education review

NEW DIRECTIONS HOME?
The challenges and opportunities of modern childhood

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LITERACY *Today*

Literacy Today **has a cross-sectoral approach to literacy throughout the English-speaking world. It includes articles on literacy policy, research and practice, as well as information on literacy issues raised in parliament, literacy resources, publications and research briefings.**

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Preface by Steve Sinnott, General Secretary, National Union of Teachers

We have much to be proud of in our children and young people. Yet, if a person's knowledge and understanding of young people was based primarily on the public image of childhood and teenage years, that person would be likely to feel only concern.

It is undoubtedly the case that young people today, as well as having unprecedented opportunities, face huge challenges – most of them consequences of the accepted values and priorities of contemporary adults. The combined influences of 'let's see how far we can go' reality TV and celebrity culture; encouragement to go into debt; excessive materialism and other 'temptations' of our marketised, 'throw-away', free choice, culture demand high levels of self control and responsibility. That has to be learned! Teachers are central to this learning process and also bear the brunt with regard to the minority of young people who are unwilling to learn or simply make mistakes of youth.

What is clear is that securing future well-being and social cohesion will not just be a matter of learning from the past. Whilst teachers, parents and others can help young people to understand the world, many of the solutions will have to come from young people themselves. Hence our title: 'New Directions Home?'

In this edition of *Education Review*, we have a wide range of contributions which seek to add to our understanding of children and young people today. We also highlight examples of effective provision and support that can help young people to lead fulfilling lives, experience well-being and contribute positively to their communities and the wider society.

It is very important to give young people a chance to speak for themselves. I am very grateful to those teachers who, in response to an invitation in NUT's *The Teacher* magazine, asked their pupils *"Is this a good time to be young?"* Although it is impossible to include all the letters, poems, stories, drawings and even school council minutes sent in, it is a great pleasure to give prominence in this edition of *Education Review* to a representative sample of the contributions. I include here some of my favourite quotes; a number of longer contributions then make up our first article; and pictorial responses are included throughout the journal.

Ellen Rack wrote: *"Dear Mr Sinnott, I just want you to realise that we're not all like that and the newspapers and everyone else should focus on the good things that we do."*

Many of the submissions were appreciative of the improved

opportunities offered by contemporary society. **Cora Gordon** expressed succinctly a common interest: *"With the latest games console just around the corner, who wouldn't want to be young?"* And **Harriet Matthews** wrote: *"I prefer to be nine today than a hundred years ago because I'm left-handed and, a hundred years ago, I would have my left hand tied to my back and made to write with my right hand."*

Hira Ayub also looked back a hundred years: *"We have education and law. Back then in 1905 children could only go to school if they were rich. Poor children did nothing but work; boys would do farming or hunting and girls would do house work. Now in 2006 the laws are much stricter for children under the age of 16 to go to school. In 1905, people's lives ended about the age of 40! Now we have all types of medicines for all types of illnesses and diseases."*

Stanley Rawlings expressed change poetically:

"And what did they do without a computer,
Reading all day those books from the famous authors,
And playing with their marbles,
While their parents are out there fighting with deadly rifles.

Then there are the diseases they went through,
Causing all kinds of curfews,
These horrible diseases that killed their family,
Unless, of course, you were wealthy."

Others sought to inform:

"The music you listen you, the fashions you follow and the activities you do all determine what group you're in. A few main groups are Emo, Chav, Grunge etc. Basically Chavs don't like Grunge, Grunge don't like Emo and Emos just don't really like themselves."

(Bethany Woolstone)

"We don't have that much choice of what form we want to be in etc. and things cost a lot of money. It costs about £4.50 just to go to the cinema, never mind buying sweets and if you go to Meadow Hall, it costs a lot to go around shops. This would be okay if we were allowed to have Saturday jobs under 14 so we could earn money."

(Jordan Chaim)

"Younger people are also getting more freedom of speech as children are no longer 'seen and not heard'. The young are no longer scared to stand up for what they believe is right and have a voice which needs to be listened to. Children no longer stand for bullying, domestic violence and child abuse; all they have to do is ring somewhere like ChildLine

and they will be listened to and helped. Also, most schools have in place a system which allows the pupils to have their say in how the school is run."

(Emily Goldie)

"What's good is that you get to watch TV when your parent/carer is making a scrumptious lunch. You can climb tall trees when your adult is too heavy. You can fit through tiny gaps when your adult is too tall. You can eat more delicious food because you are growing. You can come for brilliant sleepovers and stay up late."

(Lucy Ronal)

"Family life today: I think there is less racism today, which is good; women and men get the chance to do things that they couldn't do before. This means that some kids can spend more time with their dads. Some kids have a lot more money because their mums go out to work. This is good.

The bad side is that some kids don't spend much time with their parents, for example, some kids and parents don't eat together so much anymore. I think that is bad, it's good to talk to your mum and dad at dinner."

(Joe Dunkley)

Others expressed contemporary fears:

"Peer pressure and bullying has become a major issue in the present generation of youth. Many of the discussions taking place in Parliament reflect the situations in schools and the escalation of teenagers committing suicide due to bullying. Alcohol abuse, drugs, smoking, teenage pregnancies, are current headlines in our daily newspapers that appear more often than we think they should. All this is due to peer pressure."

(Chantal Chabwera)

"It can be unpleasant in terms of the smaller students getting bullied because of stupid reasons like dressing differently, not being 'cooler' than other pupils or not being able to play a specific sport like everyone else. Bullies pick on these smaller kids because they feel that, just because they might have got bullied, it's right to beat up and torment these younger pupils in the ways of the bully."

(Tom and Daz)

Finally, there were some words of advice:

"We shouldn't be given an easy ride, but be pushed into the real world away from the safety of school with the confidence and willpower of many generations before us."

(Aisling McFadden)

"Kids, at the moment, are very determined. If they are set a task, they will try very hard

to complete it."

(Stephen Peacock)

"I don't think there was ever a bad time to be young, however, just that there has been a slight improvement as the years have passed. On the other hand, who knows what the future holds for young children?"

(Paul Crosthwaite)

In the Union we have been very active in seeking to ensure that we listen to young people. I am very supportive of the appointments in England and Wales of a Commissioner for Children.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is very clear in emphasising the need for young people to have a say in matters that impact upon them. The Union promotes the work of the English Secondary Students' Association but more needs to be done. A big challenge in the next few years will be giving emphasis to students' voices.

Including the thoughts and views of young people themselves was made possible by the teachers and pupils at: **Brooklands Primary School**, Blackheath; **Canon Slade School**, Bolton; **Cromwell Community College**, near Peterborough; **Downs Junior School**, Brighton; **Fulneck School**, West Yorkshire; **Heathcote School and Science College**, Chingford; **Moorside First School**, Northumberland; **Oakbank School**, Keighley; **Pavilion Study Centre**, Whetstone; **The Mosslands School**, Wirral; and **Winterhill School**, Rotherham. I am very grateful to them all.

I'm also very grateful to our adult contributors. Once again, their freely donated time and expertise has enabled us to produce this wide range of exciting and high-quality articles.

David Lammy, Minister for Culture, Sport and the Arts, highlights the importance which the Government attaches to making high-quality, funded, provision for young people. **Sue Palmer** shares with us what happened in the aftermath of the pivotal letter about the need to 'detox childhood' which she and others had published in September 2006. This fuelled the public debate about childhood to which this edition of *Education Review* contributes.

Bethan Marshall discusses the serious concern about school pupils being over-tested. **Nigel Baker**, from a school teacher's perspective, writes about the need for urgent action to prevent what he calls the 'culture of cool' doing permanent damage to our society.

Our two head teacher contributors both express very positive views about ways forward. **Anthony Seldon** and his colleague **Ian Morris** describe the 'happiness' lessons that have been introduced at their school; and **Kenny Frederick** highlights the importance of 'volunteering' and describes some of the opportunities for this that her school has

established.

Patrick Alexander argues that the use of words like 'toxicity' in talking about childhood encourages negative thinking from the start; and **Louisa Leaman**, teacher and rising columnist in the revamped *TES* Magazine, reminds us that there has never been an easy childhood and nor is there a uniform experience of being young.

Ann Davies then describes the welcome practical steps being taken to introduce a more integrated play and learner-centred curriculum in the early years in Wales.

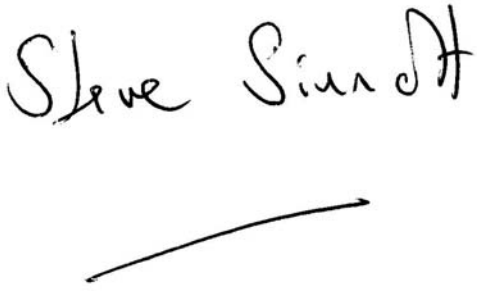
Gill Mullinar draws on young people's views to highlight the need for effective education in sex and relationships. **Sarah-Jayne Blakemore** describes changes in the brain during adolescence which effect behaviour. **Gail Ryder Richardson** highlights the importance of the environment in promoting children's learning and well-being.

Jane Lane impresses upon us the importance of recognising and respecting cultural diversity and identity. Finally, **Christopher Arnold** explores the positive relationships between empowerment, achievement and good behaviour.

Throughout this and other editions of *Education Review* the many references attached to the articles are checked by NUT's Information Officer **Janet Friedlander**. I am grateful for this important contribution as they provide valuable sources for further reading.

Last, but by no means least, I would also like to express my thanks to our book-reviewers. What a line-up! **Giles Barrow**, **Vivienne Baumfield**, **Rosamund McNeil**, **Brian Terry**, **Meryl Thompson** and **Julie Wymer** each draw on their relevant experience to review a book (or several) of potential interest to teachers and others working with children and young people. Each review is a good read in its own right; and their views on what's worth reading should be heeded.

I dedicate this edition to all young people involved in the search for *New Directions Home* and commend it to you.



EDUCATION JOURNAL

The magazine for children's services and education professionals

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Is this a good time to be young?

Abstract: *Teachers were invited to encourage their pupils to 'write, comment or draw' in response to the question "Is this a good time to be young?" Submissions were received from pupils across the age range from year 1 (6th birthday during the school year) to preparing for A levels (17 or 18-year-olds). Here a representative collection of extracts from across the age range is reproduced. The age of each author is not included as we do not do this for adult contributors. Nor is each individual's school. The focus is on the content of each contribution.*

The collection illustrates that there is not a universal 'childhood' – which is too often the impression given by adult commentators – each experience is different. **Ava Lockyear** emphasised social and historical change by presenting extracts from diaries 66 years apart:

24/06/1940
Dear Diary,
Last night Tommy Harshwood's (from next door) house was bombed. He was a good friend of my brother and George is terribly upset.
Now, Grandpa tells the best stories; tonight he told me and George about when he was young when Queen Victoria reigned and his work with the chimney sweepers (when he was my age) he had to do it for money and for food.
I wish this war would end then Father could come home, I can hear the air-raid siren going. I had better go down to the Anderson shelter.

24/06/2006
Dear Diary,
Mum picked me up from school *again* today, it's nearly
the end of year 6 and she still won't let me walk to school
by myself. All she says is "it's too dangerous, Louisa
darling, what with all the traffic and everything"
I bet grandpa George didn't have to deal with this.
He was allowed to.
Please let me do it tomorrow!

Whilst **Charlotte Herbert** reflected, movingly, on short-term changes in personal circumstances:

My life is much better than it was in 2005. I had a rough year I moved school and my brother died. I am just starting to get my life back on track. And now I love my new school well its not new anymore I feel like part of the furniture now.

I really enjoy school now I have loads of new friends. Sometime I think I'm so lucky because of the life I have now. No I don't have my brother, but I know that he is always with me and looking over me.

When I moved school it was from an old worn out lifeless school to a newly built school with computers and freshly painted walls. Overall I think that 2006 is a much better year than 2005.

A **primary school council**, including boys and girls from across the primary age range, submitted minutes based on a questionnaire canvassing pupils' views about school.

What do you like about school?
Work, playtimes, computers, dinnertimes, swimming, trips, playing,

gymnastics, PE, teachers, 'golden time', home time.

What do you like about home?
Spending time with family, playing on my x-box, playing on my quad, play stations, motorbike, riding my bike, playing in my bedroom, watching tv, playing with friends outside, playing football, going on holiday, playing with pets, playing musical instruments, going fishing, playing games like monopoly.

Do you think life is better now than it was 50 years ago?
Yes, you can get to places faster. There is more transport, and better teachers. There were wars in the past. There were different houses in the past, they were made of wood. People travelled in horses and carriages. They had wooden toys. There were no laptops, computers, tv's, videos, dvd's. There were no resources at school.

Do you think life will be better in the future?
It will be the same as now, it might be better, there will be new things. It might get worse, there might be more fighting/more wars. People might not play with each other, they might shout, hit and kick, there might be more bullies. Teachers might change.

What don't you like about school?
Bullies, reading hard words, PE, being on the red traffic light (for misbehaviour), doing hard work all the time, reading books, some of the dinners (not much choice – only two things and you have to wait and sometimes they run out of the thing you want).

What don't you like about home?
Getting grounded, getting up in the mornings, nasty cats, getting smacked, getting sent to my bedroom, having my x-box taken off me, having play station taken off me and given to someone else, running away.

What makes people bad?
Getting drunk, taking drugs, not keeping promises, swearing, arguing and getting angry, smoking cigarettes, when mam comes home and finds dad in bed with someone who's not your mam.

What makes people good?
Being friendly to each other, helping, giving presents, playing with them if they are lonely, being kind.

What would you do to make the world better for kids?
Give all children a share of the money, ensure all children have clean water and enough water. Build people lakes, send them bottles of

water. Stop people being nasty to others, look after each other, build houses, give money to poor people, help people to make friends and give them things to do and games to play.

Jack Hammond took up the 'there's good and bad' theme:

> I certainly have plenty of fun but there are some negatives nowadays that I know weren't round 15 years ago. It's hard to get an exact answer because I have nothing to compare my childhood to apart from what parents, older brothers and older friends and family have told me, and they might not be accurate accounts or my tastes may be different to theirs so I enjoy different things and have different views.
>
> Starting with the negatives, the biggest one that stands out for me is the amount of thuggish, cold-hearted gangs of youths there are, a lot of whom have tags on from the police. If it is dark and you are walking on your own, there are some areas you know the gangs will be and you feel at edge because some stories I hear are of unprovoked menace by these youths. I remember not so long ago, one of my friends got attacked by lads from a rival school, just because they knew someone that they were after. On hearing such stories my parents act in disgust which implies that this type of thing wasn't as common in the past.
>
> Also, another negative is the way people see youths. Due to name being made for ourselves as being bad, everybody is wary of us when we walk past, especially if we are in a group. The worst case for this is elderly people. If they see a youngster they become very protective of their bags and always look at you in a worried or even scared way. They feel threatened by people wearing hoodies or casual tops, but this is just fashion, and certainly, for the majority of people, not worn for status or to look hard.
>
> Enough of negatives there are a lot of positives of being young nowadays. Most of all, technology has gone through the roof. I-Pods, Playstation, PCs, DVDs. Just a few of the modern things that have completely changed the enjoyment of children. Although these may have spoilt children and made them more lazy, the hours of fun are amazing. Secondly in terms of education, the young nowadays have much more flexibility. In University you can do something as serious as training to be a surgeon, to the downright crazy course of training to be a clown. In addition I feel there is much less stress now on children, this may lead kids astray and have no manners or respect, but it can also clear a kids mind and lead them on to success.

And **Flo Tock** added her either/or views:

> There are lots of reasons for both 'yes' and 'no'. In terms of technology, it's good because with new inventions and developing technology all the time, there are endless things to do and see. However, in today's world,

there's global warming, racial segregation, education is falling apart and many other barriers in today's society, not to mention the fact that many people never get the chance to voice their opinion.

There's tons of "let's have our say!" organisations and groups for teens especially, but little actually do anything. Either they talk about it loads and never do anything, or they legally can't. I recently went along to BKYP (Bradford-Keighley Youth Parliament) meeting, which is an organisation set up for teens in the Bradford area to have their say. It's all very well and good, but the people involved can't directly change anything; all they're allowed to do is tell other people what they think; the town council, etc, then they make the decisions.

The media is constantly full of "young people today", either we are too fat or thin, watch too much television and don't do hands-on activities any more, but nothing positive is ever said. If some inspiration was said and constructive criticism maybe we would be happier.

Seeing different cultures is easier today, which helps young minds to open and develop. This is a good thing, as it helps break down barriers and is interesting to see how different people live. The cultural and technological side is great; with more developing all the time there is lots to explore and find out about.

There were many references to the long term challenges that both young people and adults face as **Khia Burke**'s list of 'what's bad' illustrates:

1. War! It is very scary to think that our soldiers are at war and dying for a war that doesn't make sense? I do not understand why people cannot learn to talk and compromise instead of fighting and killing.
2. Terrorists – all the time on the television and radio and in newspapers it tells us that we could be attacked by terrorists again, which we have seen with the twin towers and in the country a bus and train was blown up and innocent people died, this is a very daunting thought.
3. Pollution/Ozone Layer – pollution has caused damage to the ozone layer (the invisible shield that surrounds the earth) and protects us from the dangerous rays of the sun. These can cause skin cancer and the solar ice cap is supposed to be melting due to damage caused to the ozone layer.
4. Poverty – despite all the food that is made in the world and all the scientific and medical improvements we have made, in some countries people die daily from starvation and not being able to even have a clean fresh glass of water to drink.
5. Building – the more buildings that are built means less green open spaces and the animals and insects that live in these habitats die, children have fewer places to play safely away from the built up areas with lots of traffic. In some countries this can mean certain animals face extinction. It can also mean whole areas of land are destroyed and in areas like the rain forest where certain plants only grow, that have maybe even cures for things like cancer and we are destroying them.

6. Traffic – causes pollutions, traffic jams, and people can get angry (Road Rage) also accidents can happen.
7. Stress – we live busy lives and sometimes this can mean people get very stressed and may take this out on young people. Young people can also become stressed and act bad or in anti social ways and this can lead to crime, drugs, and alcohol.
8. Crime – some people commit crimes because of something that may have happened to them but then other people seem to have no reason for the crimes that they commit. Crime is reported on the television and this can be scary for young people watching it, as they feel that it is going to happen to them next even if this is not actually the case.
9. Television – it can be a bad thing as adverts encourage people into eating unhealthy junk food, or to buy things that they do not need or cant afford and can even encourage people to gamble. It can also give a one sided view on things due to the way that they edit a program e.g. 'BIG BROTHER.'

Others like **Charlotte Ross** expressed very contemporary concerns:

> 'Chavs' hanging out on street corners can be intimidating to people and the anti-social behaviour order, ASBO, has had to be introduced to deal with problems on the streets. Older people say that the education system is getting too easy compared to how it used to be which is why so many children are passing GCSE's with such high marks. Some people could say that the way modern teenagers live is spoilt. Older generations think that they grew up well without any of the luxuries that we have and believe that the way some youths see life is not preparing them for the real world. The obsessions some girls have with their weight and appearance could be seriously affecting their health. Celebrities are to blame for this as they are in sight all the time and the modern media don't help, showing pictures of skinny celebrities and their new diets. Although there is more variety in food, there is also terribly unhealthy convenience food, which often contains far too much salt and fat. Children today are not bothered with what they eat as long as it tastes good, this mean that they often eat food which is appallingly unhealthy. This could seriously affect their school work and general happiness.

In a hard-hitting 'tale', **Sophie Ogu** highlighted incidents which seem to appear all to frequently in news reports and highlight issues of peer pressure. It starts with two 14-year-olds…

> … were walking home from school and decided to walk through the park. They noticed a bystander on the phone who looked smartly dressed with a briefcase in his hand. They decided to rob him for his valuables and went for his phone; the victim resisted them and threw punches directly at them. Junior, who got annoyed, reached

in his pocket for a knife and stabbed the man several times in the arm and leg. They grabbed his bag and phone and ran off leaving the man helpless on the ground.

They were later caught on CCTV going through the man's belongings and were found guilty of robbery and grievous bodily harm and sentenced to seven years in jail. The man who had been rushed to hospital now has to be on crutches and has no life in the arm he was stabbed in.

Young people are influenced into doing criminal activity because they are afraid that they will be neglected by the other youths in the community and be treated as one of the people they go around bullying or looking down on and calling a 'coward'. ...

Young people, especially girls are being influenced into performing sexual activities, mainly because they are young and vulnerable and maybe think it is ok to go around sleeping with boys their age, older or younger. The boys know what they are doing and find no shame in it; they just go back and tell their friends who then laugh about it and give him 'credit' for it. The girls who don't see what's going on until it's too late, are sweet talked by the boys to make them think that they are in love and that they are special. ...

Too many young people are being big-headed about the area that they live in. They think that they own that area and that if someone from a different area enters their area (also known as endz) they are slipping (also known as in danger of getting beaten up) so this causes arguments with different areas and that gets them into quarrels (also known as beef). A lot of teenagers find it hard to socialise in different areas because they are scared of getting beaten up. This is caused by people thinking that they are better than each other because artistes from the different areas create music 'bigging up their endz'.

Lucie Betts suggested that there are some quality experiences that are timeless: "Even though I have all this choice of activities, I find it quite relaxing to snuggle in a corner and read a book"

And **Sam Butler** began his thoughtful contribution with priorities that all generations will recognise:

For me being young is about playing with my little brother, being nice to friends and family, trying my best in school, having good friends and to be free to play and learn.

A good thing about being young in this generation is availability of medicine today. If someone in your family feels ill or breaks a bone they can go to the hospital for free and have treatment. A hundred years ago children would not have the choice to go to the hospital and often young children died early from illness that we can now treat. Also if you have a headache you have Calpol or Paracetamol to help you and antibiotics so our lives are healthier.

Secondly only fifty years back (a very short time) schools and

education centres would still be using the cane. Things used to be stricter for children if they did the slightest thing wrong they would be hit by the cane. Times have changed and now the cane is banned from all schools in Great Britain, children can learn better. The curriculum is much more enjoyable and relationships are much better between teachers and pupils. In my experience teachers will try to resolve problems that the student may have.

