. The impact is immense, and all pervading. Government initiatives and funding have become focussed on the 'standards agenda' and reaching targets in English, maths and science. These tests also focus on the aspects of the subject which are most easily measured, so we have tests for spelling but not for oral literacy.

If you are a school at the bottom of the league table, the pressure to improve test results is immense leading to a much greater focus on the subjects to be measured. Such schools often cater for our most vulnerable children – the very pupils who most need a broad and balanced curriculum.

One-size-fits-all summative assessment runs the risk of losing pupils at both ends of the achievement scale. The children who do not perform 'well' can become disaffected with low self-esteem and little opportunity to shine in other areas. For our most academically able pupils lack of challenge and a narrow curriculum can also lead to disaffection.

In our current system the summative tasks and tests have carried far more weight in the judgements made about pupils, teachers, schools and local authorities. The tests are driving the curriculum and there is a complete lack of balance between summative assessment on the one hand and formative assessment for learning, on the other. In Key Stage 1 this over-emphasis on testing what a child can do on a particular day has led to a downward pressure on the curriculum for our youngest pupils.

The Key Stage 1 trial

There is recognition in government that the way we assess seven year olds, at least, needs to be changed. This year I took part in the Key Stage 1 assessment trial, which put greater emphasis on teacher assessment and gave schools some flexibility in the administration of the tests and tasks.

Key Factors of the Trials

■ Schools involved in the trials only had to report teacher assessment to local education authorities. However the tests and tasks still **had** to be used to

'underpin teacher assessment and help teachers to come to a secure judgement'.

■ There was no change in the arrangements for speaking and listening, writing, spelling, science or the level 1 maths task.

■ Teachers could choose from the 2003 or 2004 tasks and tests. If teachers chose to use the 2004 tests the same arrangements as in previous years applied and they could only be opened the day before the test. This was because 75 per cent of LEAs were not taking part in the trials. The 2003 tasks and tests could be carried out at any time of the year.

■ Reading at level 2 could be assessed using the task only, and there was no obligation to administer the level 2 test as well.

■ With the reading and maths tests there was no obligation to do more than one task or test i.e. if a child did well in the level 2 test the teacher could choose whether or not to administer the level 3 test. If a child took the level 3 test first and did not achieve the teacher could decide whether or not to administer the level 2 test.

■ Two samples of work for each area to be assessed were required for moderation purposes and as evidence of teacher assessment judgements.

This begs the question, why, if the evaluation showed teacher assessment to be just as robust and a 'more accurate guide' to pupil progress, do the tests remain statutory?

After reflecting on the trial I have to say that it really was not that different. I had previously carried out teacher assessment and that aspect remained unchanged. Whilst I did not have to report the results of the tasks and tests they still had to be administered with little change. I did not notice a significant decrease in workload but it needs to be noted again that there is no funding ring fenced for the release of teachers to administer or mark the tasks and tests.

Any time provided is at the discretion of individual schools. I had three days cover for test administration and marking and for collating teacher assessment information over the period of the trial. From discussions with other colleagues this is definitely not the norm in the majority of schools. There was a clear workload issue before the trial and this still remains.

The main impact of the new flexible administration meant that I was not required to use both the reading task and test and I think this did have a positive impact especially in reducing stress on pupils. I also welcomed the fact that I could use my judgement about administering the level 3 paper for reading

and maths which resulted in a handful of children taking one or two fewer papers than they would have had to do under the previous arrangements. However, in the scheme of things, I still feel these were very minor changes.

Following the evaluation of the trial by Leeds University, which found assessments in the pilot to be just as robust as the current system, the Government announced that the new arrangements would be rolled-out nationally.

When making the announcement Stephen Twigg, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools, said:

> "For seven year olds, a teacher's over-all, rounded assessment of a child's progress through the year, underpinned by national tests, will provide a more accurate guide to their progress than their performance in one set of tasks and tests."

There are two inconsistencies here that the Government must address.

Firstly, if it accepts that teacher assessment is more accurate for seven year-olds, there can be no logic in remaining wedded to a less accurate system at 11 and 14. However the Government has stated that it has no plans to extend this approach to Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3.

Secondly, Stephen Twigg was very careful to say that the tests are not being scrapped, in fact "- they will continue to be the tools that teachers use for assessing their pupils' progress."

This begs the question, why, if the evaluation showed teacher assessment to be just as robust and a 'more accurate guide' to pupil progress, do the tests remain statutory? The fact that the tests and tasks remain statutory, rather than an optional tool for teachers to use if they feel them to be appropriate, can only serve to reinforce the feeling that the Government does not trust the professional judgement of teachers.

In reality the national tasks and tests are very limited in providing assessment for learning in comparison to teacher assessment, simply because they are designed to do a different job.

Time for a comprehensive review

The issue at the heart of the debate about National Curriculum testing in schools is that there is a lack of clarity about the different purposes of assessment and the balance between them. There is an over-emphasis on summative and evaluative assessment for accountability and comparative purposes. The Key Stage 1 trial has had no impact on this aspect of the debate

because the purpose of the assessment remains the same – to provide robust data for use in value-added comparisons and target setting.

The driving concern for the Government and educational policy makers is an assessment system that provides data for league tables and targets. Teachers, on the other hand, are far more interested in the formative and diagnostic aspects of assessment because it is this that drives learning forward. It is this assessment for learning that is of primary importance to teachers.

The King's College Research Team defines assessment for learning as:

> "any assessment for which the first priority in its design and practice is to serve the purpose of promoting pupils' learning. It thus differs from assessment designed primarily to serve the purposes of accountability, or of ranking, or of certifying competence."

The frustration and confusion comes when the same tool that is used for summative assessment is also seen to have an appropriate formative and diagnostic use as well. In reality the national tasks and tests are very limited in providing assessment for learning in comparison to teacher assessment, simply because they are designed to do a different job. It is wrong to say that teachers who are opposed to the current testing arrangements are 'defensive' or 'professionally challenged'. The fact of the matter is that the tests just do not provide them with the information they need to inform teaching and learning.

The assessment and testing regime in England is unique in Europe. Only England sets national performance targets and only in England are results published which identify schools. In France such publication of results is forbidden by law and whilst some other countries do publish results, they do so anonymously. Most European countries have some external assessment at the end of primary education but this is often on a sampling basis. There is recognition in many other countries that high-stakes testing leads to teaching to the test.

There are important lessons to be learned from our neighbours in Wales who have moved away from the imbalanced system of accountability driven assessment and scrapped all the end of Key Stage tests.

The system in England has become so muddled and so confused that it must be time for a comprehensive review of all National Curriculum testing. ∎

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Bernard Trafford

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Becky Griffiths

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How do student councils encourage student participation?

Abstract: *This article looks at the valuable role that student councils can play from both the point of view of a student and head teacher. Student councils can encourage students who had previously withdrawn from school life to play a more active role and open up new opportunities for them. Being part of a student council can give a sense of responsibility and the opportunity to prove themselves to their peers and teachers.*

A response to the question in the title of this article by Becky Griffiths, Year 13, elected Chair of the Student Council at Wolverhampton Grammar School.

Well for a start, look at that term, *student council*. There is no mention of teachers, governors or any exterior influence. It is self-explanatory. A student council is designed, set up and maintained purely by the student body. Of course help can be sought from the teaching staff, but for many students this is one of the few things in their school that they are almost totally responsible for.

This fact is one of the strongest means of encouraging student participation. When a student is given the job of performing as, say, a chair or secretary in

their council, they realise that they have a responsibility and it is amazing how even the wild-child student can become diligent and conscientious when they appreciate the power that has been entrusted to them. This can finally be their chance to prove themselves to their peers as more than just a joker.

When a student is elected as a representative, they realise that expectations have been placed on them, not by their teachers and parents but by their friends and classmates. Therefore they don't want to be a letdown. In this situation a shy student can become compelled to speak out in a meeting, and without fear of being ignored, masking their insecurity under the fact that the views they are representing are not necessarily their own and that they are merely doing their job. Therefore, in this sense, councils can encourage students to gain confidence and responsibility.

An open discussion

When a student is dissatisfied with a form of teaching or an aspect of their school life, their natural reaction is to complain to anybody they can and possibly misbehave to make their point. The beauty of having a democratic council is that a student can bring their problem to it and their opinion on the matter is quizzed. Not only do they have to explain exactly what they feel is wrong: they are not allowed to leave it at that, but are asked if they can think of any method of improvement. This practice means that not only will students not make any empty complaints, but if they have a practical, beneficial idea and moves are made to remedy their problem, they feel as if they have really achieved something and given back to the school.