The internet can do nearly anything and if you have it you will have a huge advantage. Also younger students have an advantage over adults when using the computer; for instance some adults find some computer problems difficult, whereas young people may find it easy because they have lived with it all their life.

A bad thing about being young is that we now have the technology to create nuclear war. Unfortunately it is likely that we will have a war when we are adults. Additionally there is also lots of terrorism because of the war in Iraq which is scary and makes young people feel unsafe.

Overall, I think if you live in a country like ours being young now is a delight. We have the technology for game boys and entertainment such as Dr. Who and Lord of the Rings as well as enough to eat and beds to sleep in. There could be children on the other side of the world or on your doorstep that don't enjoy being young as you may do because they don't have as many opportunities. Is it a good time to be young? Well in most ways I think so, don't you?

Finally, **Emma Tatterton**'s youthful wisdom concludes with some hope for the future:

Ask an infant class "what do you want to do when you grow up?" and the answers will be as varied as a Pick-n-Mix counter. But just as a 5-year-old would never choose spinach or cauliflower over a paper bag of E-numbers, they would never announce that they want to end up in a job they can't abide, with a crippling mortgage and not enough money to feed the cat.

Why is it that people start off in life with such high expectations but end up unsatisfied and unhappy, working and working but not getting anywhere? When we are young the whole world and its possibilities are in the palm of our hand and it's as if anything is possible. Then, as time passes, our ambitions are squashed as we are taken captive by our responsibilities and what we really want to be doing is blurred in with what has to be done.

Life in the 21st century is fast-paced and demanding to the point of no return. While most of the world is starving to death people convince themselves that they will only be happy if they get that new mobile/car/sofa/ life changing shampoo. The fast advance of new and better technology and consumer goods in the last few years is astounding. A "top model" mobile five years ago is now a "brick"

and desperately out of fashion.

A new generation of human, me and people my age, has evolved. Technology freaks who without their mobile feel as if life is not worth living and spend half their life on MSN, the Internet or electronic game-playing things. But is this a good idea? What happens in the future when Earth will rest in our hands? (No sarcastic answers please! For teens everywhere I would like to add that we are not all drug addicts, alcohol abusers and thugs in hoodies).

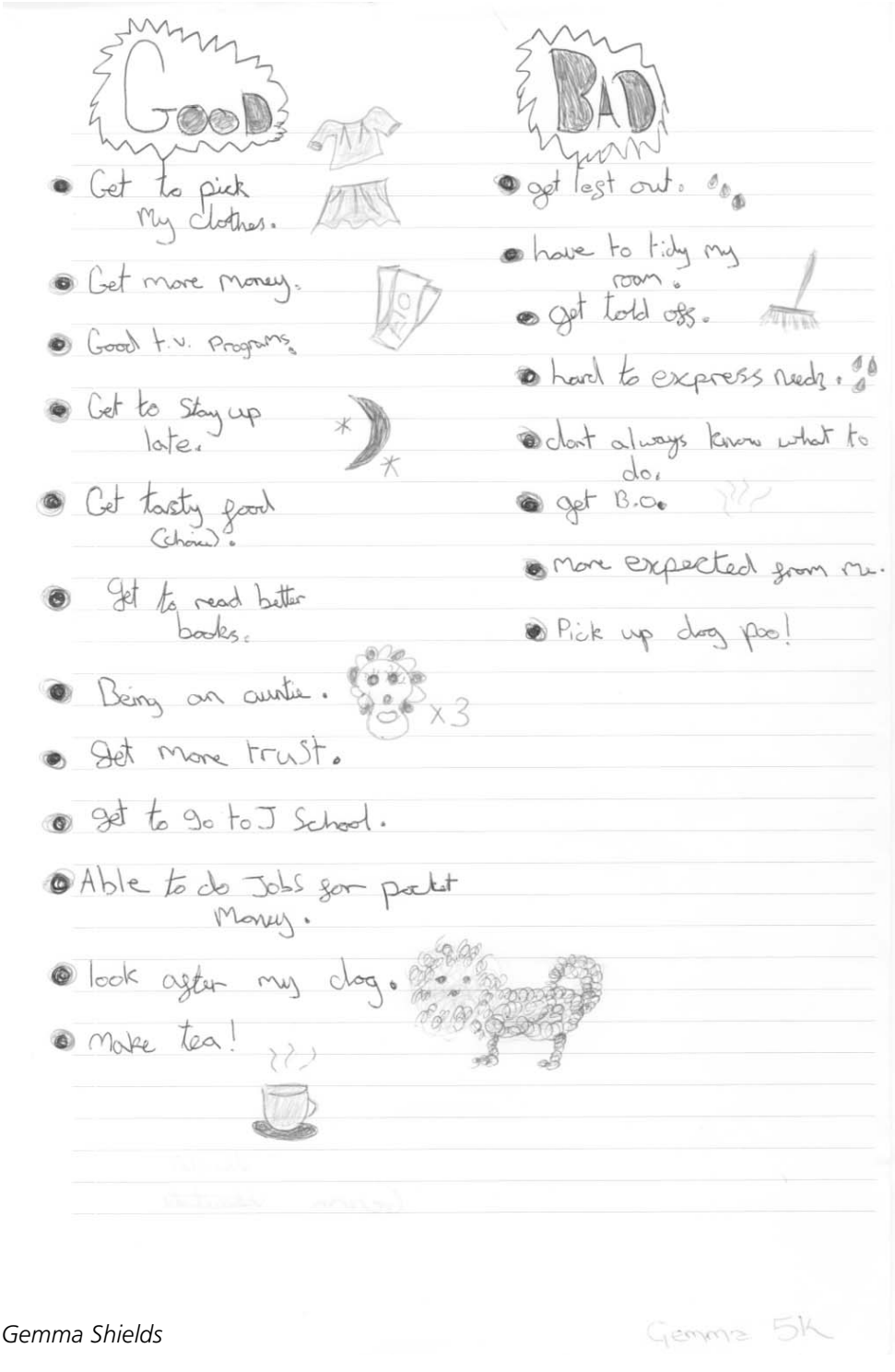
The fact that should be remembered is that young people today have never known a world without such advanced technology. Our parents and grandparents had a childhood that feels totally alien to us, a time of no mobiles, no satellite TV and what my Dad calls "decent music". But we have the advantage over them. Technology and digital communications are the future and its success lies with those who understand it and have been using it all their lives. We are not afraid or amazed by the new advances but use them as if we had never been without them.

Although we don't necessarily always appreciate it, the young people of today have the gift of a much better education than our parents had. Technology has played its part as well as new discoveries as to how children learn and the best teaching methods for different age and ability groups. Students are also being encouraged to stay in education after their GCSEs when not so long ago you were pushed into the workplace as soon as possible. Colleges and universities offer great chances for us to discover more about what we are interested in at the same time as gaining qualifications that will help us get a good job later on.

Further developments in transport and air travel also mean that different worlds are just a plane ticket away. We take our sunny foreign holidays for granted now but not so long ago it was a bank holiday day trip to Blackpool or nothing.

We also know more about the world and different cultures, (oh the wonder of TV), and are more aware of the Earth we live on. This gives us the power and the ability to stand up against things that we know are wrong. When Tony Blair and George Bush are wasting away in old folks homes it will be us who are making all the decisions and if we make the right ones we could save our world from some major environmental catastrophes waiting just around the corner.

So, what have we learnt? That to be young means to have a future of possibilities. That living after the invention of the washing machine and a load of other cool stuff will help teenagers in a future of machines. (Robots – possibly. Toasters on the moon – you never know.) And also that we have the knowledge and pretty soon the power to make the world a safer, fairer and altogether happier place to live.



Gemma Shields

Culture matters

***Abstract: David Lammy** believes that culture, sport and the arts should be at the heart of efforts to meet all five of the Every Child Matters outcomes; all of which should be central to the culture, sport and the arts services that the Government funds. The characteristics of developing education policy (autonomy, commissioning, personalisation) offer positive opportunities for the embedding of culture and creative approaches but require both schools and cultural organisations to establish new kinds of partnerships.*

David Lammy

David Lammy is Minister for Culture.

Too often the only publicity we see about this country's young people is bad publicity. Earlier this year the newspapers were full of headlines about Britain's teenager being among the 'worst in Europe' (BBC News, 2006). This followed a report by the think-tank, the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), which concluded that on almost every indicator of bad behaviour (drugs, drink, violence, promiscuity) the UK was at or near the top of the league (Margo *et al*, 2006). Clearly we face some very serious problems, particularly with those young people turned off by school and who do not go on to any further training or employment. As somebody who represents one of the most deprived constituencies in the country nothing frustrates me more than the seeing talent wasted.

One of the real pleasures of my job as Minister for Culture, however, is that I get to see the other side. Over the last couple of years I've visited so many projects that have shown me what young people can achieve if given the chance to do something positive.

One of the most memorable of these was a visit I made last year to the Pie Factory, in Thanet, an action zone run by Youth Music. What I saw there was young people, from very different backgrounds, coming together in that recording studio in a way they probably would not have the chance to anywhere else. I was amazed by the enthusiasm and real quality of a group of young DJs and beat-boxers who were working with a traditional string quartet. It was so inspiring to see two different styles of music, two sets of young people with different tastes, producing something so new and innovative. It wasn't just about music either. When all of us are worrying about social cohesion, anti-social behaviour and how to bring different sections of community together, this kind of shared space is hugely important. It is a clear example of the role of culture in building the kind of

'encounter culture' I wrote about in *Prospect* magazine recently (Lammy, 2006).

Existing provision: Arts

Projects like the one I saw in Thanet are happening up and down the country. Youth Music has 24 action zones and its wider projects have reached well over 1 million young people in 98 per cent of local authority areas. Over 90 per cent the Arts Council's regularly funded organisations have education or training programmes. These encompass a huge and diverse range of artistic, creative and cultural activities in both rural and regional areas of the country, including theatre, music, dance, combined arts, visual arts and literature. In 2003/4 these organisation ran 180,000 education sessions that were attended by 2 million children and young people.

Museums and galleries

At the same time more museums and galleries are working with schools than ever before. Last year over 2 million pupils visited a museum. They are helping to enhance and enrich delivery of the curriculum at all key stages, not just in the traditional areas of art and history but also in science, geography, citizenship, modern foreign languages and, increasingly, in supporting the teaching of literacy and numeracy.

Cultural organisations are increasingly attuned to new developments in the educational agenda. And teachers have become more adept at harnessing the skills and expertise of cultural organisations to enhance the National Curriculum. One excellent example of effective provision is the Understanding Slavery Initiative, which has seen the National Maritime Museum collaborate with National Museums Liverpool, Bristol Museums and Art Gallery, British Empire and Commonwealth Museum and Hull City Museums and Art Gallery to produce materials about the transatlantic slave trade to support the teaching of history and citizenship in school, and to offer teachers training that is designed to help them teach this potentially sensitive subject in the classroom.

When all of us are worrying about social cohesion this kind of shared space is hugely important.

Elsewhere, supported by funding from Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and DfES, the "Exploring Archives" project has used the archives of the Royal Geographical Society in London to develop a teachers' resource pack to support the teaching of citizenship and geography at Key Stages 3 and 4. Archives provide a wealth of resource material for citizenship education, and professional archivists across England have worked in partnership with teachers to develop their skills and confidence

in this area. These partnerships have ensured that the resources being developed by archives are mapped effectively against the requirements of the National Curriculum. Archives provide an important historical context for contemporary debates on issues of national culture, identity, belonging, difference, politics and what it means to be a citizen. Archives are increasingly used to discuss the more difficult aspects of citizenship, including those which confront inequality, human rights or the legacies of colonialism. Students' use of archives also helps to develop their creativity and the research skills they will need at A level and in higher education.

Sport

Sport, of course, is another match we can use to ignite passion and motivation in our young people. There are many projects happening across the country, from Sporting Champions – the Sport England funded programme bringing world class athletes into schools and local communities to help inspire and motivate young people to take part in sport – to Step into Sport, a programme that takes the motivation a step further from participation to leadership. Part of the National School Sport Strategy, Step into Sport provides a simple framework of sports leadership

The London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games provide unprecedented opportunities to inspire young people.

and volunteering opportunities for young people aged 14-19 in their local communities. It enables young people to pick up life skills and become more rounded young individuals. This includes gaining better leadership skills, improved communication, and better organisational skills. Many pupils participating in Step into Sport also go on to consider further roles in sport such as coaching and officiating.

The London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games provide unprecedented opportunities to inspire young people in a number of ways.

Creative Partnerships

Another success story is Creative Partnerships. The latest figures show that Creative Partnerships is working with over 300,000 children, in over 1,600 schools in 36 of the most deprived areas of the country. What is even more exciting for me, however, is what people are saying about the programme. All of the research that Creative Partnerships has commissioned tells the same story: Creative Partnerships is having a real impact on the lives of the people it is working with. It is providing training and CPD to both teachers and creative professionals and is impacting directly on the attainment, articulation, and aspirations of young people.

It is not the DCMS saying this – these are the views of the Burns Owen Partnership, the British Market Research Bureau, the National Foundation for Educational Research, head teachers and OFSTED.

OFSTED, in particular, was clear that Creative Partnerships has impacted on all of the Every Child Matters outcomes (OFSTED, 2006).

Roberts Review: *Nurturing creativity in young people*

Creativity and standards going hand in hand was a theme made strongly by Paul Roberts, Director of Strategy at the IdEA, in his independent review, *Nurturing Creativity in Young People* (Roberts, 2006).

Paul's report, while acknowledging that there was a lot of excellent activity taking place, set out some very clear challenges for us. He argued that the current characteristics of developing education policy (autonomy, commissioning, personalisation) offer positive opportunities for the embedding of creative approaches. He also concluded, however, that currently the system is too fragmented for schools, and ultimately young people, to make sense of.

The Government's response

In our formal response to this report, which we published earlier this month, we accepted this. One of our first actions has been to set up a new Creative and Cultural Education Advisory Board, to be chaired by Paul, which will formally advise both the DCMS and the DfES in this area. This Board, which will have representatives from all of our major stakeholders, will be responsible for implementing all of the commitments we have made in our response to the report.

These include:

- Exploring the idea of Creative Portfolios for young people, building on the success of the Arts Award run by the Arts Council and the emerging 14-19 framework.
- Finding ways to recognise and reward creative practice in Early Years settings (in the same way Artsmark currently recognises excellent arts provision in schools and building on my Department's work on Children's Play).
- Ensuring that Building Schools for the Future (BSF) provides inspirational learning environments that foster creativity.
- Revisiting the principles that inform the design of training programmes for school leaders in partnership with the National College for School Leadership.
- Incorporating creativity as a theme in all OFSTED subject surveys from 2007-08.

One particular area the Board will focus on is extended schools. I share

the view of the DfES that well-organised, safe and stimulating activities before and after school contribute to improving children's skills, confidence, behaviour, health and achievement. I also think that if we are to meet our ambitious target of all children having access to a core offer of extended services by 2010 the cultural and creative sectors need to play a full role.

Children can gain valuable learning experiences from going on cultural visits overseas to teachers simply using their school grounds imaginatively. Educational visits and out-of-school teaching can bring

Schools need to take the lead in prioritising these kinds of rich, creative approaches.

learning to life by deepening young people's understanding of the environment, history and culture and improving their personal development.

Conclusion

This idea of 'playing a full role' is absolutely crucial. The evidence shows that activities in the arts, museums, libraries, the built environment and sport can help meet every single one of the Every Child Matters outcomes. The kind of creative experiences they offer are central to young people enjoying and achieving but are also a crucial part of young people learning to be healthy, stay safe, make a positive contribution and, ultimately, achieve economic well-being.

As the Roberts Review told us, the developing characteristics of the education system (autonomy, commissioning, personalisation) offer a great chance to embed these things.

This shift also requires a new kind of sustained partnership between schools, DCMS and the sectors it represents. On the one hand schools need to take the lead in prioritising these kinds of rich, creative approaches, making the most of the opportunities that are out there and using their devolved budgets. On the other, the cultural sector needs to move away from the idea of delivering a set range of services to a position where it tailors what it offers more directly to the needs of schools and the outcomes that they are trying to achieve.

This is particularly important as we gear up for the London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games. A key part of the vision of the Games is "to capture the imagination of young people around the world". Given this we need to move to the position where the 'DCMS' offer is considered part of every young person's basic rights. We need culture and sport to be viewed in the same way people see schools and hospitals – not as an add-on but part of the very fabric of what makes us a civilised society.

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Websites

Artsmark http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/artsmark/

Creative Partnerships http://www.creative-partnerships.com/

Department for Culture, Media and Sport http://www.culture.gov.uk/ (Sear for work on children's play)

Youth Music. http://www.youthmusic.org.uk/

Footnote

'**Walking with Curators**' is a new series of seminars from the NUT CPD Programme in partnership with museums in London, Bristol, Liverpool, Newcastle and Hull. These seminars will explore how teachers can work more effectively with museum staff and how artefacts can be used to underpin children's learning about the abolition of slavery. (www.teachers.org.uk/cpd)

Detoxing childhood

Abstract: *A letter to the* Daily Telegraph *in September 2006, about 'toxic childhood" achieved its intention of stimulating debate. While most commentators agreed that there are concerns about contemporary childhood, others were sceptical. In this article, the author of the letter argues that – while there's cause to be optimistic about the overall effects of recent cultural change, and while many children are still safe from unpleasant side effects – we cannot be complacent. She also suggests how schools could help to "detox childhood".*

Sue Palmer

Sue Palmer MEd FRSA FEA is well known to British teachers as a writer, broadcaster and consultant on the education of young children. She is a regular contributor to the *Times Educational Supplement* and other journals and the author of more than 200 books, TV programmes and software for three to 12-year-olds.

Sitting in a BBC newsroom recently waiting to go on air, I spotted the researcher's notes on the story, including the ones about me. Argh! Under my usual educational pedigree was a scrawled PS: *She thinks all children are doomed.* How did it come to this? I've never thought of myself as a Cassandra figure. Much more, indeed, of a cock-eyed optimist – the Year 5 teacher of whom the head once remarked, "Sue Palmer? Oh, all her geese are swans."

And I still think children are swans, born to glide and soar, every last one of them. It's why I became a primary teacher. I believe passionately that, far from being doomed, children are the bright hope of the future. Which is why we adults must do everything possible to ensure they grow up whole and healthy, bright-eyed about work and learning, and able to rattle along together, collaborating and cooperating to keep society in good shape.

This the reason I wrote my book, *Toxic Childhood: how modern life is damaging our children…and what we can do about it* (please note the "What We Can Do About It"). It's also why, at the beginning of this school year, a colleague and I rallied "110 experts", including a dozen of so professors, three Children's Laureates, and several household names, to sign the following letter to the *Daily Telegraph*:

> *"As professionals and academics from a range of backgrounds, we are deeply concerned at the escalating incidence of childhood depression and children's behavioural and developmental conditions. We believe this is largely due to a lack of*

understanding, on the part of both politicians and the general public, of the realities and subtleties of child development.

Since children's brains are still developing, they cannot adjust – as full-grown adults can – to the effects of ever more rapid technological and cultural change. They still need what developing human beings have always needed, including real food (as opposed to processed "junk"), real play (as opposed to sedentary, screen-based entertainment), first-hand experience of the world they live in and regular interaction with the real-life significant adults in their lives.

They also need time. In a fast-moving hyper-competitive culture, today's children are expected to cope with an ever-earlier start to formal schoolwork and an overly academic test-driven primary curriculum. They are pushed by market forces to act and dress like mini-adults and exposed via the electronic media to material which would have been considered unsuitable for children even in the very recent past.

Our society rightly takes great pains to protect children from physical harm, but seems to have lost sight of their emotional and social needs. However, it's now clear that the mental health of an unacceptable number of children is being unnecessarily compromised, and that this is almost certainly a key factor in the rise of substance abuse, violence and self-harm amongst our young people.

This is a complex socio-cultural problem to which there is no simple solution, but a sensible first step is to encourage parents and policy-makers to start talking about ways in which we can improve children's well-being. We therefore propose as a matter of urgency that

- *public debate be initiated on child-rearing in the 21st century*
- *this issue should be central to public policy-making in coming decades."*

This letter was intended originally for *The Times*, as that seemed the traditional home for such a missive. But *The Times* – for reasons on which we can only speculate, but must remember are directly influenced by Rupert Murdoch – turned it down, so we sent it instead to the *Telegraph*. We especially did not go for the *Guardian* as most of our signatories were natural *Guardian* readers and we thought we would be preaching to the converted. How deeply innocent that decision now seems. The wrath of the *Guardian* was at times quite unedifying … but we certainly got a lot of publicity.

The letter summed up the major concerns expressed in *Toxic Childhood*, concerns to which primary teachers have alerted me over the last ten years and which the book gave me the opportunity to research. As an independent inservice provider, I travel all over the UK giving talks on language and literacy teaching, and on my very first day on the circuit in

1995, infant teachers told me that their pupils' language and listening skills were deteriorating. It was those teachers' words, echoed by thousands of other teachers all over the UK and beyond, that alerted me to what at first seemed an educational problem and then, as I found out more, a social problem of alarming dimensions.

The past is another planet

Over the last 20 years the pace of social and cultural change, after gathering speed throughout the twentieth century, accelerated enormously. Like most adults, I must admit to having found these changes rather thrilling. Technology has transformed our homes – PCs, laptops, email, the worldwide web, cable, satellite and digital TV, camcorders, DVD, computer games, play stations, Ipods, mobile phones, text messaging, webcams – and the changes bring with them enormous potential for the evolution of human thought. Just as, 500 years ago, the printing press ushered in the Age of Reason, it seems possible we're on the verge of another great Renaissance.

But with any cultural upheaval of this kind, there are also unexpected side-effects. And these changes have led many children into a consumer-driven, sedentary, screen-based lifestyle that – according to the research I collated – is now undermining their ability to learn and to get along with other children. The process has been compounded by changes in the family: more parents are now bringing up children alone, mothers are much more likely to work and, in a fast-moving, fast-changing workplace, the pressures of work for all parents have hugely increased. Marriages are less stable and cohabitation and divorce widespread. While – for women, at least – this is probably an acceptable trade-off for increased sexual equality, the consequent lack of a secure family base can be emotionally destabilising for children.