When a student is elected as a representative, they realise that expectations have been placed on them, not by their teachers and parents but their friends and classmates.

This is also valuable in the sense that some students have extremely valid ideas that governors or teachers would never have thought of: pooling initiative results in extremely valuable changes. There are many examples of this having occurred in our own student council. Students have created various clubs and organisations initiated by a suggestion in the council. In one case the (also elected) senior prefects felt their responsibilities could be extended, which resulted in taking on some patrolling duties, thus broadening these prefects' influence and sense of responsibility.

Of course, in a student council some students misbehave and can ruin it for others. Even when entrusted with responsibility they take on an abortive

attitude - which is a shame. But in these cases they are simply replaced by another student who may have missed out initially.

Overall I feel that student councils can only increase student participation and can prove extremely beneficial for those that put their all into them. They're not wonder remedies for rowdy pupils, as cooperation and effort is compulsory for a successful council. However, when these factors are present students will find that they can profit and mature by experiencing democratic meetings and learning skills that will prove massively profitable for future life.

Dr Bernard Trafford, Head of Wolverhampton Grammar School, adds his view.

Becky's analysis above is both level-headed, in the way she recognises the problems and shortcomings, and optimistic, in that she has herself experienced the buzz that students can get from active participation and appreciates the benefit to individuals, to the pupil body, and to the school as a whole.

Participation in itself creates a virtuous circle. It brings undoubted advantages – and its very presence within the ethos of a school gives rise of itself to a greater sense of shared ownership, and thus encourages further participation: the cycle repeats.

The principle of open management and the right of children to express their views and concerns, while respecting the rights of others not to be damaged by such expression, are both enshrined and made real by the presence of an active council.

A school that can be described as *participative* will have an emphasis on:
- Consulting and sharing information and ideas freely
- Involving everyone in analysis and review
- Identifying problems and planning and implementing solutions
- Consultation, an established right to a voice, and an expectation that students (and teachers) will *get involved*.

Encouraging student participation

This expectation that students will get involved raises a question. There must be a right *not* to get involved, but do those who choose not to participate therefore have to accept that they may miss out on at least some of the benefits that accrue from getting involved? Not because they are deliberately excluded,

but because so many of those benefits come from being there at the time and being part of it? I am still not sure. Certainly if a good proportion of students are active, even the passive will enjoy the fruits of the labours of others.

But then, that is how a democracy works. And creating a more democratic school environment is what this is about. At the heart of that environment must, I believe, be some kind of formal democratic structure such as a school council. The mere existence of an effective council makes a statement about the school and its attitude to its students.

The principle of open management and the right of children to express their views and concerns, while respecting the rights of others not to be damaged by such expression, are both enshrined and made real by the presence of an active council. The right to a voice in the way the school operates is shown to be real for staff and students, and thus begins to permeate the fabric of school life.

Nonetheless, it is never entirely clear to me whether the presence of the school council creates and promotes the participative ethos or vice-versa. I was once asked whether I thought the school council would continue if I left my school. I had to ponder. I finally concluded that, if my successor as head disliked or failed to support the council, it would quickly wither and become ineffective, even if it didn't collapse. But on reflection I also felt sure that the school's overall ethos of empowerment and responsible free speech would be much more difficult to stifle or change: democratic change is strong and sustainable, and it feeds on practice. (I'm aware that I'm starting to use the words *democracy* and *participation* as if they are interchangeable – but then, I think they are!)

Education *for* democracy is, inevitably, education *in* democracy. Participation can be encouraged only by a participative climate. The good news is that the two develop together. Participatory structures such as school councils will not flourish in an undemocratic climate: but their very presence helps to transform the climate into a democratic, participative one. The one aspect feeds the other.

A shared respect

Mutual respect, or more specifically, treating pupils with respect (and finding that teachers receive respect in return), is a vital element within a participative ethos. Sally Inman and Helena Burke[1] of South Bank University, carrying out research for the teachers' union ATL, received this view from a teacher in a participative school:

> 'It's about having respect for the children, letting them know that you like them and care about them, saying hello as you walk down the corridor, knowing their names, treating them with respect, having high expectations

not thinking that they can't achieve anything, and they're stupid. Teachers can often offend pupils because they feel disliked. It's important that an adult likes you and thinks you are important, serious and there's something valuable about you.'

The 'respect' accorded to students includes respect given to their views. They readily appreciate it. As Year 11 pupils said to the two researchers:

'It's not like a prison'
'I think they give you independence'
'You're heard'
'They give you freedom.'

Inman and Burke continue:
'From the observations and interviews we observed an underlying culture of respect and equality between members of the school community. We observed a politeness and respect in the manner that staff talked to students. We saw staff opening doors for students and vice-versa as a matter of routine practice. The corridors were largely free of stress and tension but rather were spaces where people engaged in communication.'
Again that virtuous circle is evident: trust breeds trust, respect gives rise to respect.
'I think why the school is so good is because the students are so friendly to each other. They really are.'
Becky has given examples above of ways in which the student voice, through the council, has led to real improvements: where the prefects took on more duties in order to increase their influence and standing, teachers had fewer to do. Where the council thrives, itself an example of participation, it gives rise to other forms of active engagement. Thus, directly through council discussion and initiative, my school now enjoys the benefits of a student-run newspaper (currently in its fourth year); a student-led peer support and buddying scheme; new forms of community action and charitable fund-raising; new clubs, sports and activities.
'It is saying to the student body, you are the most important people in the school.'[2]
The school as a whole can harness the power of the student voice and focus it on teaching and learning. A couple of years ago my school carried out a huge consultation exercise as part of a new development plan (described in Trafford 2003[3]). Questionnaires were issued to *all* the 730 students and to all their parents, as well as to teaching and non-teaching staff. That is not so extraordinary, but what was most exciting in the process (yet unthinkable, I am sure, even a few years ago) is the way in which we progressed to engaging in real dialogue with our

students about teaching styles and how all the things we teachers do in the classroom and provide elsewhere help with their learning – or don't.

In year assemblies, focus groups and the full student council we discussed and assessed the effectiveness of teaching styles and strategies. We were carefully talking about *teaching*, not *teachers*: what works, and what doesn't: what they enjoy and what leaves them cold. Students of all ages engaged in reasoned discussion, analysed strengths and weaknesses – indeed, they readily acknowledged teachers' difficulties and frustrations and gave credit and thanks for the good they do.

In such discussions students display a sanguine appreciation of what is being asked of them. It is challenging for us teachers when, with disarming honesty and not a little charm, students describe the futility of a favoured teaching strategy which simply de-motivates pupils.

As Becky writes above, students can be challenged in turn to provide viable alternatives. To take but one example from our school, students outlined precisely what worked for them: instead of note-taking they asked to be given the notes as PowerPoint presentations, printed out and circulated at the start so that they could annotate and mark all over them during the course of the lesson - making the information, and thus the learning, their own. This is involving the students directly and centrally in the process of school improvement.

It doesn't work perfectly. Just as Becky honestly describes the kind of pupil who can undermine the effective use of the student voice, so I might identify the teacher who, impervious to the critiques I described above, ignores the students' cogently expressed views and sticks rigidly to a preferred teaching style. But as long as the school council is there as both the symbol and the central conduit of participation, it is used effectively: and its effective use constantly demonstrates its value and thus strengthens its appeal and raises its status.

So how do student councils encourage student participation? The answer is that they are a central and essential part of it. And they really work. ■

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Book reviews

EDUCATION, EDUCATION, EDUCATION
Ted Wragg
RoutledgeFalmer 2004 **£12.99** *ISBN 0-415-33551-5*

Education, Education, Education is the ironic title for a selection of articles previously published on the back page of the Times Educational Supplement covering the period from 1998 to the present day.

Few teachers would disagree that education should not be left in the control of politicians. Sadly, for the last 30 years, that has been the increasing fate of education with countless changes, many of which have undermined or under valued the professionalism of teachers.

Tedd Wragg's collection of articles is organised in seven themed chapters that enable the reader to dip into its multiplicity of issues. The articles, with their sharp-witted analysis and hilarity, provide a welcomed tonic to lift the spirits and dispel the despair and depression that can envelop the overwhelmed teacher.