What's more, in all the tumult, many parents and most politicians seem to have lost sight of certain age-old truths about child-rearing. Our culture might be developing at a fair old lick, but that doesn't mean children develop any more quickly. They are the same biological entities they've always been, and need the same human nurturing they've always needed if they are to grow resilient and strong. This nurture underpins physical well-being, the development of self-control and communication skills, and the emotional resilience children need for successful socialisation. Indeed, the more complex the society – and these days it's very, very complex – the more effort we must put in to nurture and socialise our young.

Given how fast everything's happened, it's not surprising that ancient child-rearing wisdom has been temporarily eclipsed. Many of the old reference points – lore from the extended family, cultural and religious traditions – have been swept away. But unfortunately something else has

insinuated itself into the vacuum left behind: the jungle law of 'the market'. It takes a village to raise a child, and today's children are being raised in the electronic global village of mass communications, driven by consumer culture.

Market-driven competition has now begun to inform child-rearing methods. Everything – from learning to read to dressing up like an adult – has to happen sooner and faster every year. Childhood is becoming a sort of race, and the glittering prizes are consumer durables. Our culture tells parents that anything freely available (love, smiles, talk, play, sand, water, trees to climb) is clearly worthless. "Don't waste time just being with your children: work longer hours so you can Buy Them More Stuff! To play properly today, your child needs a Play Station."

What's more, 'the Market' passes its messages on to children as soon as they can press the ON switch. So even when parents realise what's going wrong and try to return to biological necessities, the children don't listen. A harassed mother offering a choice between carrots and peas is on a hiding to nothing when a marketing man in the corner of the room drowns her out with adverts for pizza and coke.

Playground culture throughout the developed world has now been infiltrated by market forces promoting a competitive, consumer driven culture of cool.

Researching *Toxic Childhood* made me deeply sympathetic to contemporary parents. The cultural landscape in which they're raising their children is utterly different from the one in which they were brought up themselves. LP Hartley, writing in the mid-twentieth century, famously said that "The past is a foreign country – they do things differently there." Well, the past isn't a foreign country any longer – it's another planet.

Inform and empower

Of course, in spite of all this, many parents still do an excellent job and many children still turn out fine. Schools too, despite the tests-targets-league-table culture imposed by a macho, market-enthused Government, often manage to work wonders. In response to the *Telegraph* letter, a number of columnists railed against us for failing to mention this. In fact, if the *Telegraph* had offered me 2000 words – as the NUT has kindly done here – I would definitely have pointed it out, but a five paragraph letter didn't give much scope for subtlety. And for interviews, 20 minutes or so conversation is digested into a few simple sound bites. All I can do, whenever people question my sound bites, is refer them to my book.

But recognising that many parents, children and schools are holding up well in this increasingly toxic environment does not preclude us from worrying about the effects of this culture on less fortunate parents,

children and schools. *Toxic Childhood* has ten chapters (covering: diet; outdoor play and exercise; sleep; communication; changes in the family; childcare; education; marketing and peer pressure; growing up in an electronic village; parenting and society) and at the end of each is a post script entitled Mind the Gap, pointing out how ill-effects impact much more on disadvantaged families.

Indeed, teachers and youth workers I meet from socially disadvantaged areas are now very worried indeed about the effects of "toxic childhood syndrome" on these children. And they fear the problem will seep steadily up the social strata. Even where parents take great pains to protect their own children, they cannot keep them hidden from the world: playground culture throughout the developed world has now been infiltrated by market forces promoting a competitive, consumer-driven "culture of cool". So there's no point in taking a Panglossian "all's for the best in the best of all possible worlds" attitude. We need to look seriously at what's going on, and to find ways of detoxing childhood. Addressing our own children's lifestyle is not enough. We have to detoxify the global village where they – and their children – will grow up. And, personally, I don't think this should too hard to achieve. We simply need to do what good teachers have always done: inform and empower.

We have to make sure the information parents need about children's developmental needs is widely and readily available – and in a form strong enough to override the siren calls of the market. Then, as a society, we have to empower parents to take back control of their children's destiny. That can't be done by government initiatives or top-down prescription – as teachers know only too well, this type of solution merely deskills and disempowers its recipients. Empowerment has to be a grass-roots movement, with informed parents communicating and supporting each other, then rallying real "parent power" to achieve the types of local and national support they deem necessary. So how do we get an "information and empowerment" movement rolling?

Well, it seems to me that handy little agencies planted in the middle of most communities already share with parents responsibility for raising the next generation: schools. It should be relatively easy for schools to distribute information about children's developmental needs. What's more, schools are geographically well-placed to offer a meeting ground for parents keen to look for local solutions. So I reckon that if schools can resist the temptation to preach to parents or to try and poach parental responsibility, we could help nudge everything back on track in no time…

But then, I always was a cock-eyed optimist.

See also www.suepalmer.co.uk and *Toxic Childhood: how modern life is damaging our children…and what we can do about it* by Sue Palmer (Orion, 2006)

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A crisis for efficacy?

***Abstract: Bethan Marshall** reviews the evidence behind current concerns that school pupils in England are suffering from over-testing. She reveals an education system in which increasing numbers of teachers believe they are doing what is required rather that what is best for their pupils – certainly in terms of developing independent learning skills. Some teachers mitigate this by using Assessment for Learning strategies; but for Bethan this finding should not diminish calls for reform.*

Bethan Marshall

Dr Bethan Marshall is senior lecturer in English education at King's College, London.

The average pupil in England, who stays in full time education up to the age of 18, will take over 100 high stakes, public exams during the course of their school career. This statistic puts young people in England around the top of the exam-taking league in the west. It is a statistic that is beginning to cause so much concern that even the Archbishop of Canterbury, in his launch on an inquiry into the state of childhood, was moved to identify the 'pressure to achieve' in tests as one of the prime causes of crisis amongst the young (BBC, 2006). Much of the rhetoric around exam pressure, including, to an extent, the Archbishop's, revolves around the mental stress and anxiety that such frequent testing causes. To which the DfES's usual answer is, as it was to the Archbishop, that pupils 'cope well' with being examined.

Capacity to learn

Yet perhaps a better question to ask, and one that is less tritely deflected, is how the sheer volume of formal examining affects children's capacity to learn. One of the most telling studies on the effects of the testing, on pupils and teachers alike, is a publication by the Assessment Reform Group (ARG). The findings in *Testing, Motivation and Learning* are based on a detailed examination of 19 research studies, which, as the title suggests, addressed the impact of testing on learning and motivation. In undertaking this survey, which began with a much broader literature review, the group asked: 'What is the nature of that impact and does pupils'

learning benefit from it?' (ARG, 2002, p1).

The answer to that question was, in the main, that excessive testing of pupils tends to be detrimental to pupil learning and motivation. While their findings did show that teachers can offset the negative effects of testing, and that a focus on what has now become known as "assessment for learning" can have many benefits (Black *et al*, 2004), this happened despite rather than because of high stakes tests. Indeed much of the evidence in the ARG report suggested that the culture of testing undermined the importance of learning as a means to improvement. They found, for example, that pupils tended to attribute success or failure to external sources including innate ability or luck and so made them more passive in their learning.

The work of psychologist C.S Dweck (1999) highlights why such an attitude is so antithetical to developing a belief in the value of learning. She contrasts what she calls incremental with entity theories of ability, and task versus ego approaches to learning. Those with entity and ego approaches are far less likely, she argues, to see or value the process of learning as a means of improvement. As the writers of the ARG report suggest, children and young people holding such beliefs tend to attribute success or failure to circumstances beyond their control. The problem is compounded, for the writers of *Testing, Motivation and Learning*, by the preponderance of practice tests. These, they found re-enforced the significance of the tests in pupils' minds and made them focus on exam strategies rather than learning. The ARG report concluded that, "Repeated practice tests are, therefore, detrimental to higher order thinking" (ARG, 2002, p4).

Excessive testing of pupils tends to be detrimental to pupil learning and motivation.

The effects were particularly damaging to pupils who did not do well in the tests. The ARG report noted a clear correlation between self-esteem and achievement: low achievement leading to low self-esteem. "One impact of the test [National curriculum tests] was the reduction in self-esteem of the pupils who did not do well" (ARG, 2004). Moreover, "Being labelled as failures has an impact on how they feel about their ability to learn." The problem was further compounded by the fact that, typically, timed tests assessed a very narrow range of skills: "When tests become the main criteria by which pupils are judged, and by which they judge themselves, those whose strengths lie outside the subjects tested have a low opinion of their capabilities." The cumulative effect of each of these problems, "is to widen the gap between low and high achieving pupils". (ARG, 2004)

Teaching to the test

But it is not only pupils' attitude towards learning that is constrained by

the dominance of tests. The potential scope of learning is also limited, as teachers, feeling pressure for pupils to succeed, teach to the test and so restrict the curriculum on offer (Gardner, 2006). More recent research undertaken as part of the Teaching and Learning Research Project, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, revealed the extent of the problem, both in terms of the effect on pupils' learning and the constraints of the curriculum.

The Learning How to Learn Project was originally designed to ask what learning to learn might be; how effective it was in improving the educational experience of pupils and how schools might embrace it (James et al, 2006). One particular focus became the way in which schools might enable pupils to become independent or autonomous learners. An initial hypothesis had been that the adoption of assessment for learning practices

There was a marked gap between what teachers claimed to value in terms of learning and what they actually saw practiced.

might be a crucial element of this process. To explore whether or not this was so, researchers at Cambridge, King's College London, Reading and the Open Universities worked, over a period of four years, with over 40 primary and secondary schools and some 1,300 teachers. The research, which was undertaken at three levels – classrooms, whole school and networks – included whole school and pupil questionnaires, teacher interviews, videoed lessons and regular meetings with all the participant schools.

The whole school questionnaire data revealed one of the starkest findings of the research. Teachers completed a bi-variant questionnaire in which they were asked to respond to each individual question in two ways – one, what they valued and two what they felt happened in practice. Three strong orthogonal factors emerged from the questionnaire responses – making learning explicit, promoting learner autonomy and performance orientation. In two out of the three factors there was a marked gap between what teachers claimed to value in terms of learning and what they actually saw practiced. Around 80 per cent of teachers placed high value on those activities they felt would promote learning autonomy but did not practice them. Conversely, the same percentage valued little about the performance-orientated culture in which they worked but perceived it as dominating what they did (for a fuller account see Pedder and James, 2006).

The practice-values gap highlighted by the questionnaire may be evidence of what Woods, Jeffrey, Troman and Boyle (1997) called constraint. Woods analysed primary teachers and charted their progression from what he called *dilemma* through, what he termed *tension* to what he describes as

constraint. He defines tensions as "the product of trying to accommodate two or more opposing courses of where choice is limited or circumscribed". Constraints are, "Structural, in the sense that they are beyond personal resolution within the immediate context. Constraint implies compulsion, force repression of natural feelings." Moreover, these constraints are not simply practical, they also constitute what Woods calls an "assault on values". In these circumstances what occurs is "a foreshortening of choice for the teacher in resolving dilemmas" which, where significant, produces "tension" and, "where there was felt to be very little choice at all" – "constraint".

Performance culture

While the questionnaire data is suggestive of Woods' analysis it is not conclusive. Interviews with 37 focal primary and secondary teachers involved in the project, on their beliefs about learning, however, do begin to put some flesh on the bones of the questionnaire findings. What these interviews highlight is the way teachers believe the performance culture acts as a direct impediment to pupil learning. Stephen Ball describes what he calls the "dominance of performativity within the new managerialist culture of schools" (Ball, 1998b, 2006) and there is a sense in which this data tells a similar story; it is the context in which the teachers in the L2HL project operated. But these interviews lend Ball's narrative a significant sub plot, which, to extend the metaphor for a moment, affects the main action – the learning that takes place within schools. The interviews of these focal teachers go beyond the institutional managerial structures, which Ball considers, and begin to unpick how and why teachers believe this performance orientated culture impacts on their effectiveness as teachers and the pupils' ability to learn.

If we look at the coincidence of two of the major codes (derived from our analysis of the data) – performance orientation and barriers to learning – we find three further sub categories which are important to understanding how teachers feel constrained. As Woods might describe it, the circumstances in which they work, which are curriculum coverage, national testing and the tick box culture.

Running like a leit motif throughout the data is a sense of the time pressure that arises from curriculum coverage.

> *"Well the curriculum can interfere in as much as you are pushed for time to get through things and therefore, often it's a race against time to … and you feel sometimes a slower pace for certain areas would be more useful but we haven't got the time allocated for it"* (Alison, primary).

A race against time

This teacher's use of the metaphor of a race is implicit in many of the teachers' comments about the pressure of curriculum coverage. They frequently talk in terms of movement, about 'rush' and 'pace' in relation to the quantity of material to be covered. "The curriculum is so full, you're expected to cover so much in such a short time, that you feel it's got to be pacey. You've got to go, go, go" (primary).

The testing regime adds to the pressure. "You just need to be independent learners and sometimes it doesn't work and then you have to say well look you have to do it because it's your GCSE exam. It's here. It's in the syllabus. You have to do it (secondary)." Another secondary teacher observes, "What do they do to help themselves to learn when they are forced to learn things, literally learn things by rote, like for tests?" Or again, "At the time of testing they could do it because they were drilled to do it. They needed to do it. But by the time they come to us they can't do it because they hadn't really learned what was behind it (secondary)." One teacher concludes, "I've written down learning versus testing…I think that assessment impedes learning. There is so much emphasis on it at the moment (secondary)." Another comments, "We move and we snapshot areas and we do it because we have an exam at the end of it and we have to cover areas that have to be examined. But that stops learning. That stops developing their love of learning (primary)."

For many teachers this creates considerable tension:

> *"The ethical dilemma is simply the fact that you are continually teaching to try and get good results in exams and things and we know that there's a whole love of other stuff that might be in there that's really good learning…they're not going to get kids through the exams. And you know we need to get the balance right between pushing them towards the exam and learning in general"* (Molly, primary).

She describes this, and her anxiety that tests put too much pressure on pupils at too young an age, as her 'personal view'. Her 'personal view' and values are a mere parenthesis to the system in which both she and her pupils operate. The dilemma can be compounded by a sense of the valueless nature of the tests themselves:

> *"We have to work to the best we can to see that our students achieve the best they can at the exams. I don't see it's the best way of assessing, sitting in a room and seeing if they can answer questions over two one and a half hour slots or whatever it is. Is that the fairest way to test someone's mathematical ability? I'm not convinced"* (Nigel, secondary).

And then there is the tick box culture, which helps neither teacher nor

pupil. All but one of the frequent references to tick boxes or checklists provide evidence of Ball's (1994, 2006) culture of performativity rather than as an indicator of a learning organization. They occur as bureaucratic and external impositions on their own working conditions (MacBeath, 2006).

As one secondary teacher comments of her class, "There are misconceptions about learning. They have a certain tick-box mentality. If they've done something they can tick it off their list and forget about it." While another primary teacher says of herself, "I feel under pressure to press on and make sure I've covered everything and I've ticked all the boxes, whereas actually what I'd like to do is go back and teach something again." She goes on to add, "I sometimes feel I'm teaching in order to tick boxes…whereas actually I just want to get on with using the assessment to teach the next bit but I'm ploughing through the paperwork."

The observations of these teachers appear to present a picture of unremitting gloom. They describe, in the main, a school system in which they feel unable to put into practice what they believe. The questionnaire data, however, showed one cluster of teachers who were different (James and Pedder, 2006). About 20 per cent of those teachers surveyed had almost no gap between what they valued in terms of promoting learner autonomy and what they felt was practiced.

Then there is the tick box culture, which helps neither teacher nor pupil.

This percentage corresponded with findings from the video data, where again 20 per cent of teachers observed put into practice what we have called the spirit of AfL, as opposed to the letter. Essential to understanding the difference between the spirit and letter of AfL is the extent to which classroom activities were designed to promote pupil autonomy. Around one in five teachers did this creatively and productively, and there is much to learn from these teachers. It would appear from the interview data that these teachers held a particular set of beliefs about themselves as learners and about the processes of learning itself that enabled them to put into practice what they valued – namely the importance of encouraging pupils to be independent learners. (For a fuller discussion of these findings, see Marshall and Drummond, 2006.) But despite this group of teachers what is also evident from the data was the very real difficulty of translating AfL procedures or strategies into classrooms that promote pupil autonomy in the performance orientated culture in which they work.

The conclusions can only be speculative. But there does seem very strong evidence to suggest that (taking together the questionnaire data, interview data and lesson observations) the current school climate is not conducive to fostering independent learning in its pupils. When the findings of the Learning How to Learn Project are combined with those of

the ARG report, the case for radical change in our testing culture is overwhelming. That a small number of teachers are able to overcome the circumstances in which they work should not be an excuse for avoiding reform. And while we can learn much from them about how to encourage independent learning in the current regime, a system in which only one in five teachers feels able to practice what they preach needs to end.

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Is this a good time to be young???
you don't have to earn money bcz having a job you can just let your parents work all day to earn money
!
Also children have very strong imagination
lots of you can do activities for example swimming, acting, dancing gymnastics and playing an instrument


Im Léa and this is what its like to be 9 years old
you can go round to friend houses or have slee
3+4=7
12+6=18 well done
you have to go to school, now Im not saying school is bad its just that I enjoy some lessons bitter than others
Its up to your parents to decide whether your going round to a friends house or not which is quite annoying
you don't have to do things parents have to do like cleaning the dishes, doing the washing, doing the ironing and doing the accounts. What a nightmare To tell you the truth, I don't really like food shopping and that's another thing parents have to do once or twice a week!

Léa Sawicki

The assault on childhood and parenting; why urgent action is needed

Nigel Baker

Nigel Baker is Deputy General Secretary of Birmingham NUT. He has taught in primary schools for over 15 years. He was the author and mover of the motion 'Commercialisation, Child Health and Advertising Aimed at Children' which was unanimously passed at NUT Conference 2003. Since then he has represented the national union on related issues, particularly the link between nutrition and behaviour.

***Abstract: Nigel Baker** believes that the wellbeing of children is being undermined by too-rapid cultural change and exploitation tactics by advertisers. Meanwhile their parents are decreasingly able to counter these influences as a result of fragmentation of social and community networks. Nigel believes that urgent and radical actions are needed to prevent the 'culture of cool' doing permanent damage to our society.*

The pace of change in society seems to increase exponentially, even my 19-year-old daughter talks about children 5-10 years younger than her as living radically different lives to the one she experienced at their age. As a 40-something year old I constantly question myself as I repeatedly see behaviours, and influences on behaviours, of children and young people that almost make me despair. Is this the whinging of the older generation at the irresponsibility of youth or is there really something more fundamental at play?

Like the authors (Greenfield *et al*, 2006) of the open letter to the *Daily Telegraph* of September 2006, which included writers, scientists and a variety of child development experts, I am absolutely certain that there is a crisis in childhood. I also believe there is a crisis in parenting. These crises are a result of a collision of factors, first and foremost being relentless, unregulated marketing aimed specifically at children and young people.

The second is the widespread fracturing of family/neighbourhood support networks. These two main factors have a number of related influences including education, play, diet, wider cultural norms etc, and surrounding all of these are two key multipliers: one being the sheer pace of change; the second a climate, since the early 1980s if not earlier, of non-intervention by government in socio-cultural life (fear of the 'nanny state' stigma).

The market rates

The subordination of rational analysis to the rule of the market which has been immensely damaging in so many different ways has had a particularly pernicious effect on childhood. The advertising industry has over the last 30 years realised the immense commercial rewards that accrue by targeting children. Children are perfect targets because they:

- Do not have the skills to differentiate between the spin and reality (though it begins to dawn from the early teens on).
- Are potential customers for life and as such the aim is to 'brand them' at least as much as it is to sell them specific items.
- Are key influences on a wide range of parental buying decisions, (from foods to cars).
- They (especially teenagers and 'pre-teens') are highly conformist and therefore particularly vulnerable to 'lowest common denominator' marketing strategies such as gender specific toys.

Marketing is dominated by big brands, billion dollar multi-nationals whose superficially creative marketing strategies are underpinned by a very simply central strand, or lowest common denominator (LCD). The LCD for the twenty-first century is what I call the 'culture of cool'. It is sold by music companies, computer game companies, the fashion and sport industries and of course the drug pushers (legal and illegal – but mainly the alcohol industry).

Directly, indirectly, subliminally and even unconsciously advertisers sell the 'culture of cool'. They have twisted and abused a simple evolutionary tension, which is the desire of children and young people to have and do what those a year or two older than them can have and do. Furthermore a multiplier effect operates because once the 10 year olds are doing what the 12-year-olds used to do; and the 12-year-olds what the 14 -year-olds used to do, the next cohorts will want to do what those 4 years older than them used to do and so on.

Exploiting growing-up

The culture of cool is a twenty-first century "Lord of the Flies" on our streets and in our schools; rights without responsibilities; or at least,

rights beyond their years and responsibilities below their years. The natural tension between youth and authority is pushed to the nth degree, so that adults; parents, teachers and passers by are increasingly stripped of appropriate authority. Just what is an adult supposed to do when verbally abused by a couple of 12-year-olds in the street whom they don't know?

The marketers have unleashed a new order of social control centred on the child as consumer, bank rolled by increasing parental indebtedness and time poor relationships.

In schools specifically, the "culture of cool" manifests itself in socially desirable qualities that are overwhelmingly counter-productive to successful and rewarding learning.

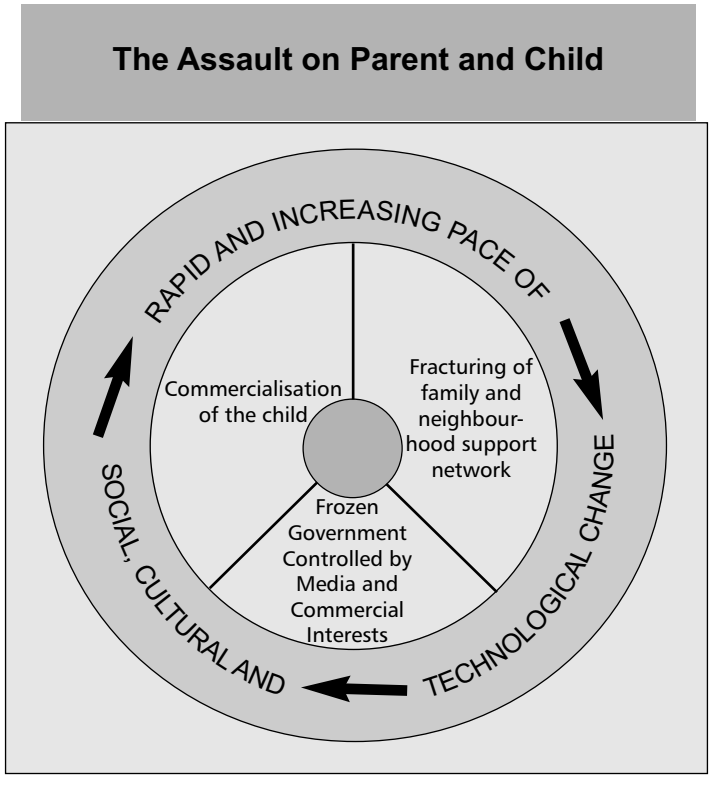
It breaks down something like this:

COOL	UNCOOL
'Hard' – aggressive	Caring
'Not bothered' (lazy/unmotivated)	Trying/ interested
Low marks (not achieving)	Achieving
The right clothing	Appropriate clothing
Junk food	Healthy food
Drinking, smoking, sexualised behaviour	'Moderation', resisting temptation/pressure

Another illustration of the cultural shift is the new meaning of words, so that 'bad', 'wicked' and 'sick' have superseded 'good', 'brilliant' and 'fantastic' in the lexicon of positive adjectives.

The brilliantly simple marketing target of exploiting children and young people's anti-authoritarian tendencies (yes, we had them too in the 70s) has opened up a Pandora's box of problems, whose lid will take a mighty effort to force shut. Boys, in particular have succumbed to the strategists; white working class boys are now the most underachieving group in England. Whilst this is also reflection of broader socio-economic factors, the fact that white working class boys have slipped to the bottom is a clear indication of another malaise at play. In *The Economics of Acting White*, the Harvard economist Roland G. Fryer (Austen-Smith and Fryer, 2003) tells how a high-achieving boy moving into a new area fell foul of this culture: "I became a target….I got all A's and was hated for it; I spoke correctly and was called a punk. I had to learn a new language simply to deal with the threats." The boy was nine years old. (Palmer, 2006)

Equally worrying is the growing challenge to the authority of teachers and other educational professionals. Verbal assaults on teachers are commonplace in many of our schools; they are rarely formally recorded.



Physical assaults are increasing too (NUT, 2006). Verbal commands in corridors and school yards are routinely ignored. A further relatively new factor of real concern is the growing incidence of sexual harassment of female staff by secondary school boys, including direct inappropriate physical contact.

It is not in the interests of teachers or pupils to pretend that these things are not happening. It is, however, vital that a no blame approach to addressing the overall problem is taken. The behaviour of children and young people is, as it always has been, directly related to the cultural environment. Given the 'culture of cool' is it any wonder that these behaviours are flourishing?

I have found myself attacked by some for criticising working-class youth culture and, when I have supported parenting initiatives, for being a 'middle-class person telling working class people what to do'. This view is naïve, simplistic and doctrinaire. First of all, this is not a working class culture; it is a culture manufactured by big business. Secondly, it is a culture detested by most working class people. Thirdly, supporting parents by trained experts in childcare and parenting is no different from supporting parents by suggesting they seek the advice of doctors when their children are sick and teachers when they want them to learn!

Where are the parents?

Running children and young people very close as victims of child commercialisation are, of course, their parents. I believe parenting has probably never been more challenging, certainly in terms of the complexity of demands and the struggle against a commercially driven agenda for children's hearts and minds.

Parents now have to counter actively the commercialised, super powered agenda of junk food addiction, brand loyalty and image consciousness in children as youn as five or six; issues that 30–40 years ago simply didn't exist.

In a market driven economy, the lowest common denominator again applies when it comes to food. Humans have an evolutionary predisposition to enjoy and even gorge on sugary, fatty foods; simply because for 99 per cent of our existence as a species, food has been very hard to come by. As a result, the chance to fatten up from time to time was of real value. Unfortunately now we can fatten up once every five minutes and for many adults and children it is a hard urge to quell. Our slavery to the market is at the expense of our children's mental and physical health. It is as if we are in the middle of a vast uncontrolled experiment to see the effects of depriving millions of children of significant amounts of their bodies' essential minerals, vitamins and fats! More important even than the epidemic of obesity is the fact that millions of children are very seriously lacking in omega 3; the most important nutritional element in brain development. The lack of serious government attention to this issue alone is quite scandalous.

The culture of cool is a twenty-first century 'Lord of the Flies'

The crisis in parenting, like the crisis of childhood is not the fault of parents. Twenty-first century parents not only have commercialisation to counter, but they have seen traditional networks of family and neighbourhood support severely eroded. This is not a simple issue of single parent families and divorce; much more it is the lack of a range of supportive adults to turn to for advice, mentoring, sharing, providing time out, being a watchful eye, etc. In the absence of these networks it is the duty of the state to do a bit of 'nannying' by providing high quality childcare, advice on parenting and facilitating networks of support. Once again our evolutionary skills as parents have been grossly outpaced by social changes.

The evidence of the value of early intervention has been so obvious for so long, especially to teachers. Given this it is strange that so many still baulk at the need to give parents and children of all social classes the support they need to get their relationships right and cope with the demands of twenty-first century living. There is a strong body of

professional opinion which consider parenting style to be the most significant determinant of a child's behaviour and self–image.

To quote Kirsty License, Specialist Registrar in Public Health Medicine, Oxford City Primary Care Trust:

> *"The existence of at least one good parent-child relationship, characterized by affection, approval, appropriate supervision and authoritative discipline, is associated with greater emotional resilience, and positive self-esteem in the child. This can help the child to combat the possible adverse outcomes of a poor social and economic environment. Promoting positive mental health in childhood is therefore closely bound up with the promotion of positive parenting"* (Licence, 2004)

It is vital that misplaced emphasis by the Government and others on parenting classes being 'punishment' and the associated blame culture is countered by a strong positive message that good advice on parenting and systems of support could change the life opportunities for millions.

Urgent and radical action is needed – the market place must be regulated. All advertising aimed at children should be very tightly regulated or simply banned and parental support programmes should be freely available to all!

I will never forget what catalysed my personal involvement with these issues – an advert so unscrupulous that it requires no commentary, simply a description. The advert, for Frosted Shreddies, was in cartoon style and showed a spotty, gawky-looking child bird watching. The child then spied a bowl of tasty sugar-encrusted cereal and ate a spoonful. Said child, in true cartoon fashion exploded. Off-screen to the right, entered cool kid, baseball hat on back to front – you know the one. He took a spoonful of sugar-encrusted cereal, 'yum yum' said he; no explosion. Cue punchline: "Frosted Shreddies Too Cool for Geeks!"

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Should schools be teaching happiness?

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***Abstract: Anthony Seldon** and **Ian Morris** believe that there is no more important task for schools than teaching happiness – or wellbeing as it is more accurately described. Here, they describe how all students at Wellington College experience wellbeing classes. Each lesson starts with two regular features: meditation and 'blessing counting' followed by various elements of the skills of wellbeing. These may only become fully meaningful for students later but should equip them with life skills for the rest of their lives.*

"Happiness" was the new buzzword of 2006. A host of books was published on the subject, including on the history, philosophy and politics of happiness. Every newspaper carried articles on the subject and even David Cameron, the Conservative Party Leader, started to say that an objective of government policy should be to maximise "general well-being" (GWB) rather than the traditional target of maximising Gross National Product (GNP). The year finished with *The Economist* magazine (2006a, 2006b) devoting its front cover to happiness, and many of the pages inside; and the *New York Times* looking at why happiness classes have become so prevalent in American universities. Truly, the idea has come of age.

But can and should we be teaching happiness in our schools? Everyone seems to have a view. When Wellington College, an independent senior school in Berkshire, announced that it was to be teaching happiness (or well-being, as it should be called), there were howls of derision from the right wing press and scorn from the left. The right regarded any attempt to teach children how to be happy and to look after their minds, bodies and emotions, as a dangerous distraction from "real teaching". The left had traditional contempt for any idea emanating from private schools, coupled

with a view that "this kind of thing is all right for posh kids, but not in the real world". I have tried not to caricature either view point (sadly, I have in fact represented both accurately).

This article is in two parts. The first part, written by Anthony Seldon, discusses why all schools in Britain should be teaching well-being, and the second, by Ian Morris, Head of Philosophy and Religion at Wellington, describes the course, as it is taught at the school.

The reasons why

I believe that there is no more important task for any school than to ensure that its children leave at the age of 11, 16 or 18 knowing more about who they are; what they want to do with their lives; how to manage and look after themselves; and how to relate well to others and to their environment around them. All these are the core of well-being lessons. The conventional curriculum in schools today, meanwhile, gives young people, more or less well, the skills and knowledge they need to learn to be able to work and live in modern society.

I believe that the present education system in Britain is badly out of line. What is currently studied in schools is the product of what universities, employers and government have put there. Interestingly, these three bodies are far from happy with school leavers. Universities increasingly find A level to be such a blunt instrument that they are setting their own tests to help sift the intellectually able from the merely well taught. Employer organisations regularly complain about poor levels of literacy, numeracy and social skills, while government bodies, most recently the report of the Teaching and Learning in 2020 Review Group (2006) have concluded that the current levels of under-achievement in British schools can only be tackled by a greater emphasis on personalised learning, and a whole host of other measures. These three bodies have only themselves to blame. We need to go back to the drawing board, and ask "what is the purpose of school education?" What would we like our young people to be/do, know/understand by the time they leave school at the age of 16 or18?

Children need to be put at the very heart of education. Schools are for many children an almost brutal and irrelevant experience where they are drilled with facts and they find it hard to understand what this means to them. Well-being classes, and the whole philosophy that goes with them, are designed to put the child at the centre of their own learning discovery. I believe strongly that what is not taught in schools will not be acquired later on in life. We send out our young people directly into jobs or higher education without fundamental knowledge of how their minds work; what the main emotions are that they will encounter and how to deal with them; and how to look after their bodies and to ensure that they operate

well.

Child depression, as well as adult depression and mental illness, is at an all time high. Again, these classes will help young people ward off the risks of developing depression in their lives. Much of the anger and alienation of young people comes because schools have not helped then to discover what it is that they most want to do in their own lives, and these classes help in that direction.

In practice

But what exactly goes on in the classes? The aims of the wellbeing course at Wellington are simple and threefold. To make students aware of *who* they are, to develop and improve students' relationship with life; and to help students to develop the skills of wellbeing.

The teaching methodology is pretty straightforward too. We hope to engage students in actively improving their own wellbeing and *living* what we teach them, which is the great hurdle for PSHE. In other words, we try to get the students to live in ways that are productive for them, rather than lapsing into destructive behaviour. To do this, lessons have to be engaging, active and not didactic in any way: we hope that students will discover most of what we are trying to teach them and feel as if the knowledge or the skill belongs to them. It is also important to be provocative, unusual and challenging: for example we might use clips from 'The Office' or 'Fawlty Towers' to make a point: any kind of stimulus which helps students to engage with the ideas is encouraged. We play games or use role play or perhaps might use drums in a lesson to illustrate points about cooperation and harmony.

The lessons do not follow a set formula, although there are two ingredients that are present every time. Each lesson begins with five or more minutes of 'imaginative practice' which is akin to meditation. Psychologist, Kabat-Zim (1993) carried out research into the positive benefits of meditation where he offered a course in meditation and divided the people who applied into two groups: one group would learn meditation immediately, the others would have to wait. The group that learned immediately was given eight weeks of training and had their 'happiness' measured afterwards by questionnaire and tests on brain activity. The group who had mediation scored much more highly that the group who had not. Also, everyone taking part in the study was given a flu jab after the course whether they had meditated or not: those who had meditated developed a much higher immunity to flu as a result of the jab.

Top performers also use 'imaginative practice': Sir Steve Redgrave has commented on how much of a difference it has made to his success at rowing and you will often see bobsled drivers using a form of it to rehearse the course before they set off. For students it can be an enormous help in

getting them to sleep effectively, helping them to develop focus and concentration and also to rehearse potentially tricky situations before they occur.

The second core ingredient is 'blessing counting'. All students, after they have done some 'imaginative practice', write down two things that they are grateful for that have happened since the last session. Some promising research carried out by Emmons and McCullough (2004) shows that people who regularly reflect on positive things in their lives have increased levels of wellbeing.

We encourage our students to practice both of these skills as often as possible outside lessons.

The skills of wellbeing

Aside from these two regular features, over the course of two years, our students experience the following 'skills of wellbeing';

- **Who am I?** We start by getting the students to engage with who they are by filling out a 'who am I?' sheet containing various questions about them. A colleague had some interesting results with this. One of his students is quite hard work: surly and prone to emotional immaturity in a number of ways. One of the questions in the exercise is, 'what are your regrets?' My colleague asked the group if they wanted to contribute any of their answers and this one student, unusually, put his hand up. His regrets were, "I regret not having a better relationship with my dad and I regret that my parents aren't still together."
- **Emotions**: This is all about teaching the students emotional intelligence and how to use emotions to make progress: harnessing the energy inherent in emotion to bring about productive and desirable outcomes. Another facet of this is looking at how our emotions can have physical consequences such as stomach trouble, heart disease, or in the case of Gail Porter, whose story we look at, hair loss.
- **Past, present, future and fantasy**: We all know people who are stuck in one or more of the following: their past, the present, their future or a fantasy life. The aim of this part of the course is the integration of these four important parts of human life into the self in a balanced way, and to show students the pitfalls of getting trapped in any one area. We teach students about how to avoid this, using ideas such as Csikszentmihalyi's (1997 and 2002) theory of 'Flow' and Baylis' and Keverne's (2005) work on the avoidance of living a fantasy life.
- **Relationships within ourselves**: This module is concerned with getting ourselves set up to achieve wellbeing. We examine how factors such as regular exercise, getting enough sleep, good diet and awareness of our subconscious mind can all contribute to increased wellbeing if harnessed skilfully.

- **Relationships with others:** We teach students about the value of relationships of all types. People who are the most successful human beings always cite the importance of a partner, family and friends. We teach community living, conflict resolution and collaboration instead of the individualism that governs many peoples' lives. A great example of how to work with others can be seen in the army bomb disposal unit who undergo rigorous training in teams.
- **The environment:** The environment plays a very important role in our wellbeing. In modern life, which can confine us to a room with a TV or games console, this can be forgotten. We show students that a vital part of being well is to get outside as often as possible. Research has shown that patients recovering from surgery, who have a view of the outside from their hospital window, recover on average a day faster than patients who do not.
- **Technology:** This module examines how factors of modern life such as TV, email, advertising and text messaging can be excessively intrusive and we get students to explore whether or not they are overdosing on technology, or using it to benefit them.
- **Talent:** this module explores the importance of becoming an expert in something. The idea that you have to be born with a talent to become good at something is a myth. The reason Zinedine Zidane is a better footballer than David Beckham is that he didn't waste practice time by going to school, and consequently has a few more hours under his belt. Anyone can develop a reasonable level of expertise in anything at any point in their life.
- **Stretch and balance:** This last module is directed at showing the value of constantly challenging ourselves to give a constant feeling of achievement. Those who live stagnant lives do not experience the incredible sense of satisfaction at having pushed their own personal boundaries. Of course, it is vital to counterbalance challenge with rest and it is crucial for young people to choose their battles well.

Students keep a diary throughout the course, which they fill with their reflections, the things they are grateful for and resource sheets that we produce for them. Wellbeing is a lifelong skill that takes time to practice. Many of the things we go through with our students may mean nothing to them until they are in their twenties or perhaps older: it is important that they have a record of what they have looked at for reflection at the times they need it.

Sex and drugs

You will have noticed that the course does not have dedicated modules on SRE (sex and relationships education) and substance misuse. As a PSHE

co-ordinator, I was happy to lose curriculum time on drugs and sex. I think that we sometimes over-egg the pudding with this aspect of PSHE and can end up with a diet of quite negative education, rather than equipping students with skills that avoid this kind of behaviour in the first place.

At Wellington, the key elements of SRE/substance misuse are covered elsewhere in the school through peer education in 'Hype' and external providers such as the school nurse, or the police and there is no curriculum time specifically dedicated to SRE/substance misuse. It is our belief that students who are taking care of their wellbeing will naturally avoid things like one-night stands/unprotected sex and experimentation with illegal substances, because if they take their self-esteem and wellbeing seriously they may not have the need to mask emotional problems with risky sex or drugs. Also, for those who decide to experiment anyway, hopefully wellbeing will encourage the kind of mindset that will help them out of these situations.

Wellbeing needs to be a whole school ethos. We are in the early stages at Wellington, but it is my hope that as wellbeing evolves, we will be 'a wellbeing institution' where students and staff realise that their primary duty is to guarantee wellbeing for the simple reason that everything flows from it. Without wellbeing, good exam results and positive behaviour are difficult to achieve!

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Doing good in the hood

Kenny Frederick

Kenny Frederick is Principal of George Green's School, Tower Hamlets

Abstract: *As a head teacher,* ***Kenny Frederick*** *believes that children who care for the well-being of others and their community should be valued. She also believes strongly in the five aims of the Every Child Matters agenda. Her school encourages volunteering and, here, she describes a range of opportunities to volunteer that have become a beneficial element of school life. She believes that the current political climate is conductive to setting up volunteer schemes - both within and around schools – and that there is funding available to support them.*

Recently we carried out a major survey amongst pupils, parents and the community. We asked them what we could do to make things even better at George Green's School. All three groups identified opportunities to volunteer as the most popular way forward. This point was made even clearer when I held my first meeting with the newly elected School Council a few weeks ago. They all asked for more opportunities to volunteer. This may surprise many, who view young people as monsters, whose only thought is for themselves. This stereotype of selfish young people needs to be challenged by those of us who know them best – their parents and teachers!

As a recently designated Humanities Specialist School one of the main planks of our specialism is citizenship. We aim to develop our young people as citizens rather than tourists who are just passing through. We want them to take responsibility for their own lives and for their school and community. We also try to instil a sense of responsibility for the global community. This is not an easy aim but is worthwhile and is even more important (in my view) than achievement of GCSE grades. Our young people are our future and we want them to understand this fact and to be prepared for the challenges in the future. Our motto "All different, all equal" is well known and understood. We aim to make sure that our pupils are not frightened by difference but welcome diversity. Most sign up to this ideal.

Yes, we have the "hoodies" and those who behave in an anti-social manner. However, these youngsters are in the minority and it is important that we keep this fact in mind and ensure that those displaying more altruistim are recognised and prioritised. This is a key task for all of those who work in schools. We need to value and highlight youngsters who demonstrate a caring and emotional side, who support each other and contribute to the well-being of others. The Every Child Matters: Change for Children agenda does mark a shift from a narrow focus on attainment to "enjoying and achieving" which should mean genuine opportunities for schools to take on a wider brief for developing the whole child.

Time and attention

As I am showing visitors around the school they are always impressed that I know the names of those we meet in the corridors. What they don't realise is that like most head teachers I tend to get to know those pupils who are frequently in trouble and are the most likely individuals to be out of lessons!

Despite my guilt and recognition of this point, it is very hard to move away from this model and to give the quiet "average" child, who just gets on with things the same amount of attention as those who cause problems.

Many of the young people in my school come from families that are undergoing difficulties of one kind or another. This is a fact of life and has to be considered when designing the support structures within the school. These youngsters often take on responsibility for younger siblings or are the primary carers for disabled parents. Many are put into the position of carer by default when parents are alcoholic or addicted to drugs. Others (in increasing numbers) experience domestic violence on a regular basis. Mental health issues are on the rise and many young people are living in dysfunctional families as a result. Individual coping strategies vary and our job is to help youngsters in these situations survive and even thrive. We cannot always (in fact rarely) change their situation but we can help them to become more resilient so that they can cope. What we don't know is what makes some children more resilient than others. All we can do is identify vulnerable children and support them through difficult episodes and long-term problems.

In our school we are very aware of the "average" child issue and go out of our way to recognise and celebrate their achievements not just concentrate and praise the high fliers who seem to be good at everything (although we don't ignore them either!).

We are lucky enough to be sponsored by Jack Petchey who gives us £300 a month to award to an individual pupil who goes out of his or her way to overcome difficulties and to support others within their community. Every month staff and pupils are encouraged to nominate an individual

who deserves recognition and we receive over 20 nominations every month. Choosing a winner is always difficult. However, all those receiving a nomination are published with their photo and reasons given for the nominations in our weekly newsletter. This is often reward enough and pupils (and parents) love to see their name and picture published. The actual winner of the monthly award receives a framed certificate and a medallion and they can decide on how to use the £300 for the benefit of the community. This can be a community project of their choice. Many decide to support specific after school clubs or visits by their tutor group. Others donate the funds to a children's charity of their choice or buy a specific piece of equipment or furniture for a favourite curriculum area or for the playground. Our newsletter goes out to every home every Friday. It is also sent out to "friends of the school" who include business partners, governors, voluntary organisations, the DfES, the local press, local councillors and others. This is just one way that we counter the negative image of young people and inner-city schools. We also have an open-door policy and regularly invite visitors into the school to see our pupils at their very best.

We need to value and highlight youngsters who demonstrate a caring and emotional side, who support each other and contribute to the well-being of others.

The "V" programme

Volunteering is now well established in our school. We have been running the Millennium Volunteer programme for the last six years. The original funding came from Community Service Volunteers (CSV) but when that funding ran out we raised the necessary finance from a variety of sources including the New Opportunities Fund to keep it going as part of our extended school programme. In fact the "V" programme as it is now called is being run by a previous volunteer who attended our school and who returned from university to become the co-ordinator of the project. She is doing a marvellous job!