Cynicism and fun-poking have been the allure of Wragg's articles together with his often anarchic style that cuts through the pretentiousness that confronted him for comment

The book reminds us of just how many initiatives, policy announcements and policy changes have faced teachers in the last six years and just how hare-brained and precarious many of those ideas were, driven by the target and teacher bashing culture that prevails.

It seems incredulous that Chris Woodhead was kept in office for so long in the early days of the New Labour Government when he continued to attack teachers and schools. Wragg's article, 'Woodhead was my sick joke,' included in the "Blame and Shame" chapter is a cutting and funny analysis of the damage he did to the public perception of teachers and schools.

It is thanks to teachers that education is not going down the plug hole (as the cover of the book depicts). The profession continues to show remarkable resilience and has been able to rise above the unwelcome changes and depressing cynical manoeuvres of politicians – because children matter more.

The book is ideal for the busy teacher to dip into while grabbing a break from planning or marking.

JERRY GLAZIER

THE INTELLIGENT SCHOOL
Barbara MacGilchrist, Jane Reed and Kate Myers (Second edition)
Sage Publications 2004 **£18.99** *ISBN 872767 51 6*

I have found *The Intelligent School* to be an intelligent book. Its aim, in summary, is to help teachers teach better and pupils learn more effectively.

The contents list is clear with each chapter's sub-headings listed and page referenced. The titles illustrate exactly what will be found in each chapter as the authors explain their theories eruditely and with teachers in mind.

The importance of benchmarking is queried and authors point out that using value-added results to demonstrate pupils' academic attainment need a 'health warning'. However, intelligent schools are, 'developing a range of self-evaluating strategies to monitor progress including the systematic collection of data to provide the necessary evidence of improvement'. So, no 'snapshot' of a school but a need to consider change in effectiveness over time.

One of the key messages is that teachers need to be the main agents of change and change must ensure that the improvements are for the better and sustainable. Therefore the change must be planned and its management of vital importance.

MacGilchrist, Reed and Myers see all teachers as managers, 'the management of learning and teaching in the classroom is the most important management activity that goes on in school'. They emphasise that only a corporate plan will have an impact on pupils' learning.

Throughout, the stress is in on learning with excellent information on this for both teachers and pupils. I found Chapter 5: "Teaching for Learning" particularly relevant.

Chapter 7 begins, 'This chapter is central to the book. It explores what we mean by the intelligent school. It draws on all the previous chapters to offer a conceptual framework.' The breakdown of the different types of intelligence and their explanations provides a more rounded account of how people can be intelligent and how that would enable the intelligent school to educate in a more apposite way.

This is a challenging book and makes for uncomfortable reading at times because one realises that there is so much more to be accomplished in education. How can the teacher who wants to follow this further find out more? MacGilchrist, Reed and Myers have given the next step: each chapter has a conclusion and 'questions for discussion and activities' which are very open and will lead to considerable introspection.
With the research presented, teachers at all levels in a school's hierarchy can start to bring about the intelligent school.

JANIS ADAMS

EMOTIONAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR SCHOOLS

Helen Cowie, Chrissy Boardman, Judith Dawkins and Dawn Jennifer

*Paul Chapman Publishing 2004 **£18.99** ISBN 0 7619 4355 2*

I always read the 'blurb' on the back of a book, as it is usually a good guide to the contents. While the 'blurb' on the book certainly does its job, I feel it does not do the book justice. Professor Cowie and her colleagues actually do much more than such a brief summary implies.

The book is divided into three sections: the first defines the parameters and considers the merits of intervention. The second is the majority of the book and describes the various emotional problems from which children can suffer in considerable detail.

These include violence, bullying, sexual health, alcohol, drugs and substance abuse, social isolation, eating problems and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. There is no panacea provided for dealing with these but the authors make information easily digestible and are very realistic about the problems that may well have to be overcome to support pupils, possibly at very difficult times in their lives.

Each chapter in this section is sub-divided: the problem is defined and includes relevant studies; the benefits of intervention are clearly outlined; possible interventions are suggested with consideration of appropriate personnel, costs and problems; there is a summary; and, finally, a list of resources. The last two provide a quick way into each chapter for the busy teacher with a pastoral role who wants to find out what is available.