The Millennium Volunteer project was originally designed for 16 to 24-year-olds and nearly all our sixth form students and other young people from the community signed up. Several hundred young people have since completed 200 hours of volunteer hours. The programme is very structured and is carefully coordinated. It allows young people to volunteer in areas that really interest them. They get paid expenses and have lots of opportunities for training and development. Their activities and training all contribute to producing a very impressive CV – a fact we are keen to explore! We are able to signpost volunteers to suitable volunteering opportunities either in our local area or at least across London.

Occasionally we arrange something further a field! A small number manage to go abroad to developing countries to participate in global volunteering programmes. The benefits to the school are many. Besides the enrichment opportunities offered, volunteers help us to deliver our holiday programmes and after school activities, particularly as sports leaders and coaches. They also form part of our positive playground team and enable us to ensure unsupervised time is structured and safe. They also volunteer in local youth clubs, a city farm, primary schools and indeed many support our own youngsters with their reading and numeracy. Others volunteer in voluntary organisations in the local area.

Those students who complete 200 hours of volunteering are subsequently employed part-time to run our community activities (evenings, Saturday mornings and holiday programmes) or in youth clubs, etc. More importantly, being a volunteer helps them get into universities or jobs with training of their choice. Two of our volunteers are going to Belfast, along with 32 pupils and four staff, on a visit designed to show our pupils what a divided community looks and feels like. This trip is a

Our newsletter goes out to every home every Friday. This is just one way that we counter the negative image of young people and inner-city schools.

response to racial conflict in our particular area and the two volunteers are going along to help deliver conflict resolution sessions and support the young people involved. The volunteers were previously participants and following their Belfast trip they trained in conflict resolution techniques and became Young Adult Peers. In this role they have formed a very important group in the main body of the school which has helped us identify and intervene to sort out difficult situations before they "kick off" in the play ground. It is a credit to these youngsters (now in our sixth form) that they are now part of the staff on the trip delivering a programme as part of their volunteering hours.

This is one way we are seeking to develop community capacity and community leadership. The idea is that in the future they will be able to intervene and resolve conflict in their own communities.

Wider influence

Our school tendered, and has been commissioned, to deliver youth services on the Isle of Dogs. We know that this will open up more volunteering opportunities for young people in the area – with the prospect of future employment. We also hope that it will help to provide a quality service for the young people in the area. This is an addition to our extended school and part of our bid to broaden our area of influence.

Another example of our volunteering opportunities is academic mentoring. This project has been designed by our English faculty as an additional language department and enables Year 10 pupils to support Year 7 (EAL) pupils. They are trained to work with identified youngsters to prepare them for their science lessons. They meet with the Year 7 pupils and go through the teaching materials they are going to be using in science. This gives the Year 7 pupils greater confidence and knowledge about key words and key vocabulary within science. This preparation ensures they can access their science lessons with relative ease. They also form close supportive partnerships with the older pupils. The Year 10 pupils really enjoy the experience and their self esteem goes through the roof! The School Council has asked for more opportunities of this kind. In response we are opening the "V" project to 14-year-olds and upwards. Staff from local businesses regularly work in our school as volunteers. The local Education Business Partnership provides training as mentors or as reading partners. These "adults other than teachers" add great value to the school and pupils love working with them. The volunteers also benefit greatly from the experience and grow and develop personally. In addition, they get a lot of job satisfaction!

Every child really matters at our school. We know that volunteering can potentially contribute to achieving all of the five outcomes.

As adults who work in schools we need to be role models and show youngsters a variety of ways of behaving. We need to teach them to develop their own values and principles and not to be over influenced by the media and a "get rich quick at any expense culture". The teachers and support staff at George Green's School (and throughout the country) give up their time freely to give pupils opportunities to widen their horizons, to participate in a range of visits and activities with which they would not normally have the opportunity to get involved. Although our primary purpose is teaching and learning we recognise the need to become emotionally involved and do what we can to develop the whole child. Teachers have and are successfully resisting the push to become examination factories! This is important if we are to defeat social exclusion of many in our communities.

Every child really matters at our school. We are great supporters of the Every Child Matters agenda. We know that volunteering can potentially contribute to achieving all of the five outcomes – particularly in enabling all young people to make a positive contribution. We try to support each child on an individual basis. However, it is important that we build the capacity of our community so that it can support itself and not be dependant on the professionals. Building social capital is the best way to do this. We can't do it alone. Working with voluntary organisations and

local community members helps to provide our pupils with opportunities to contribute and to make a difference in their community. Our children are our future and we must invest in all aspects of their development.

The Government rhetoric is all about strengthening communities. There is a lot of money around to support volunteering and it is important for schools get involved and apply for such funding. The job is too great for teachers to set up and organise volunteering opportunities – they have enough to do. There needs to be a dedicated member of staff to set it up, to track participants, to liaise with providers and provide quality assurance systems. As with everything else, we have to be able to show the positive impact for the volunteers who are doing the work and for the school and for the community in which they live. It is well worth the effort!

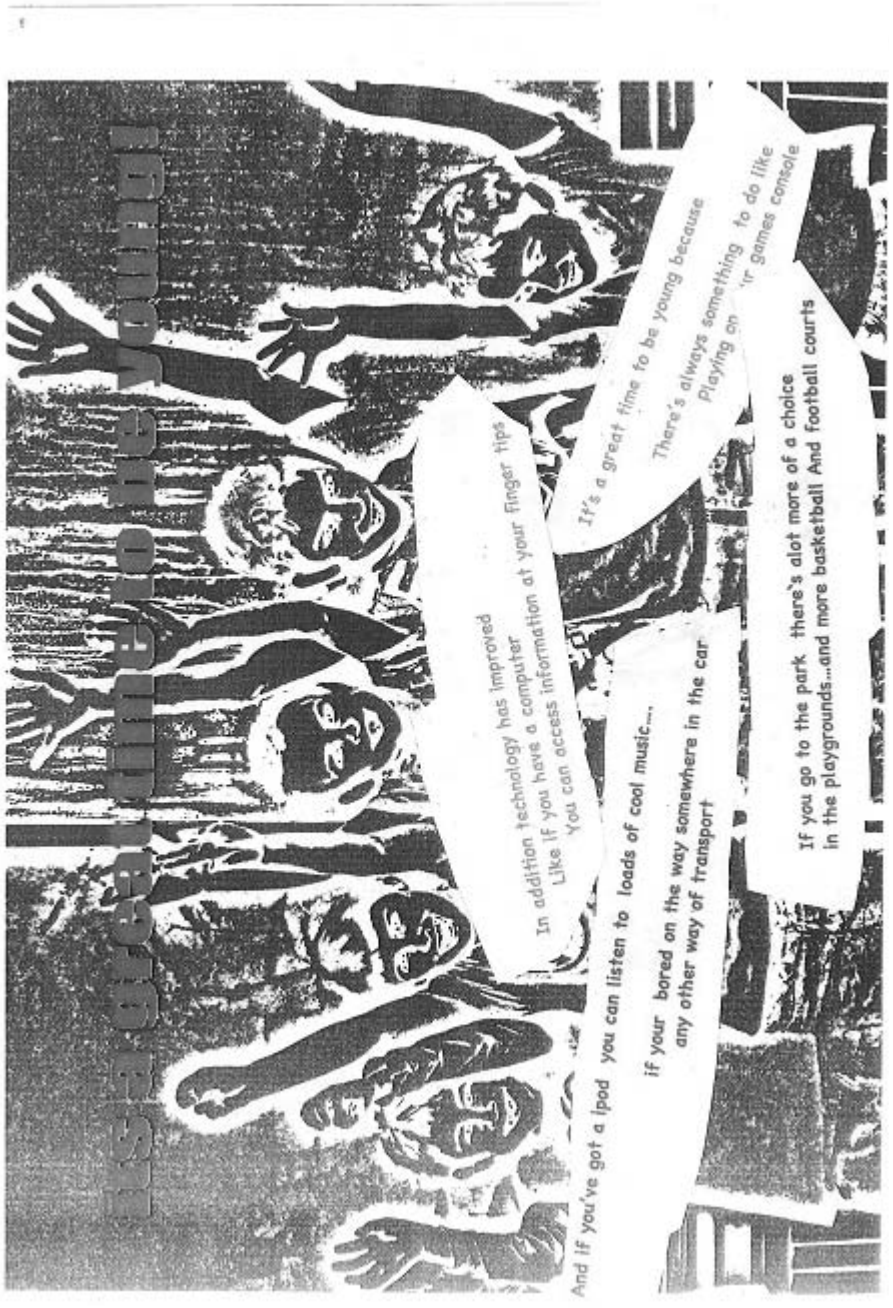
NUT Play Policy "Time to Play? Not Just a Foundation Stage Issue"

The NUT has recently published a policy document and resource pack which promotes play-based approaches to teaching and learning. Ann Davies, together with a number of other NUT members and experts on play, such as Liz Wood of the University of Exeter, Janet Moyles, Julie Fisher, Chair, Early Childhood Forum and Pat Broadhead of Leeds Metropolitan University, have contributed to its contents.

The policy document sets out the theoretical background and evidence base to support the NUT's view that play-based learning has an important contribution to make to children and young people's development in the widest sense, as well as to their academic performance.

The resource pack contains a wealth of case studies and suggestions for practical ways in which schools and individual teachers could consider introducing or consolidating play-based approaches to teaching and learning.

Both the NUT play policy document and resource pack are available to download from the NUT website www.teachers.org.uk



Rive Britton

Rethinking the "toxicity" debate: the vitality of contemporary childhood

Patrick Alexander

Patrick Alexander is a PhD student at the Oxford University Department of Educational Studies (OUDES). He is Junior Dean of St. Hugh's College.

Abstract: Patrick Alexander *argues that the current debate over the "toxicity" of childhood in contemporary Britain needs to be recontextualised if it is to provide helpful, positive discussion about the nature of childhood and education in the twenty-first century. He believes that "toxicity" suggests that we are dealing with a disease that needs to be cured: apparently, children are being poisoned by globalisation, new technology, and standardised testing, and we must seek the remedies to these ills. He argues that the framework of "toxicity" fails to appreciate the complexity of "childhood"; and also reinforces an image of the relationship between adults and children – or teachers and students – that is asymmetrical and alienating to the young people it presumes to help.*

How are students to actively engage in teaching and learning if they are obliged to begin from the premise that their culture – the building blocks from which their identities are created – is "toxic" and needs to be made healthy again? In September 2006 the signatories of an open letter – including Royal Institute director Baroness Professor Susan Greenfield and author Phillip Pullman – stated their grave concerns about the future of

childhood and education in twenty-first century Britain. They argued that the rise of consumer capitalism and the increased importance of new digital technologies were eroding the cognitive and creative capabilities of young people. The letter expressed concern that children are spending more time in front of computer screens developing "virtual" social relationships, instead of engaging in physical activity and "face-to-face" communication; increasingly using consumer products as markers of who they are and where they belong; eating unhealthy foods; under great pressure from marketing and advertising; whilst their education is dominated by an "audit culture" of exams and testing that drains the educational experience of imagination and creativity instead of supporting relational, socio-culturally inscribed approaches to teaching and learning.

All these factors, they argued, are likely to significantly diminish the cognitive abilities of contemporary British children, giving rise to an ever-increasing number of learning difficulties and an education system that does not serve the best interests of teachers or students.

These are undoubtedly important issues that deserve attention. However, it is equally important that the specific ingredients of this so-called "toxicity" are unravelled and understood. We need to recognise complexity rather than adopt a simplistic, negative perspective that measures the corruption of contemporary childhood against an essentially nostalgic vision of what "childhood" used to be. The first step towards doing this is to step outside of the perjorative conceptual frame of "toxicity" in order to debate the effects of contemporary society on childhood and education in a more nuanced and balanced manner.

The "toxicity" of childhood: a healthy starting point for debate?

In a recent article in the NUT's *The Teacher* magazine, Richard House, senior lecturer in the Research Centre for Therapeutic Education at Roehampton University, and a principal signatory of the aforementioned open letter, argued that its purpose was not to create a moral panic but rather to encourage open, balanced debate into the factors influencing the "toxic" nature of contemporary British childhood. To do so, however, it would first seem useful to dispense altogether with the "toxic" metaphor currently being used. From the outset the epidemiological metaphor of "toxicity" implies that we are dealing with a disease that needs to be cured: children are being poisoned, and we must seek the remedy. This approach is unhelpful because it implies that children adopt an essentially passive role in their participation in contemporary culture rather than using the cultural artefacts around them to actively negotiate meaningful interactions between them and the cultural world of which they are a part.

If we remove the negative lens of "toxicity" it is possible to explore

more effectively the ways in which children actively shape their childhoods – to think about how they have developed new competencies to deal with the new cultural influences that play a part in defining childhood today. Beginning with the vitality of contemporary childhood in this way, it is easier to see both the negative, and more importantly, the positive potentials of living in a technologically advanced, consumerist society.

Contemporary childhood in perspective

It is easy to agree that contemporary children are exposed to a large number of "negative" cultural influences. Sadly, the world is not a perfect place. Intensive advertising that negatively influences the health choices of young people is damaging. The internet exposes children to potential abuse and mistreatment. There is no doubt that a diet of nothing but junk food and television is bad for you, whether you are 14 or 40. It is vital that we recognise the potential risks and dangers that face young people, not least within the education system that is supposed to provide them with the best that can be offered for their futures.

It is equally important that children themselves are aware of these issues and play an active role in determining how they want to experience and influence the world in which they live. However, it would be too easy to paint a black and white portrait of how these different aspects of contemporary society affect how young people develop. Consumption, advertising, television, and the internet all have the potential to impact negatively on the quality of life for children, but they are also inextricably tied to the processes by which we construct our identities today, both as "children" and as "adults". The significance and nature of these influences – or what constitutes the "worst excesses" of this culture, to use Richard House's phrase – is of course a matter of perspective (2006:15). House, for example, argues that children "need to spend less time in virtual worlds and more time in the real world – eating real food, playing real games, and interacting with real people, including the significant adults in their lives" (ibid. 14).

For children who have grown up with "virtual" relationships as part of their normal social repertoires, and indeed for the latest batch of NQTs who developed these skills as teenagers, the distinction between "real" (better) and "virtual" (worse) may not be quite as clean cut. For many young people social interactions on user-led online networks like myspace are just as "real" as interactions in the "real" world. Online worlds like *Second Life* and *Warcraft* are similarly "real", not least because these virtual environments make it possible to transfer social and economic prestige from the "virtual" to the real world. Virtual tools and designer clothes are bought and sold daily on ebay (itself, of course, a "virtual" marketplace)

for use in social worlds.

Mobile phone technology further imbeds the "virtual" in the "real": text conversations take place within and alongside face-to-face communications. Suggesting that the "virtual" aspects of children's lives are any less important or vital than their activities in the "real" world not only misrepresents the cultural importance of the latter, but also oversimplifies the complex relationship that exists between "virtual" and "real" social experiences. It is not surprising that such misreadings should take place, given that globalization and the current rise of new digital technologies are issues that most teachers and child development professionals have had to deal with in their adult lives. For today's children, however, there is nothing unfamiliar or inherently negative about identities shaped in part by consumption and digital technology; these are normal aspects of cultural life in the twenty-first century. In this sense it is to young people that we should turn first to find out what really constitutes the "worst excesses" of the globalising culture that they are shaping, and which shapes them (and us). After all, for the most part they know better.

New influences, new risks, new competencies (for children and adults)

Alan Prout begins to explore the ways in which oppositional constructions of childhood and adulthood fit uncomfortably with the complex realities to which they are applied today. The same arguments can be used to problematise the idea that contemporary childhood should be seen simply as either "toxic" or "healthy". James and Prout (1997) suggest that the homogenising force of globalisation has led to "the assumption of some kind of universal experience of childhood" (1997:4). That is, Western notions of childhood are increasingly used as an international standard by which all children should be measured, often with little regard for the cultural specificities involved in the construction of childhood in non-Western societies.

At the same time, however, Prout argues that the spread of global consumer capitalism has allowed for an increased diversity in notions of childhood identity, in that an increased flow of goods, images, and ideas has led to myriad reinterpretations of these cultural products in different cultural settings (Prout, 2005:30). Nike shoes do not mean the same thing in Manchester and Mogadishu. Moreover, developments in digital and electronic media have vastly expanded the scope of cultural artefacts upon which young people are able to draw to construct their identities. Buckingham suggests that "it is impossible to understand contemporary childhood without taking account of the media. Indeed, it could be argued that children today are living 'media childhoods' – that children's

experiences, and indeed the *meanings* of childhood itself, are largely defined and determined by electronic media…media use is inextricably tied up with the process of identity formation" (2003:184 &187). Moreover, the scope of the media and the forms that media texts take is rapidly changing, with the boundaries between media and consumer products blurring as marketing strategies spread the profits of one into the other (ibid. 198). And just as the line between product and media begins to blur, so too do the lines between the different audiences that these media attempt to reach. Increased access to the internet, television and other media has

They have developed new competencies to deal with the new cultural influences that play a part in defining childhood today.

allowed children and adolescents to access "adult" domains which would otherwise be far more difficult to enter. With this expanded repertoire of cultural knowledge children and adolescents are able to subvert the supposed divide between adults and themselves, blurring the boundaries of identity on both sides. Conversely, in order to accommodate for this increased cultural repertoire, products and entertainment programming supposedly geared at young people is accessible to adult audiences as well. It is fitting, with this in mind, that House refers to contemporary children as "mini adults" (2006: 14); contemporary adults are "big kids" in the same way.

There are a number of other areas in which processes of globalisation have altered experiences of childhood in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Prout makes the point that late modernity is characterised by fragmentation: "economically driven change is paralleled by multi-dimensional social and cultural changes affecting a wide range of relationships: class, gender, ethnicity, identity, ecological and risk awareness, and practices of civil society and politics" (2005:24). It would of course be misleading to assume that "modernity" was, in contrast, a stable and sedentary social and economic environment in which binary relationships of rich and poor, male and female, or child and adult existed unproblematically.

The scale of fragmentation wrought by the rise of global consumer capitalism and its concurrent social and cultural impacts does, however, make the idea of discrete, unchanging binary oppositions difficult to sustain. In the lives of children this is evidenced on multiple layers. Transnational movements of people and products raise questions of identity that may not have figured in constructions of child or adolescent selves in the past.

Race, ethnicity and national identity are increasingly problematic

cultural markers with which to construct identities, not least in the wake of the supposed failure of British multiculturalism and the post 9/11 turn against diversity that this has been seen to herald. Family configurations have become more complex, with more frequent and increasingly socially acceptable incidences of lone parent families. Children negotiate multiple relationships within these family matrices, and as a result are capable of dealing with a diversity of social situations that would not present themselves, for better or worse, in a traditional family setting.

An interesting example of how global economic practices have changed markers of identity for young people can be seen in Yunxiang Yan's account of how increased disposable income for youths in semi-rural China led to massive changes in bridewealth practices and kinship structures, eroding father-son relationships in favour of conjugal ties (2003). Wives are now more important than fathers. Whether or not these kinds of changes to social life should be seen as negative, or "toxic", is to an extent irrelevant (or at least very subjective); they are happening, and children are developing complex sets of tools to deal with these changes in positive ways.

Nike shoes do not mean the same thing in Manchester and Mogadishu.

Contemporary adulthood

The effects of late modernity are, of course, felt by adults as well. Nick Lee suggests that, "With regard to being a 'grown up', we have entered an age of uncertainty, an age in which adult life is newly unpredictable and in which whatever stabilities we manage to produce cannot be expected to last our whole lives" (Lee, 2001:7). Lee points principally to shifts in the stability of both employment and intimate relations for adults when characterising the current "age of uncertainty".

Prout suggests the same: "It is no longer expected that adults will necessarily enter into one lifelong marriage or pursue a career until retirement. We live in the era of 'reconstituted families'. These have made the 'unfinished' character of adult lives as visible as those of children" (Prout, 2005:66). The possibility for rapid, disruptive change has eroded the notion of adulthood as a stable, completed identity, and as a result the "end result" of childhood is removed; there is no perfectly formed adult in the adolescent cocoon. This, of course, does not indicate that adulthood is becoming more "toxic"; it simply suggests that constructions of "adulthood" are developing to accommodate new social and cultural conditions.

In terms of teaching and learning these developments present difficult new challenges and real opportunities for positive, disruptive change. As Lee goes on to suggest, the notion of the "unfinished" adult has significant

implications for the authority of adults in Western complex contemporary societies. As they are no longer willing or able to uphold the traditional distinctions between parents and children that their parents maintained, contemporary adults are unable to present themselves as the unquestionable, expert superiors of their children. While parents remain more knowledgeable and experienced than their children, hierarchical family structures of authority and control are in some ways developing into more democratic systems where negotiation and participation are key (Lee, 2001:19).

The cast-iron patriarchal hierarchies of traditional Chinese family structures are no exception. Yan describes how the ideology of filial piety has been eroded by shifts in the financial wealth of young people and the new cultural markers – those of consumer capitalism – that they now claim above family as symbols of living happily (2003:162). Semi-rural China may seem a long way from the teachers and students of British secondary schools, but it is arguable that understanding of contemporary adulthood and childhood in either setting requires a set of conceptual tools that moves beyond a discrete binary oppositions of "adult" vs. "child" or "toxic" vs. "healthy".

The same can be argued for the supposed dichotomy of teachers and students. In the "age of uncertainty", how should "unfinished" adult teachers negotiate their relationships with "unfinished" students? Could teaching and learning benefit from rethinking how "adults" and "young people" interact in contemporary complex societies like the UK? Finally, in

Contemporary adults are unable to present themselves as the unquestionable, expert superiors of their children.

practice, do adult teachers and adolescent students recognise and/or embrace the notion of a common "cultural world" in the classroom, or are they more at ease keeping one another's identities at arm's length?

House argues quite rightly that "authentic 'relational learning'" is essential if children are to learn in a productive, creative way (2006:14). The "audit culture" of standardised testing, he argues, runs contrary to the aim of creating a positive context for learning. Summative assessment, used inappropriately as it currently is in the English education system, certainly presents a hurdle to positive classroom interactions in which knowledge is shared and developed by both teachers and students. However, it would seem equally difficult to develop genuine, positive learning relationships if the conceptual framework of "toxicity" is maintained. We should begin instead, perhaps, by looking at the vitality of childhood, celebrating and harnessing the ability of young people to shape

the very different world in which contemporary childhoods continue to develop.