The third and final section provides support to those planning to implement any of the strategies given.

The index and references are comprehensive enabling ease of access to the book as well as other relevant and useful material used successfully in the book's case studies: an excellent resource.

Although the book is aimed at the secondary level – which is not, in my opinion, the only level where young people are, 'most constrained, observed and challenged to develop,' this should not limit its application. Emotional health and well-being is important at all stages of a child's development and some problems cited in this work, like the death of parent or sibling, must be treated with care whenever they happen. Earlier awareness and intervention can prevent problems developing to a more serious level that could be more dramatic at secondary level.

This work would be of use throughout all age ranges as the different problems and strategies are very easily accessible with a lot of proven, practical support. Professor Cowie and her colleagues have produced a valuable tool for use in all schools on both a micro and macro level.

JANIS ADAMS

OBSERVING CHILDREN: A PRACTICAL GUIDE
Carole Sharman, Wendy Cross & Diana Vennis (Third edition)
Continuum 2004 **£12.99** *ISBN 0 8264-7238 9*

This is a new and revised edition of a useful book for level 3 students (CACHE DCE, NVQ3 and SNVQ3, GNVQ) training to work with children. It would also help training teachers who have not had to do observations before. There are two new chapters, and three others have been extended. The book is a very useful teaching aid, but would not be suitable for students unfamiliar with observations working on their own – some of the information needs decoding and explaining.

The descriptions of observational techniques are good, as is the new chapter on extending and utilising observations. Realistic examples support clear descriptions. The new chapter linking observations to the Early Learning Goals is little more than a list of the goals, a description of the Foundation Stage Profile, and a discussion about the importance of working in partnership with parents. This is a shame, as it is easy enough for students to get hold of the QCA documents on this, and what they really need are some examples of how to link what they are seeing to what they are reading.

The extended chapter on activities to promote developmental progress is a useful launching point for ideas, but students would need to be encouraged to see these as just one set of ideas, and not the only options.

The "Developmental Milestones" chapter continues to be extremely useful. I have used this is the past with level 3 and 4 students, and welcome the new material. Unfortunately the section on Further Reading has not been updated – the texts listed date from 1986 to 1993, and I would be encouraging students to consider books published in the last five years.

SARA BOND

MULTI-FAITH ACTIVITY ASSEMBLIES
Elizabeth Pierce
Routledge-Falmer 2004 **£22.50** *ISBN 0-415-30359-1*

This invaluable resource for primary school teachers has over 200 pages of ideas for school or class assemblies plus another 50 pages of background information on the six major world religions covered: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism. It is arranged around 8 topics: new beginnings, places of worship, friends, festivals, rites of passage, water themes, animals and birds and inspirational leaders.

It is not a book for sluggards, not a resource planned to meet the emergency

of suddenly having to take assembly half an hour later; each of the subjects is thoroughly researched and will take considerable preparation before being utilised.

However, if any school wishes to make a proper educational use of assemblies instead of using them to fill time while teachers are released for other tasks, this is the book to obtain. Strangely there is no attempt to link assemblies to the rest of the curriculum; they appear to exist in a vacuum; but again producing this link is an exercise a school could profitably undertake.

Elizabeth Pierce attempts not only to inform children about world religions but very importantly to give them the opportunity to respond in different and appropriate ways including activities.

Most conclude with a prayer and a hymn, some of which might be unsuitable in a multi-faith school. I would find it more appropriate to invite children to pray or meditate silently about the theme of the assembly in their own way; but again the user has to think through its use before embarking.

The background information is well researched and presented, and should be required reading for all staff if they are to understand their pupils' faiths and heritage. There is also a full list of resources for each of the religions. Altogether this is a treasure of a book.

MALCOLM HORNE

EFFECTIVE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT
K B Everard, Geoffrey Morris and Ian Wilson
Paul Chapman Publishing 2004 **£19.99** *ISBN 1-4129-0049-2*

The heart regularly sinks on coming upon yet another volume of advice about how to transform a school by applying the methods the author (now retired and working as a consultant) found so successful in running 'My Company plc'. So it was with some cynicism that I began reading this handbook. However I have to admit that by the end of Chapter 3 I had received some seriously useful advice.