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Walking in their shoes

Abstract: *Troubled by what she sees as a call for a return to innocence in the recent media focus on childhood,* ***Louisa Leaman*** *suggests that there has never been an easy childhood. Nor is there a uniform experience of being young. Focusing on her work with troubled children, she highlights the influence of home circumstances – both material and emotional – and calls for greater empathy with the difficult circumstances some young people experience. She believes that we need to help children to survive the lives they live.*

Louisa Leaman

Louisa Leaman is a part-time special needs teacher. She has written a number of books on behaviour and classroom management (*Managing Very challenging Behaviour*, *Classroom Confidential* and *The Naked Teacher)*. She also provides training for secondary teachers on behaviour management.

Much of the recent debate about childhood and young people growing up today has given the impression that all young people are the same and have a similar experience of "childhood". In reality, of course, there are many individual differences between children and they respond differently to the situations/circumstances that they encounter. Some of them react in very challenging ways particularly towards teachers (and other representatives of authority).

An open letter was published in the *Daily Telegraph* (Greenfield *et al*, 2006) during September, presenting the concerns of a number of eminent academics and professionals (including authors Jacqueline Wilson and Phillip Pullman) regarding the demise of "childhood". The letter warned that modern trappings such as computer technology, test-orientated education and advertising are corroding the essence of childhood. It suggested that children are being stripped of their innocence too early in life, and are being sucked straight into a "fast-moving hyper-competitive culture". It then went on to imply that this loss of innocence has a relationship with the increase in childhood obesity, depression and anti-social behaviour.

The letter ignited much public interest and debate, and I gave my own contribution in the *Times Educational Supplement*. I felt strongly that "childhood" was more complex than the themes of the fast-growing campaign were implying. I also wanted to heed against the possibility of "childhood" being highjacked by the mass media/political forces, as a

means of slating current government action and winning electoral votes. One of the letter's sentiments that I did agree with is that childhood is important – too important to be mulched by political heavyweights.

I also wholeheartedly agree that the modern world is a tough place to grow up in, but I can't think of an era in history that has ever had it easy. The challenges faced by children of the twenty-first century pale in comparison to those of our distant and not so distant pasts. If it is a choice between SATs and the workhouse, I know which one I would choose. Maybe today's 12-year-olds are not as innocent as we would like them to be, but only a hundred years ago they would have been busy in the factories – that's hardly the essence of youth. And let's not forget this is a very Western perspective. Around the world, childhood exists in many different and varied forms.

Societies are continuously evolving, and we need to adapt to survive. The things that were relevant to life in Britain 50 years ago have changed, and in 50 years time they will have progressed again. In this respect, is it not important that childhood "keeps up" with the times? The academics' plea for a return to the supposedly lost land of fairy-tales and tree climbing sounds idyllic, but like it or not, we are in the age of technology. If we don't grow with this, we will eventually become redundant (and then there will be a public outcry about all the eight year olds who don't how to word-process!)

Altered images

The image of childhood portrayed by the recent campaign seemed to me to be one of deprivation. Moreover, it suggested that children do not spend enough time in fresh air anymore, either because they are addicted to television and playstations, or because their over-protective parents are too haunted by media representations of the paedophile monster that lurks round every corner, to allow them out. Children being house-trapped! When I thought about this image I laughed to myself, because most of the young people I have worked with, in a number of Pupil Referral Units and BESD schools, are likely to be found anywhere but indoors.

These, in my opinion, are the individuals whose childhoods we really need to look out for – those who regularly spend up to seven hours on a weekday evening, come rain or shine, hanging about the streets. And these are not streets lined with grass and trees and butterfly-filled adventure playgrounds. These are grim and unwelcoming urban nightmares. A typical evening for Kyle (real name withheld), aged 13, involves skipping out of school early, having a bit of an argument at the gates, before heading down to the chip-shop. He may stop off with his mates at the newsagents, for something fizzy. He may try to scrounge some money together for a packet of fags…

By six o'clock the light is fading, but Kyle will still be on good form. He and his mates try to chat up some girls by the station. "Crazy Dean" comes along, and he's got some weed to smoke, as well as a few bottles of WKD that he lifted from an off-licence. Someone climbs into an abandoned shopping trolley and crashes it into parked cars – it's a good laugh. At eight o'clock, Kyle decides to go home for some tea. His mum asks if he's done his schoolwork. Yes, he answers. "Liar!" she calls him, and then carries on with her telly. Bored by this lack of meaningful conversation, Kyle is back out again at eight-thirty, and will not see bed until after midnight.

The side effects of this kind of lifestyle hit the headlines recently, with a report into Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (the infamous ASBO). And what do you know? Findings suggest that many young people view their ASBOs

Maybe today's 12-year-olds are not as innocent as we would like them to be, but only a hundred years ago they would have been busy in the factories – that's hardly the essence of youth.

as "badges of honour". Perhaps they are not the panacea that the Government hoped they would be (I could have told them that years ago). So how can we get the naughty kids away from our streets? Wouldn't it be easiest just to lure them back in doors with free computer games and porn sites? "NO!" cries Phillip Pullman *et al.*

Empathy plus

The one thing that seems to be missing from all these media frenzies, government policies and author-backed campaigns – the thing that could potentially make a difference – is genuine and thorough empathy. What makes a child feel inclined to behave in ways that go against the grain of accepted social expectation? What makes a young person respond to the world with aggression and disrespect? Or to lock themselves in their bedroom with a family bag of *Monster Munch* and endless hours of *Zombie Smash III*? I don't claim to have the answers, but I believe that the place to start looking is with the thoughts and experiences of the children themselves.

I have often wondered what would happen if I could take one of my challenging pupils out of their own impoverished experiences, and place them in someone else's life, someone else's upbringing: my own? Stable loving family, nice middle class house and good education. Of course, some key personality traits would remain, but I'm sure a lot would otherwise change. I would be hesitant, however, to assume that it is simply a question of privilege.

I run training days on managing very challenging behaviour, and have

worked with teachers from a wide variety of schools throughout the UK. A surprising amount of "this-is-what-I-have-to-put-up-with" horror stories that I hear are actually about "posh" kids – those who are rude, difficult and lazy, despite being immensely bright and with everything seemingly going for them. A little dig beneath the surface tends to reveal a common theme: something meaningful is missing or damaged in their relationships with their families. Busy, working parents who don't have enough time for them, or who simply argue their way through their family responsibilities.

In this respect the problems that shape the posh kid are not so different from the ones that make young Kyle such a strong candidate for an ASBO. It comes down to healthy and meaningful connections between

The one thing that seems to be missing from all these media frenzies, government policies and author-backed campaigns – the thing that could potentially make a difference – is genuine and thorough empathy.

people. In all walks of life, and all levels of society, I have seen happy, well-behaved children, raised by parents/carers who nurture their offspring with encouragement and praise, who set clear boundaries, and who create opportunities for exploration and self-fulfilment. Some of them play computer games, some of them don't like the cold, and some of them (gasp) eat Turkey Twizzlers from time to time.

Emotional experience

Sadly, I have also encountered my fair share of those whose home-life needs are poorly met. It is no coincidence that these are also the children who spend substantial amounts of time talking to police officers, or contemplating the four walls of the headteacher's office, or contemplating nothing much at all – because what is the point if no-one thinks you're worth it?

As a teacher, I have always been frustrated by the limits of my role. Not that I desire to take my work home with me, but the relentless battle sometimes breaks my spirit. In my classroom, I fight for the core values of respect, consideration, and effort to be upheld. I refuse to accept an insincere apology – I work them until they understand what it is to be responsible for their own actions. I do whatever it takes to make them recognise that they are just as valid, just as worthy, and just as deserving as the chap who drives the fast cars in the pop video. And then, at three o'clock the bell goes. Out they trot, and all is unravelled.

Classrooms, by and large, are controlled environments. Sometimes I wonder if this is part of the reason why some children are so destructive in

school – it is a "safe" place to kick-off, a "safe" place to express anger. Throw a wobbly in the PE changing rooms, and someone sensible will intervene. Throw a wobbly at home, and someone will throw it right back at you, but worse. If we think of behaviour as an outward manifestation of inward feelings, we see that, far from being randomly thoughtless, disruptiveness is about experiencing and, ultimately, expressing thoughts and emotions.

A significant obstacle for young people learning to manage themselves and their behaviour is a lack of understanding of their own emotions. We all experience different feelings – from rage and jealousy to sheer joy. A mature, emotionally developed adult is likely to be able to identify these different feelings within themself, and to have an awareness of how they affect their interactions with the world around them. Most young people, however, are yet to reach that level of maturity, and some may never reach it. Confused emotions lead to confused, unpredictable actions.

If we want young people to change their inappropriate behaviour, we need to start by putting ourselves in their shoes, to consider why they may be doing it, and then using this insight to help them make sense of their own underlying emotional issues, and of the things they need to make the best of their lives. It is not about banning game consoles, or labelling them as menaces to the neighbourhood. It is about helping them live the life they have with their eyes wide open. Teaching them to be aware of their circumstances - the cons of advertising, and the perils of stodgy food. Above all, teaching them to be aware of themselves and their range of emotions. This is what I promote in my classroom. It is perhaps not quite in synch with the academics' bid for a return to innocence, but I want my pupils to survive.

I like to believe that, despite the gulf between order in the classroom and order in the rest of the world being rather wide, my pupils are gaining something from my endeavours. I may not see it each morning. When, for example, 13-year-old Kyle arrives moaning that his mum smoked all his fags in the night; but, and in the not-too-distant future, he might just remember that he has choices. Who knows, he may even realise he has the wisdom to make the right ones.

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Time to Play? Foundation Phase Pilot Scheme

Ann Davies

Ann Davies is head teacher of Ysgol y Dderi school in Ceredigion, Wales.

Abstract: *In Wales practical steps have been taken to introduce a more play-based, integrated and learner-centred curriculum for the early years – three to seven-year-old children.* ***Ann Davies*** *summarises the main aims of this new approach and reports on her school's involvement, to date, in the four year pilot.*

In April 2004 the Welsh Assembly Government published 'The Foundation Phase in Wales' – a Draft Framework for Children's Learning.' This was the Assembly's vision for educating all children from three to seven years of age. The framework builds on and integrates 'Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning Before Compulsory School Age.'

There are seven areas of learning that form the Fouundation Phase Curriculum. Emphasis has been placed on developing children's knowledge, skills and understanding through experimental learning – learning by doing and by solving real life problems both inside and outdoors. The seven areas of learning are:

- Personal and social development and well being.
- Language, literacy and communication skills.
- Mathematical development.
- Bilingualism and understanding of the world.
- Physical development.
- Creative development.

The guidelines reflect Wales' bilingual nature.

The draft framework is being trialled in Wales from 2004 - 2008 as part of a pilot project in 41 settings. A monitoring and evaluation group has been established to provide guidance and support throughout the pilot phase.

Direct experience

Ysgol y Dderi was selected as the maintained setting to pilot the project in Ceredigion. This Community school is located in a rural setting and serves the educational needs of children from neighbouring villages. The bilingual dimension is fundamental to the educational experiences provided for children and delivered by the school.

Being involved in the pilot project has enabled us to present our children with skill based activities tailor made for their needs and development.

The early years staff took the task on board with belief and enthusiasm and were delighted that at last children could be children and all that was taught would be meaningful for each individual.

The fundamental principle of the framework is to provide meaningful and exciting experiences and environments for children.

Learning through "play" was not an issue as staff were already delivering this basic concept which underpins the framework.

We are currently in the third year of the pilot. Year 2 children have been monitored closely as they have progressed along the learning continuum.

In practice

Our starting point involved detailed discussion with teachers, parents, governors and LEA advisors. We established clearly defined targets for children to achieve by the end of Year 2 in line with the requirements of what youngsters needed by the time they were seven.

The fundamental principle of the framework is to provide meaningful and exciting experiences and environment for children. We have created a mini village – including the construction of a shop, post office, garage, park, a greenhouse and garden and a forest field with adequate shelters. We have also bought suitable clothing, so children feel comfortable to learn outside.

Children are divided into flexible age groups with key workers focussing on skills at a ratio of one adult to eight children for 3 to 5-year-olds and one adult to fifteen children for 5 to 7-year-olds.

The children are given challenges to encourage independence and to put into practice the skills taught each day. Revisiting and re-applying is paramount for sound learning.

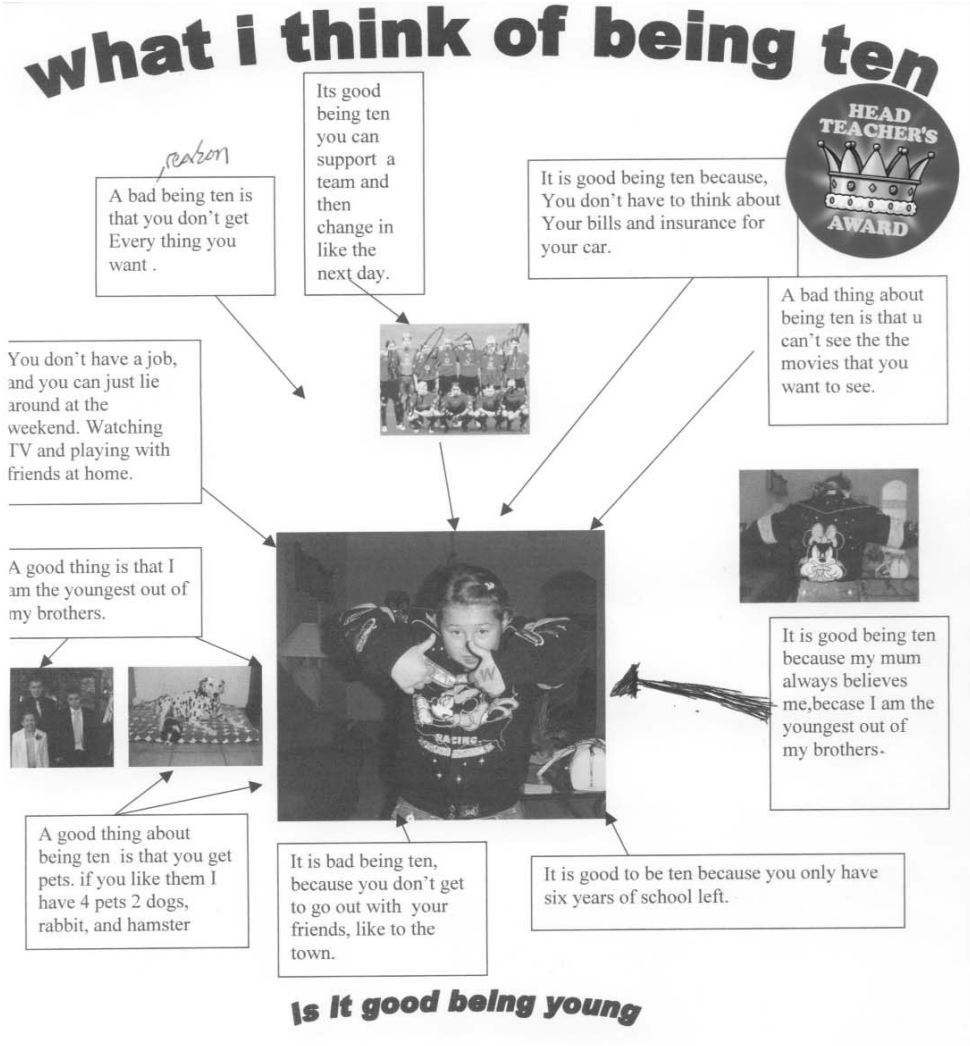
Continuous formative assessment and monitoring is an integral part of daily practice. Focussed training was essential and we formed a partnership with the LEA to ensure relevant guidance and direction for all the key workers. Professional development for all has played a central role

and all non-qualified staff are now following NVQ3 courses and specialised courses to enhance speech and language training.

On reflection, we have found since adopting the concept of the Foundation Phase that the outcome has been that our children are:

- More independent;
- More motivated;
- Far more confident;
- More actively involved in their learning processes;
- Responding easily to wider whole school initiatives;
- More aware of their roles within the local international and multicultural communities.

At the completion of the pilot phase, our aim is to continue to provide opportunities for our children to be involved in active learning processes and the environment. The pilot has, in particular, made a positive impact on the teachers involved; the whole school family; and, more importantly, the children who have been involved in the project, as well as the children at the upper end of the school.



Lucy Pellett

Sex and relationships education – we'll tell you what we want, what we really, really want!

Gill Mullinar

Gill Mullinar is Coordinator of the Sex Education Forum at the National Children's Bureau.

Abstract: *In this article,* ***Gill Mullinar*** *uses young people's views to demonstrate the value of, and need for, effective sex and relationships education (SRE) in schools. She explores what entitlement to effective SRE means and provides evidence that pupil satisfaction with SRE tends to decrease in secondary schools. She describes the campaign to make SRE within PSHE a statutory part of the National Curriculum and details the support from parents and carers for SRE in schools. She also identifies how schools can support Every Child Matters outcomes by tackling issues such as online safety and by supporting pupils to access confidential health services.*

> *"There's a lot of hype surrounding sex and I've heard that it's not what it's cracked up to be. Education needs to come first. The hype can come later."*
>
> (Female college student)

As Coordinator of the Sex Education Forum, I work on behalf of our 48 members to promote the entitlement of all children and young people to effective and high quality sex and relationships education (SRE) in schools and non-school settings. In this role, I am in the privileged position of representing a wide range of organisations which work together to provide an informed view about how SRE affects young people's sexual behaviour and emotional well-being, and to counteract media hype by examining the reality behind the headlines.

So what does promoting entitlement to high quality SRE actually mean? It means that all children and young people are offered and able to participate in SRE which:

- Is mindful of their early experiences and based on their developmental and expressed needs;
- Provides consistent messages;
- Is ongoing and progressive and supports children's confidence and self-esteem as they move from childhood to adulthood;
- Prepares them as young adults to negotiate, take responsibility for and enjoy a wide range of relationships, including sexual relationships when they are ready, and to neither exploit others nor be exploited;
- Provides them with sufficient information and skills to resist pressure, have a sense of their own rights, and protect themselves and their partner from unintended/unwanted conceptions, or sexually transmitted infections, including HIV;
- Explores attitudes and helps young people to gain an understanding of different social, cultural, ethnic and religious frameworks and develop their value systems;
- Helps young people to make informed, healthy, safe and responsible decisions (Sex Education Forum, 2003).

To deliver this effectively, schools need a clear policy developed within a framework of values and in consultation with children and young people, parents and carers and professionals from the wider community. Teachers, many of whom welcome further training and support, need to offer a planned programme of SRE within PSHE which is relevant and inclusive.

The views of young people

Children and young people's views about why SRE in school is important seldom hit the headlines; but they provide a crucial starting point for any school committed to further developing its SRE policy and practice. Children start to learn about relationships, gender and sexuality long before they begin primary school, so finding out what younger children think is as important as encouraging older pupils to have their say.

Although many children and young people want to learn about sex and relationships at home (Balding, 2005), even young children recognise the difficulties which can face parents and carers, many of whom might not have had effective sex education themselves:

> *"If you didn't learn about sex and relationships in school, it might be hard for your family to explain these things."* (Boy, Year 4)

> *"Maybe mums would teach us the same things, but mums are usually busy and might not have time."* (Boy, Year 4)

They also know that SRE in school is vital if they are to receive accurate information:

> *"We learnt about things properly in class, things we might otherwise talk about in the playground and get things wrong."* (Boy, Year 4)

Effective SRE gives children knowledge and understanding which in turn leads to increased choice:

> *"It gives you control over your future, because you can decide when you want to have a baby and start a family."* (Girl, Year 6)

Children also understand that effective SRE is about much more than sex and relationships – it is about feelings, emotional and social well-being, developing skills such as empathy and exploring attitudes and values:

> "[It means that] *when you grow up, if you are watching a sad film you can comfort someone if they are upset."* (Boy, Year 4)

> "[It's] *about respect in relationships and how people should always treat each other fairly and should always agree about things together."* (Girl, Year 6)

SRE can help to allay anxieties which might be barriers to learning:

> *"It is helpful for children my age to understand going through puberty. I think I am more calmer now I know what my body is doing and I think my friends are calmer as well."* (Girl, Year 5)

> *"Before the programme I was worried about getting my period, but now I know it is all a fact of life."* (Girl, Year 6)

Some pupils are already clear about their own and others' role as future educators:

> *"If you want to be a PSHE teacher when you grow up, you need to know about SRE."* (Girl, Year 4)

> *"I'm glad that someone had the idea of sex education because now I properly understand internal and external changes in our bodies. I can keep this information to help me cope when I get older and explain it to my children."* (Girl Year 5)

And there is good advice for teachers and pupils too:

> *"I would say to teachers that it is important to teach us about sex and relationships so that we can be happy and healthy in our futures."* (Girl, Year 6)

> *"I would say to the children – take it seriously, don't laugh, be interested and learn as much as you can!"* (Boy, Year 6)

Too little, too late?

All of the children quoted above are lucky – they have been involved in planned programmes of SRE in schools committed to meeting their pupils' needs. But in spite of the best efforts of many secondary school teachers, the reported experience of older teenagers at local and national level tends to be dissatisfaction with SRE provision which they see as being 'too little, too late and too biological':

> *"Instead of having just the bare minimum of sex education, we need to have it completely. No ifs, no buts, no maybes. What is the point of giving a little bit of information when you can give it all and they can learn and then they can make their own choices?"* (Girl, aged 17)

> *"What I got in Year 10/11 – they give you a banana… I didn't want to know about that – I wanted to know about the consequences, the risks and all the sorts of things I found out about in college. I find it quite embarrassing actually – I should have known about this since secondary school – it's shameful."* (Girl, aged 18)

In 2006, two large-scale initiatives involving young people turned this dissatisfaction into concrete calls for improved SRE provision. A CosmoGIRL! Magazine survey in which 80 per cent of respondents had said that their SRE 'could be better' led to a petition calling for compulsory SRE within Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) in every secondary school in the UK. Over 2000 signatures were collected together

with comments such as the one below:

> *"I think it's fantastic how you are campaigning for better sex and relationships education in schools. We have had the absolute minimum of sex ed in our school and we definitely need more."* (Girl, aged 14)

The UK Youth Parliament followed this with a petition calling for the Government to ensure that every young person received SRE within PSHE by making PSHE a compulsory part of the National Curriculum. Over 5000 signatures of support were collected from young people across the country and delivered to Downing Street in March 2006.

Continuing campaign

The campaign for PSHE to be made a statutory foundation subject at all key stages has rapidly gained momentum, with extensive support from over 50 professional organisations, government independent advisory groups on teenage pregnancy and sexual health and HIV, a range of education professionals and the backing of the House of Commons Health Select Committee (10 Downing Street E-petitions, 2006). There is strong support from teachers who believe in young people's entitlement to PSHE and its beneficial effect on pupil health, well-being and achievement, and from those who understand that enhancing the status and priority of a subject which they are already teaching is vital if schools are to achieve the five Every Child Matters outcomes. But to date the Government has resisted this pressure and reiterated its stance that other measures exist to drive up the quality of PSHE including the Healthy Schools Programme, the PSHE Continuing Professional Development certification programme, the newly-formed PSHE Subject Association and a forthcoming OFSTED report on PSHE due in Spring 2007. Support for PSHE to be made a foundation subject continues to be gathered, most recently in an online petition.

Effective SRE is about feelings, emotional and social well-being, developing skills such as empathy and exploring attitudes and values.

The Sex Education Forum strongly believes that the opportunity to make relationships, as well as sex education, a statutory part of the curriculum would enhance provision for young people, and we know that there is substantial and ongoing support from pupils for improved SRE. But what of parents and carers and the general public? Contrary to what might be assumed from media coverage, recent opinion polls and surveys reveal substantial support from these groups. Eighty-four per cent of the general public agree that schools should teach children about sexual

behaviour and relationships, going beyond the basic biology of reproduction. Eighty-six per cent of those surveyed agreed that every young person should receive SRE in school as a compulsory part of the National Curriculum, and 94 per cent agreed that SRE should cover the emotional as well as the sexual aspects of relationships. Comparable figures for parents were 78 per cent and 83 per cent (Martinez, 2006).

In an ideal world, all parents and carers would cover SRE at home with their children, and there are organisations which provide training and support for parents and carers wanting to gain confidence and improve their knowledge and skills in this area. However, in an ICM survey carried out prior to a Teachers' TV 'Big Debate' on sex education recorded in December 2006, nearly half of 800 parents of secondary age children said that they had not talked in-depth about sex to their son or daughter.

Staying safe

So schools have a critical role to play in providing safe, age-appropriate SRE to all young people, which as well as offering pupils a planned opportunity to learn about a wider range of attitudes and views than might be available to them at home, can also be the trigger for those in abusive or coercive relationships to seek help. If young people are to 'enjoy and achieve' and 'be healthy', helping them to 'stay safe' is an essential element of effective SRE. A Government agency, Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP), has developed a website for children and adults concerned about safety

Evidence suggests that a multi faceted approach to SRE is most effective in tackling high rates of teenage pregnancy.

online. It includes information for teachers, a website for young people and offers a useful way in to tackling this increasingly important issue. A factsheet on addressing sexual exploitation within PSHE in schools which lists other organisations, websites and resources will be available shortly on the Sex Education Forum website.

Evidence suggests that a multi-faceted approach to SRE is most effective in tackling high rates of teenage pregnancy. School-based SRE, particularly when linked to contraceptive services, impacts on young people's knowledge and attitudes, delays sexual activity and/or reduces pregnancy rates (Health Development Agency, 2004). In line with government guidance and models of best practice (DfES and DOH, 2006), an increasing number of secondary schools are developing links with sexual health services. These links vary from running an on-site clinic or advice centre through to arranging visits to young people's services. They may simply involve ensuring that local sources of advice and information

are well-publicised within the school with clear referral mechanisms which all staff are aware of. The Sex Education Forum runs a moderated e-mail network supporting school and other staff engaged in this work and information will be posted on the website in early 2007.

Young people deserve the best SRE we can give them to prepare them for adult life. In case any schools which are doing their best to provide effective, consistent and appropriate SRE are tempted to leave the job to someone else. I'd like to end where I began with views expressed by a group of young people talking about why SRE matters to them:

> *"You would think that the majority of us would know yeah about sexual health and STIs but if you take the time to go into it, you find out that we don't know about these sort of things. Some of us haven't had sex education in school – I haven't had sex education in school – I wasn't even told about periods. It's scary because we are just so young and we have our whole life ahead of us and just having sex could change our whole life forever."*

Acknowledgements

Grateful thanks to all the children and young people whose views are reproduced in this article.

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Further information

Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre
http://www.ceop.gov.uk/
PSHE Subject Association http://www.ncb.org.uk/pshe%5Fsa/
Sex Education Forum http://www.ncb.org.uk/sef/
Speakeasy Programme
http://www.fpa.org.uk/community/parentsandcarers/
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Brain development during adolescence

Sarah-Jayne Blakemore

Sarah-Jayne Blakemore is a Royal Society Dorothy Hodgkin Research Fellow at the Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience at University College, London. She is actively involved in Public Engagement with Science: she frequently gives public lectures, was scientific consultant on a BBC series on *The Human Mind* in 2003, worked with the Select Committee for Education in 2000, and has recently co-authored a book called *The Learning Brain*.

Abstract: *While the physical changes associated with adolescence are well known, what is happening inside the teenage brain needs further investigation. In this article,* ***Sarah-Jayne Blakemore*** *explains the complex processes of brain development in babies and outlines recent research evidence of the further significant changes experienced during puberty and beyond. She maintains that education during the teenage years might focus on stimulating those parts of the brain which are changing during this period including internal control, multi-tasking and social cognitive skills.*

Adolescence is usually defined as the period of psychological and social transition between childhood and adulthood. The beginning of adolescence, around the onset of puberty, is characterised by dramatic hormonal and physical changes. The transition from childhood to adulthood is also characterised by psychological changes in terms of identity, self-consciousness and cognitive flexibility. During puberty children's personalities can seem to change. After puberty, children can seem to become more aware of themselves and other people around them, their opinions and emotions. Worry about appearance and concern about what other people – especially peers – will think seem to become profoundly important, much more so than before puberty. Much is changing in the body and seems to be changing in the brain during puberty. Despite common anecdotal and autobiographical accounts, there has been

surprisingly little empirical research on the development of cognitive skills and the brain during puberty and adolescence. In the past few years, a number of pioneering experiments have looked at the development of brain and cognitive processes during the secondary school years.

Early brain development

An adult human brain contains about 100 billion brain cells (*neurons*[i] – see Figure 1); human babies are born with just as many neurons as adults. However, as babies develop, many changes take place in the brain. Neurons grow, which accounts for some of the change, but the 'wiring', the intricate network of connections between neurons (*synapses*[ii] see Figure 2) undergoes the most significant changes. Early in development, the brain begins to form new synapses, so that the synaptic density (the number of synapses per unit volume of brain tissue) greatly exceeds adult levels. This process of synaptic proliferation, called *synaptogenesis*, lasts up to several months, depending on the species of animal. Thus, a one-year-old baby's brain contains many more connections than does an adult brain. The next stage of development reduces the surplus synapses to an adult number.

The increase in the number of synapses is followed by a period of synaptic elimination (or *pruning*) in which excess connections wither away. This process is pre-programmed to a large extent – it will happen no matter what environment the baby is in. However, the species-specific environment can also influence synaptic pruning, in that frequently used

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connections are strengthened and infrequently used connections are eliminated. Pruning of synapses is much like pruning of a rose bush: getting rid of the weak branches allows the remaining branches to grow stronger. This experience-dependent process, which occurs over a period of years, reduces the overall synaptic density to adult levels, usually by the time of sexual maturity.

It is believed that synaptic pruning effectively fine-tunes networks of brain tissue and perceptual processes. An example of this is sound categorisation. Learning one's own language initially requires categorising the sounds that make up language. New-born babies are able to distinguish between all speech sounds. Patricia Kuhl at the University of Washington discovered that, by the end of their first year, babies lose the ability to distinguish between sounds to which they are not exposed (Kuhl, 2004). Kuhl studied babies' perception of two different sounds from the Hindi language, between which American (and British) adults are simply unable to distinguish. In an ingenious series of experiments, Kuhl

Figure 1

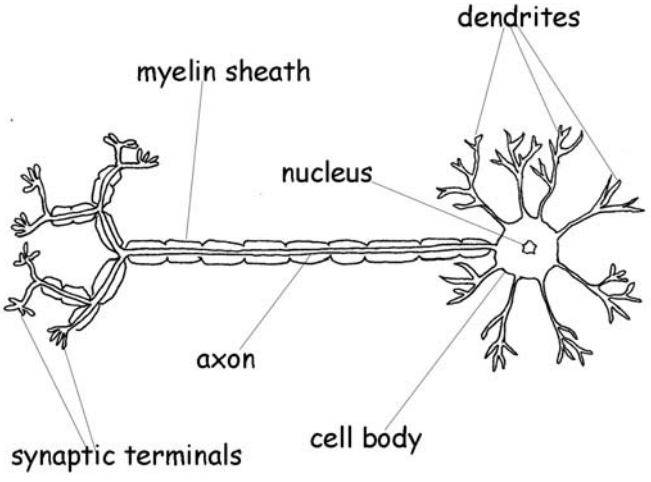
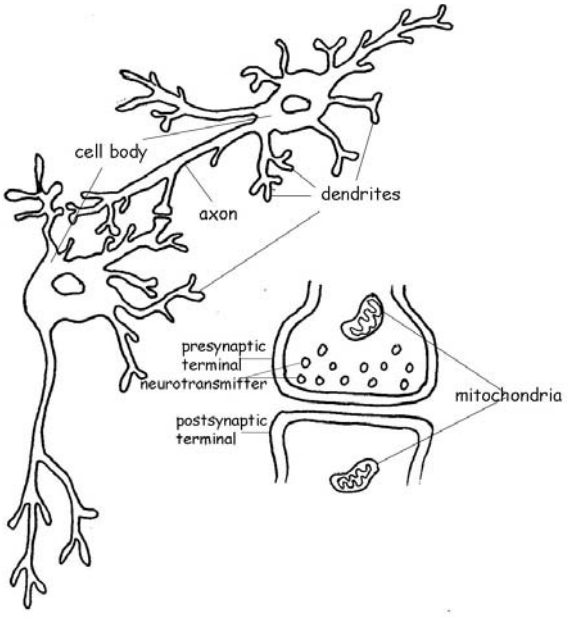


Figure 2



showed that American babies under 10 months could detect the difference between these sounds, which American adults could not. After 10 months of age, babies gradually lose this ability (Werker *et al* 1981). This is because the American language does not contain those particular distinct sounds, so American babies are not exposed to them. In contrast, babies brought up

hearing Hindi at the same age become even better at hearing the distinction between these distinct sounds because they are exposed to them in their language. In this respect, there is nothing unusual about Hindi language sounds: there are sounds in all languages that non-speakers cannot detect. This experience-dependent fine-tuning of sound categorisation may rely on the pruning of synapses in sensory areas involved in processing sound.

Brain development during adolescence: the first experiments

The experiments described above suggested that development of certain areas of animal brains is particularly sensitive to environmental influence at particular times very early in life. As a consequence of this research, the very idea that the brain might continue to undergo change after this very early sensitive period seemed improbable. Indeed, it was not until the 1970s that research on post-mortem human brains revealed that some brain areas, in particular the *frontal cortex* (see Figure 3), continue to develop well beyond childhood. The frontal cortex is the area responsible for important cognitive abilities such as the ability to make plans, remember to do things in the future, multi-task and inhibit inappropriate behaviour (known as *executive functions*). The frontal cortex also plays an important role in self-awareness and understanding other people. Peter Huttenlocher, Professor of Paediatrics and Neurology at the University of Chicago, collected post-mortem brains from people of all ages, and found that the frontal cortex was remarkably different in the brains of pre-pubescent children and post-pubescent adolescents.

While in sensory brain areas, synaptogenesis and synaptic pruning occur relatively early (as described above), Huttenlocher discovered that there is a second wave of synaptic reorganisation in the frontal cortex that starts at around the age that corresponds to the onset of puberty (Huttenlocher, 1979). He found that the number of synapses in the frontal lobe is maximal at an age that corresponds to the onset of puberty, after which their number decreases (due to synaptic pruning) throughout adolescence.

Another developmental mechanism that occurs for many decades in the frontal cortex is *myelination*. As neurons develop, they build up a layer of *myelin* on their *axon* (the long fibre attached to each brain cell, see Figure 1). Myelin is a fatty substance that insulates the axons and hugely increases the speed of transmission of electrical impulses from neuron to neuron. Whereas sensory and motor brain regions become fully myelinated in the first few years of life, axons in the frontal cortex continue to be myelinated well into adolescence in the human brain (Yakovlev and Lecours, 1967). This finding is remarkable because it means that the transmission speed of

neurons in the frontal cortex may increase after puberty. In addition, the research demonstrating synaptic pruning in the frontal cortex suggests that fine-tuning of cognitive processes of the frontal lobes should also take place in adolescence. One purely speculative possibility is that sensitive periods accompany this later period of fine-tuning, just as they do for fine-tuning of speech perception in the first 10 months of life (as described for sound categorisation). Just as the environment influences early synaptic pruning, so might it have an impact on the pruning that occurs in the frontal cortex during adolescence. We have no idea whether or not this is the case – there are no tools as yet to look at pruning in the living brain. However, if the environment influences synaptic pruning during adolescence, this has implications for what kind of experiences adolescents should encounter.

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Brain development during adolescence: recent experiments

Until recently, the structure of the human brain could be studied only after death. The scarcity of post-mortem child and adolescent brains meant that knowledge of the adolescent brain was extremely scanty. In the past decade, non-invasive brain imaging techniques, particularly Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI[iii]), have enabled scientists to study development of the living human brain. In the past seven or eight years, a number of MRI studies have provided further evidence of the ongoing maturation of the frontal cortex into adolescence and even into adulthood. These imaging studies have confirmed that the brain changes during the teenage years, as first revealed in the cellular studies carried out 20 years earlier (Giedd *et al*, 1999).

The brain images from the MRI studies showed that the amount of white matter in the frontal cortex (amongst other cortical regions) increases between childhood and adulthood. Myelin is made up of fatty tissue and appears white in an MRI scan. Therefore, the increase in white matter seen to occur throughout adolescence may represent the increase in axonal myelination discovered by the cellular studies performed decades earlier. The increase in white matter in the frontal cortex is steady and linear.

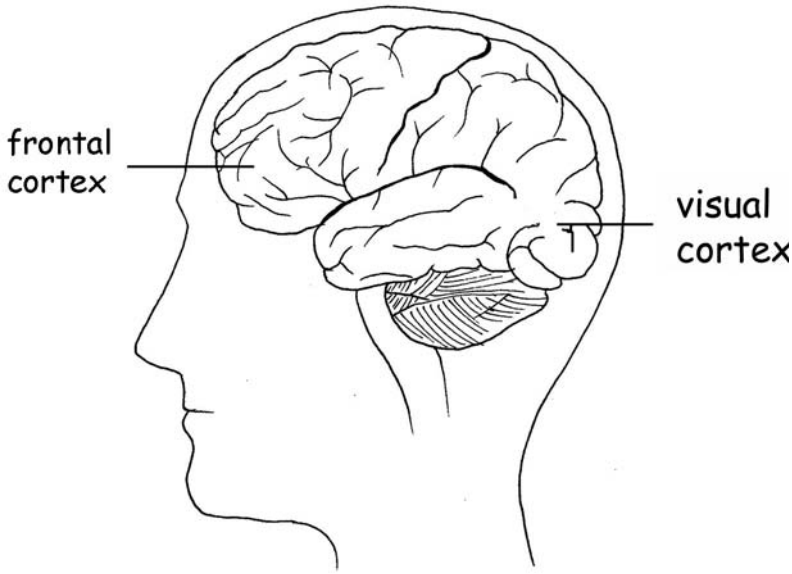
In contrast to the steady, linear increase in white matter, at the same time, there is a more complex, non-linear decrease in grey matter (made up of cell bodies, dendrites and synapses) in the frontal cortex during adolescence (Giedd, 2004). In the past decade, Jay Giedd and his colleagues at the National Institute of Health in Maryland, USA, have scanned hundreds of children, adolescents and young adults. The results from their

studies have shown that grey matter volume in the frontal cortex increases gradually during childhood and peaks at around the onset of puberty: approximately 11 years in girls and 12 years in boys. This is followed by a gradual decrease in the volume of grey matter during adolescence and early adulthood. The pattern of grey matter development has been attributed to the increase in the number of synapses, which peaks at the onset of puberty, followed by synaptic pruning during adolescence (first discovered by Huttenlocher in his post-mortem studies described above).

Cognitive changes during adolescence

The frontal cortex changes dramatically during puberty and adolescence and beyond. As mentioned above, this brain region plays a critical role in a host of high-level cognitive abilities, such as executive functions, including

Figure 3



planning, multi-tasking, inhibiting inappropriate behaviour; and social understanding, including perspective-taking and self-awareness. In the past few years, empirical research has looked at the cognitive changes that occur during adolescence (Blakemore and Choudhury, 2006).

A number of studies have demonstrated that these abilities do undergo refinement during adolescence. Some abilities, including planning and inhibiting behaviour, seem to improve steadily, while others seem to undergo a "dip" at puberty. A series of experiments carried out in Australia

showed that many executive functions steadily improve during adolescence (Anderson *et al*). In contrast, a recent study showed that the ability to match an emotional face to an emotional word actually deteriorates at around the age of puberty (McGivern *et al*). In this task, a large group of children and adolescents were shown either pictures of faces displaying particular emotional expressions (happy, sad, angry), or words describing those emotions ("Happy," "Sad," "Angry"), and were asked to specify, as quickly as possible, the emotion presented in the face or word. In a third situation, volunteers were shown both a face and a word, then, after a delay, had to decide whether the facial expression matched the emotional word. The rationale behind the design of the task was that the face/word connection places high demands on frontal lobe circuitry, since it requires working memory and decision-making.

If early childhood is seen as a major opportunity for teaching, perhaps teenage years should be seen in the same way.

The results revealed that, at the age of puberty onset, at 11-12 years, there was a decline in performance in the matching face and word condition compared with the younger group of children. After puberty, from age 13-14, performance improved until it returned to the pre-pubescent level by the age of about 16-17 years. The authors linked this pubertal dip to the increase in the number of synapses in the frontal cortex at the onset of puberty. The idea is that this wave of synaptic proliferation perturbs the functioning of prefrontal cortex, which has to be reorganised into efficient networks by synaptic pruning during adolescence.

A recent study looked at the link between brain development and IQ. In this experiment by Philip Shaw, Jay Giedd and colleagues, over 300 children were scanned at least once, and underwent IQ tests, between the ages of 8 and 16 (Shaw *et al*, 2006). The participants were divided into three groups depending on their IQ: average, high or superior. The results revealed that cortical (particularly frontal cortex) thickness peaks later (at age 13 years) in children with superior IQ, compared with children with average IQ (5.6 years) or high IQ (8.5 years). This is followed in late adolescence by cortical thinning, which is more rapid in the superior IQ group than in the other groups. In other words, although cortical thickening is delayed in the superior IQ group, their cortex thickens and thins faster than the other groups. The authors of this study suggest that the delay in thickening might promote higher IQ because the older the child is, the more complex and varied experiences they can undergo at a time when the cortex is growing and malleable.

Implications and conclusions

In this article, I have skimmed the surface of research demonstrating that

the brain continues to develop and change during adolescence. The study of the development of the brain beyond childhood is a new but rapidly evolving field with potential applications in education and social policy. The finding that changes in brain structure continue into adolescence and early adulthood has challenged accepted views and has given rise to a recent spate of investigations into the way cognition might change as a consequence.

If early childhood is seen as a major opportunity for teaching, perhaps teenage years should be seen in the same way. During both periods, particularly dramatic brain reorganisation is taking place. The idea that teenagers should still go to school and be educated is relatively new. And yet the research on brain development suggests that education during the teenage years is vital. The brain is still developing during this period, the brain is adaptable, and needs to be moulded and shaped. Perhaps the aims of education for adolescents might include a focus on abilities that are controlled by the parts of the brain that undergo most change during adolescence. These abilities might include internal control, multi-tasking, planning, and social cognitive skills.

On the other hand, the research also suggests that there is no biological necessity to rush and start formal teaching earlier and earlier. Rather, late starts might be reconsidered as perfectly in time with natural brain and cognitive development. Teaching and learning apply to all ages.

Footnotes

i A *neuron* is the primary cell in the nervous system. Neurons communicate with other neurons by sending electrical impulses from their cell body, down their axon, to their synaptic terminals, which connect with the dendrites of neurons in the surrounding areas.

ii A *synapse* is a gap between nerve cells, across which chemical information is passed in the nervous system. Synapses generally lie along synaptic terminals and dendrites of nerve cells.

iii *Magnetic Resonance Imaging* (*MRI*) uses a very large magnetic field to produce high-quality three-dimensional images of brain structures without injecting radioactive tracers. A large cylindrical magnet creates a magnetic field around the person's head, and a magnetic pulse is sent through the magnetic field. Different structures in the brain (so-called white matter and grey matter, blood vessels, fluid and bone, for example) have different magnetic properties and therefore they appear different in the MRI image. Sensors inside the scanner record the signals from the different brain structures and a computer uses the information to construct an image. Using MRI, it is possible image both surface and deep brain structures in great anatomical detail.

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The great outdoors

Gail Ryder Richardson

Gail Ryder Richardson is one of Learning through Landscapes' Senior Development Officers. She has over 20 years experience in the early years sector and has been involved in all aspects of early years work since she joined LTL in 2003 to deliver the *Space to Grow* project in Kent. *Creating a Space to Grow* is the award-winning book that details the process and outcomes of this project.