The authors clearly understand how schools function and have produced a handbook that could prove invaluable to a teacher moving to an enhanced role as numeracy co-ordinator or head of department and could still be a reliable source of advice when that teacher was appointed to a headship.

The book is clearly structured, with an informative table of contents. Each chapter ends with practical tasks, which could be used either by an individual at home or by groups in a training session.

The first section, 'Managing People', makes clear that "the most crucial skill

is undoubtedly the development of human resources." By suggesting that some readers may be familiar with material in the early chapters, the authors avoid patronising those who may be using the book at various stages of their career.

The first four chapters establish a general approach, then chapters five to eight deal with specific tasks. They make many telling points – such as that we all have a common tendency to assume that others' motivational needs are of a lower order than our own. And how many failed schemes – not to mention recalcitrant pupils – might have borne more effective fruit had their promoters recognised that people are generally reluctant to accept goals set by others.

I can not resist selecting gems like "the risk of not taking a decision is often the greatest of all risks to the organisation" from the excellent chapter on decision-making, but the whole section is well grounded in practical situations.

Part Two moves on to "Managing the Organisation" and is definitely education-specific, and up to date in the issues considered. The third part deals with 'Managing Change' and makes very clear the complexity involved in bringing about change in organisations like schools where worthy plans can so easily fail because insufficient thought was given to the process in advance.

I feel the book is worth adding to any staffroom library for the section on 'time-management techniques' alone. If only I had acquired the habit of "starting each day by writing a list of all the things that should be done that day and starring them to indicate importance" in recognition that "the critical distinction is between what is urgent and what is important"!

JANET STURGIS

A SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATING
Roland Meighan and Iram Siraj-Blatchford (Fourth edition)
*Continuum 2004 **£25.00** ISBN 0 8264 6815 2*

The fourth edition of *A Sociology of Educating* has been substantially revised with new chapters on current issues in the field of education and sociology such as creating learning communities and grading and examining. Meighan and Siraj-Blatchford are both highly respected academics and the new text contains real depth while at the same time being accessible to someone without a great deal of knowledge in the area. The book really benefits from the clarity of the language used and the division of chapters into understandable sections.

The book is divided into areas such as the curriculum, life chances and sociological perspectives on the study of education. Some of the sections include case studies, which are particularly effective in bringing issues to light.

Clearly, when putting together any major text such as *A Sociology of Educating* it is not possible to cover every issue. It should be noted that the book is good at providing further signposts at the end of each chapter for further reading rather than simply having a huge bibliography at the end. However, there are some areas of the book where perhaps Meighan and Siraj-Blatchford will leave some readers slightly disappointed.

The new chapter on "Doing Research in Schools and Classrooms" is probably too brief, with very little focus on research methods, to be generally helpful. The chapter on "Postmodernism" has the feel of being separated from the educational angle. For instance, the section on identity fails to really bring to light the important contribution made by post-modern writers to questions of racial and sexual identity and the implications of this work to education.

Despite the difficulties noted above, this work provides a very good introduction to education and sociology and deserves its place as one of the major textbooks in this area.

RHODRI THOMAS

Reviewers

Janis Adams, retired secondary head of humanities, chair of governors

Sara Bond, lecturer of Braintree College, writes for young children

Jerry Glazier, NUT Executive member

Malcolm Horne, past president of NUT and retired senior teacher

Janet Sturgis, a former teacher who has served as an NUT representative in Examining Boards.

Rhodri Thomas, ex member of staff in the NUT's Education and Equal Opportunities Department

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CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

Education Review, volume 17, No2, Spring 2004. "Educating the whole child".

Gerda Hanko "Towards inclusive education: Inter-professional support strategies within and across schools and school services" (page 63)
The final sentence of the penultimate paragraph on page 63 should read: "For the time it had taken to ease the inter-professional problem, there was clearly a reward in less strain and worry which the teachers would have experienced when coping with multi-professional problems separately and less successfully."

Jan Campbell and Liz Craft "Citizenship and PSHE – opportunities, responsibilities and experiences" (page 74)
The Abstract to the above article incorrectly stated that the abbreviation PSHE stood for physical, social and health education instead of personal, social and health education.

We apologise to authors and readers for these errors.

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