***Abstract: Gail Ryder Richardson** draws on her experiences with Learning through Landscapes to highlight the special nature and benefits of 'outdoors' during 'school time' for young children. She identifies the key features of outdoor environments that are successful in providing play based Foundation Stage learning. She considers some of the whole school issues that can hamper the development of this provision and suggests practical solutions to common problems.*

Learning through Landscapes (LTL) is an educational charity dedicated to ensuring that all children and young people enjoy their entitlement to the unique opportunities and experiences which well designed, well managed and well used school grounds can provide. Through projects, research, advocacy, membership and consultancy, LTL promotes the importance of 'outdoors' and supports schools in making more use of outdoors for play, learning and social experiences.

Learning through Landscapes' work within primary schools includes practical advice and support for the Foundation Stage. This article starts from the premise that play is a key way in which children learn within the Foundation Stage, it sets out to identify the special nature and benefits of outdoors, and the key features of environments offering effective provision for play based Foundation Stage learning. It will also explore some of the common whole school issues that arise in relation to provision of learning outdoors, and it will consider starting points for schools working towards overcoming these barriers to making effective outdoor play provision.

The value of play

'Well-planned play, both indoors and outdoors, is a key way in which children learn with enjoyment and challenge' (QCA, 2000). The existing curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage includes explicit references to the importance of play for young children and the distinctive

contribution of outdoors to children's play experiences. The new Early Years Foundation Stage (QCA and DfEE, 2000) also places high importance on outdoor environments and will include materials developed and contributed by Learning through Landscapes.

Academics and early years professionals have long recognised the value and importance of play and the variety of ways in which it influences the learning and development of young children. Bilton (2002) argues that play is an easy means of learning for young children as they are naturally drawn to it and want to get involved in it. Children's play within the Foundation Stage often involves others, and the value of this is recognised by Wood and Bennet (1997) who identified that one of the primary functions of play is to develop children's language and social skills. Lally (1998) states that, through play, children have opportunities to 'explore and discover, construct, repeat and consolidate, represent, create, imagine and socialise'. The particular importance of imaginative play has been explored by Bruce (1987). She asserts that it enables children to 'decentre' and therefore understand a situation from another point of view.

More recently LTL convened a group of leading early years organisations and consultants to discuss and develop a shared vision (LTL 2003 and 2004) and a set of ten agreed values for outdoor play. The second of these values asserts that: 'Play is the most important activity for young children outside; play is the means through which children find stimulation, well-being and happiness, and is the means through which they grow physically, intellectually and emotionally. The outdoor environment is very well suited to meeting children's needs for all types of play, building upon first-hand experiences'.

The special nature and benefits of outdoors

One of the three shared vision statements for outdoor play (LTL 2003 and 2004) asserts that *'all children have the right to experience and enjoy the essential and special nature of being outdoors'*. The outdoors is a significantly different environment and one that can complement and extend what is offered indoors. Recognising and using the special nature of outdoors is a vital first step towards providing children with high quality outdoor play experiences. Learning through Landscapes highlights the following characteristics as making a significant contribution to the special nature of outdoors.

Outdoors offers children more **space**:

- Space at different levels and perspectives, as well as additional space, sideways and upwards – the sky is the 'roof'.
- The added space outdoors encourages children to work on a larger, more active scale across all areas of learning, and supports collaborative activity.

- The space outdoors feels very different to that indoors and it includes a wider range of light effects, air movements and temperature changes.
- Outdoors offers children a different mental and emotional space to that which exists indoors – it just feels different!

Outdoors offers children **freedom**:

- Freedom to move around in a bigger space and enjoy vigorous activity, larger scale play, or to just 'feel' the space around them.
- Freedom to do things not possible indoors, such as riding bikes, leaping from a height, or puddle-jumping.
- Freedom to be more relaxed and inventive about exploring, transporting, mixing resources and making a mess.
- Freedom to be boisterous and have opportunities to make noise without disrupting others.
- Freedom to explore different ways of feeling, behaving, interacting or 'being' from active super-hero play to cloud watching.

Outdoors offers children **contact with the natural world**, its living creatures and physical features:

- Children can have direct contact and ongoing experiences with plants, animals and mini-beasts, as well as natural features and materials such as rocks, stones, shells, soil, water and sand.
- Experience of the four elements of earth, air, water and even fire (through outdoor cooking or role-play barbeques) can be offered outdoors.

Outdoors supports **creativity**:

- Children can question and involve themselves in challenging experiences, learning to reflect critically on their ideas, actions and outcomes.
- Outdoors offers children valuable opportunities to make connections and see relationships between events and objects.
- Children can experiment with ideas and options and envisage what might be possible.

Outdoors offers children opportunities to use their bodies and learn through **whole body, multi-sensory experiences**:

- Children can be vigorous, boisterous and active for long periods. They can use their torso and limbs, developing health, strength and co-ordination and enjoy finding out what their bodies can do.
- Whole body experiences with resources that excite the senses can be offered on a larger scale outdoors. For example, lying down in the sandpit, or burrowing under a pile of autumn leaves.

Outdoors offers **real experiences**:

- Real and direct experiences are offered through growing plants, experimenting with natural materials and discovering the seasonal elements of the weather – for example rain, snow, frost, shadows.
- The sounds and sights of the locality and community can be experienced then explored through imaginative play outdoors.
- Children can experience and understand concepts such as volume and weight when transporting a barrow-full of sand, and distance or height when using the physical play apparatus.

Outdoors offers a wide **variety of spaces, places and perspectives**:

- In addition to open space, outdoors can offer nooks and crannies amongst plants, climbing frames, playhouses and dens. Children can be enclosed or high up, enjoying the new perspective of looking down on their world.
- Places can be active and provide sociable large scale opportunities for play, or they can be areas for calm, reflection, one-to-one interaction or the chance to be solitary.

Outdoors is a **dynamic** place full of change and flexibility:

- Outdoors offers children the freedom to manipulate, change and be in control of their environment through the use of moveable, open-ended resources and materials.
- The daily changes in the quality of the air, temperature and rainfall and the gradual changes through the seasons offer huge potential for play – every day is different!
- The uncertainty of daily changes outdoors and the surprise and excitement arising from spontaneous events, such as finding a ladybird or noticing a hot air balloon overhead enrich children's experiences as they find out about their world.

Outdoors **enriches children's relationships** with adults and other children:

- Some children find it is easier to choose how they interact with others or participate in activities.
- Children have meaningful opportunities to cooperate, negotiate and collaborate.
- Adults can take more time to sit and chat with children, get involved in play and exploration or simply stand back to observe and listen to children's play.
- Children benefit from the higher tolerance levels that adults often have to noise, mess and activity in the bigger, unrestricted outdoor space with no ceiling and less concern about spillages or collisions with

obstacles.
- Children can feel less controlled by adults outside and this often has a positive effect on their play and interactions with others.

Outdoors is a **safe yet challenging** place:
- The outdoors offers children many ways to be adventurous and to challenge their own limits within a framework of safety provided by adults and the environment they have prepared.
- It provides experiences through which children can learn how to keep themselves safe and how to be aware of the safety of others.

Key features of effective provision

When planning for children to have high quality outdoor play experiences within the Foundation Stage most early years practitioners will face a range of challenges and obstacles. However, there are some identifiable features that are commonly recognised to have a positive impact on children's outdoor experiences. Before exploring the barriers and challenges in more detail it is useful to identify and consider these key physical and organisational features.

Physical features:

Outdoor learning will be more effectively supported if adults and children have good access to outdoors, and worthwhile opportunities to move freely between the indoor and outdoor environment. This includes convenient access to outdoor clothing and toilets. Secure entrances, exits and boundaries are a vital safety feature and offer adults the peace of mind to let children freely roam and explore. Enough space should be available to avoid the risk of overcrowding and collisions. A variety of natural, made, hard and soft surfaces and low level slopes offer added interest, exciting new perspectives and act as a catalyst for children's play ideas. Both adults and children need to have protection from extreme weather conditions through provision of shade and shelter. A supply of water outdoors enriches children's play and learning all year round and makes caring for plants easier during the hot weather.

The outdoors is a significantly different environment and one that can complement and extend what is offered indoors.

Organisational features:

The attitude and behaviour of adults outdoors has a profound impact on what happens outdoors and on children's learning. It is therefore vital that children have the support of attentive and engaged adults who are enthusiastic about outdoors and understand the importance of outdoor

play and learning. Similarly, the outdoor environment will only be fully effective as a place for high quality learning experiences if the adults involved in the organisation, use and maintenance of the space recognise the importance of risk assessing to 'enable' rather than 'restrict' children's experiences. The organisation and design of outdoors should include safe places where children can observe events without having to get involved unless they choose to, as well as active places where children can be boisterous and noisy.

The availability of appropriate clothing and protection enables adults and children to go out all year round – whatever the weather! In practice this means providing everyone with good protection against extreme heat and cold, and muddy, wet, windy or snowy weather conditions. Independent access to well-organised storage facilities enables children to select and return resources as and when they need them. Play and learning experiences outdoors are improved and 'setting up' and 'clearing up' becomes a shared responsibility that both adults and children can participate in.

Whole school challenges

Many schools have a range of challenges to overcome to make high quality outdoor play a reality for Foundation Stage children. Learning through Landscapes believes that the process of changing attitudes towards the use of outdoor spaces should be based on three underpinning principles.

The process should be holistic and consider the needs of the whole school community, the whole site, the whole child and the whole curriculum. It should be participative and involve all members of the school community (not just those most directly affected) – for example teaching and non-teaching staff, senior management, parents and children. The design, management and maintenance of developments outdoors should be sustainable so that the time, money and energy that is initially invested in making changes brings long term benefit to all. Learning through Landscapes believes that the solutions to the challenges faced by schools are as individual and unique as the schools and the children within them. Consideration of the most common issues and identification of some potential solutions is a useful catalyst for generating discussion but the best solutions are found by the individual schools themselves and the process of working together and resolving these problems is as important as the final outcome.

Solution-focussed

The table below sets out some of the some of the most common challenges within early years settings and suggests starting points for seeking solutions.

Challenge	Effect on Practice?	Have You Thought About It?
The Foundation Stage children do not have their own designated outdoor space.	• Different age groups use the outdoor area throughout the day. Therefore difficult to organise opportunities for sustained play. Lots of setting up and clearing away! • Equipment has to be suitable for both younger and older children.	• Discussing the issue with children? They are the experts in their space, they know the potential and pitfalls and how they would like to use it. • Looking at the whole school site and reorganising the way the grounds are used? Just because it has been used that way for many years doesn't mean it has to be used that way! • Looking at the internal space? Moving year groups around and changing the use of classrooms indoors can change the way outdoors is accessed and used. • Being creative in how fixed equipment is viewed and used? A climbing frame that is inappropriate for younger children to climb on could be used as the basis for a den for them to hide under. • Involving older children in 'codes for behaviour' around younger children's equipment? • Creating different zones? Set up some areas for sole use by specific age groups and other areas that are for general use. Involve everyone in deciding on and developing these zones.
Deployment issues.	• Changes in staff at specific times of the day (e.g. at lunchtime) alter the use and management of the space.	• Working with all staff deployed in the space to develop a shared understanding of how it is to be used and managed at various times during the day? • Reviewing the routines of Foundation Stage staff? Would staggered breaks make a positive difference?
	• Not enough Foundation Stage staff available to enable children to make good use of indoors and outdoors simultaneously.	• Reviewing staffing levels across the school? Is there anyone that could provide extra support to the Foundation Stage classes? • Appealing for volunteers? • Taking the whole curriculum outdoors at fixed times throughout the day or week – whatever the weather?! • Offering both indoors and outdoors but limiting the space that is used so that it is more manageable and easier to staff? • Risk-assessing[1] both the indoor and outdoor environment to reduce the risk of harm to an acceptable level? • Thinking about indoors and outdoors as two halves of one environment – rather than two different spaces? A shift in perspective may help staff overcome their anxieties about managing the space? • Initiating a discussion amongst colleagues around timetabling and routines?
Whole school routines e.g. playground duty.	• Foundation Stage staffing levels, children's play and indoor/outdoor routines are interrupted by 'whole school' routines and are more difficult to manage.	• Making the case for Foundation Stage children and staff to be exempt from some whole school routines, where their involvement is not in the children's best interests?
Access problems.	• Indirect access from the class to outdoors gives rise to concerns about children's safety and ability to mange the route independently.	• Changing classrooms? • Risk assessing the route to reduce the likelihood of harm arising as children make their way outdoors? • Discussing and role-modeling the behaviour you want children to adopt along the route? • A self-registration system whereby children put their name or photograph on the door to record that they have gone outdoors? A similar system can be used outdoors so that staff know who has come out or gone in. • Placing sticky footprints on the floor, or a painted line along the walls at child height to give a clear visual clue to the route outdoors? • Identifying the route with low-level photographic displays of outdoor activities to signpost the way and jog children's memory about their outdoor experiences? To maintain interest, change the display regularly as seasons pass and different experiences are being offered. • Reviewing the layout of the indoor environment to improve access – is there another door that could be used?
Lack of natural features.	• Limits children's contact with the natural world.	• Contacting Learning through Landscapes or your local garden centre for information and ideas about small scale growing in containers and pots?
Boundaries undefined and/or insecure.	• Concerns about children's safety –potential for people to pass through children's play space.	• Creating a temporary boundary, for example from builders' mesh or banner material? • Marking out a designated route through the space to reduce the impact on children's play?
Storage – shortage of, poor positioning, inaccessible to children.	• Unable to offer children independent access to equipment - setting up and clearing away is time consuming.	• Re-siting existing storage facilities? • Re-organising storage to make it safe for children? • Installing smaller storage 'depots' around the outdoor area so children can collect what they need when they need it –and return it too?! • Using wheeled storage or trolleys to bring equipment to where it is needed?

The time is right

However daunting the challenges may be – and in some settings they are considerable – public perception that outdoor play is a disappearing part of childhood provides a real incentive to find solutions. The benefits will make investment and extra effort worthwhile.

Notes

[1]Contact RoSPA for information and guidance about risk-assessment procedures www.rospa.co.uk

'Come rain, come shine' – NUT's CPD Programme's practical seminar focusing on outdoor play in the early years is 'showcasing' at the Education Show 2007. For details visit: http://www.teachers.org.uk/resources/word/ES_PROGRAMME_INFORMATION.doc

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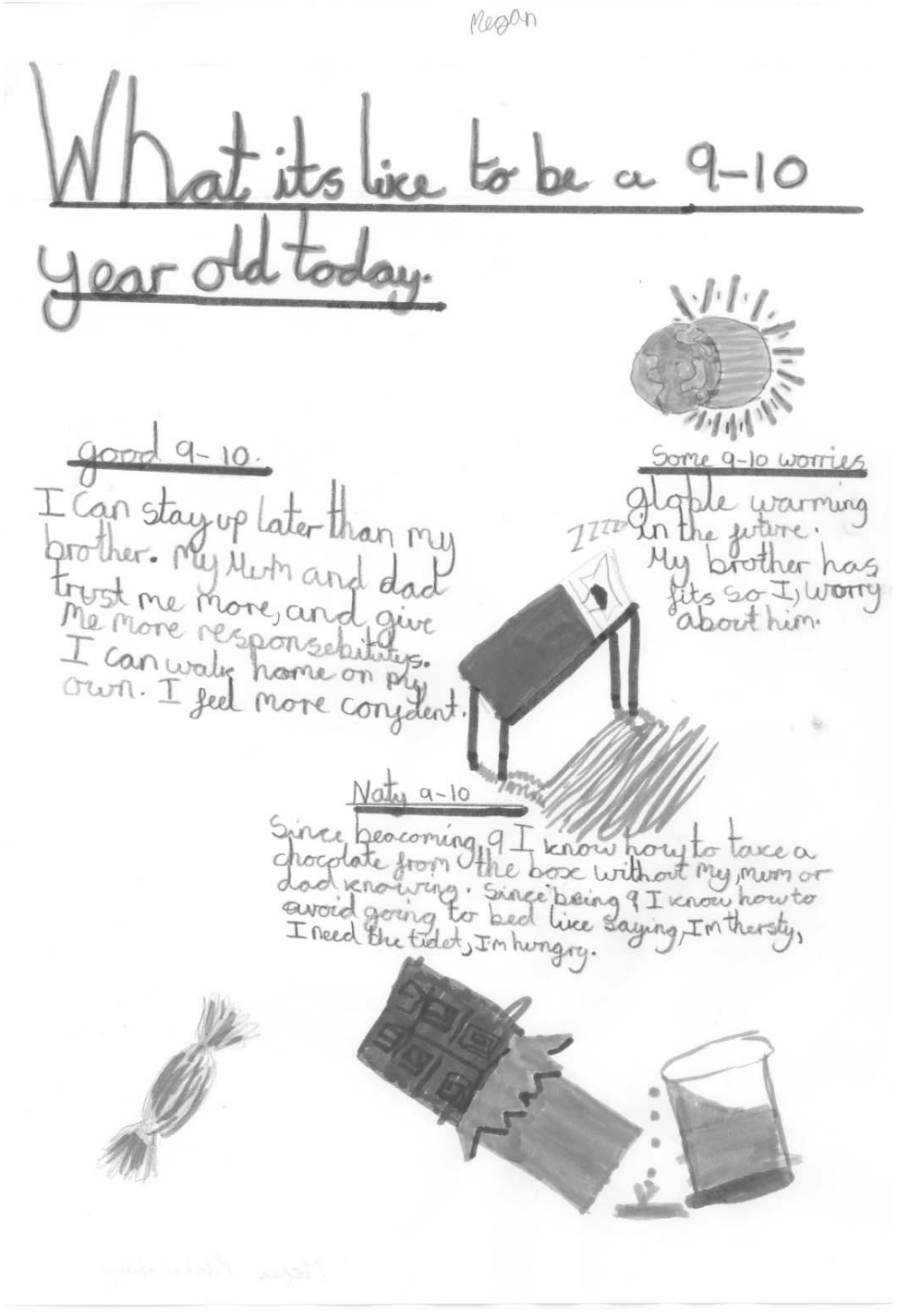
Learning through Landscapes http://www.ltl.org.uk/



Megan Pilcher-King

Culture, ethnicity, language, faith and equal respect in early childhood – does 'getting it' matter?

Jane Lane

Jane Lane is an advocate worker for racial equality in the early years.

Abstract: *Recognising the unique background to every childhood,* ***Jane Lane*** *highlights the importance of all young children having their family history and heritage respected. Here she considers how 'getting it' - grasping the wider significance of acknowledging and understanding the reality of racism – is necessary for genuine respect for the heritage of every child. She lists the steps of identifying, understanding and breaking down barriers needed in early years settings to ensure that all staff and families 'get it'. For ease of terminology Jane refers to all forms of early years provision as "settings".*

As individuals we cannot make the world free of racism for every child but we can do our very best to ensure that our early years settings are small models of what we would like the world to be. Every teacher knows that what happens to children in their early years influences their subsequent lives. Most also know that these years are when children's attitudes, including their attitudes to people who are different from them, begin to

form. Children are not born with these attitudes, they learn them. They learn them from the whole environment in which they live, both within and outside the family, including in any form of early years provision they may attend – children's centres, nursery schools, nursery classes, early excellence centres and other forms of voluntary, private or independent setting.

If we are concerned that *every* child feels equally valued and respected, has positive self-esteem and feels good about themselves we need to consider what these influences might be and whether any might be interfering with this objective. Influences on young children include the family, peers, other adults, the media, the resources around them, the local community, wider society, the early years curriculum and those who work with them in early years settings.

The prevalence of racism

In terms of respecting a child's culture, ethnicity, language or faith we know (or we should know) that racism is deeply embedded in our society. But what may not be so well understood or questioned is exactly whether and, if so, how racism may impact on all the influences around children.

Evidence shows that many people are racially prejudiced, that some manifest racial hatred and violence, that the media (particularly the printed press) often demonises sections of society (particularly Muslims and asylum seekers) and that this sometimes culminates in tensions between communities, often reinforced by poverty. Rather than seeing racism as only being about racial prejudice, forms of discrimination covered by the law, and offensive racist groupings, it should perhaps be seen as a 'package' of wider factors that may affect most aspects of life (for a discussion of this package of racism see Lane 2007). This package includes institutional racism as one factor in disadvantaging and discriminating against minority ethnic people (Macpherson 1999).

The concept of respecting every child's heritage encompasses more that just having appropriate resources and celebrating some relevant festivals.

Over recent years much work has been done in addressing the implications of our multicultural, multiethnic, multilingual and multifaith (or no faith) society for education. So why is it that after 30 years of schooling in such a society the variety of cultures, ethnicities, languages and faiths (or no faith) is not always seen as having any relevant impact on the lives of young children? Why is it that the question sometimes still arises of what needs to be done to ensure that all children are equally respected? Do we really not know, do we think it is something

more complex and difficult than it is or might there be barriers preventing us from knowing?

Combating racism

Over these 30 years there has also been increasingly strong legislation to make racial discrimination in education unlawful and, more recently, to place a statutory requirement on all local authority provision to promote equal opportunities and good relations between people of different racial groups (including in mainly white areas). Such provision is required to be part of the authority's race equality scheme or to have its own racial equality policy. These requirements are backed up by OFSTED inspections, DfES guidance, the Early Years Foundation Stage documentation and a whole raft of training/education and qualifications mechanisms. Are these not sufficient to address the above questions?

Furthermore, many good resources have been produced focusing on how to 'value diversity'; how to implement antiracist practice; how to

We need to relax! Before we can fully understand racism and its impact on early years education we may need to stop feeling bad or angry about it.

support refugees, asylum seekers, Travellers, Gypsies, Roma and children learning English as an additional language; and how to celebrate religious and cultural festivals in positive ways. These include books, articles in journals, videos, films and training materials. Do these not provide sufficient effective help and support for teachers?

Getting it (or not)

Recent DfES research offered a fundamental truth for those seeking to answer these questions :

> *In terms of race equality, individuals and organisations can broadly be categorised as either* ***those that 'get it'****, or* ***those that 'don't get it'****. A risk inherent in any policy to tackle racial inequalities is that those that 'get it' will act on the policy (if they are not doing so already), whilst those who 'don't get it' will view the policy as an unfair/pointless/bureaucratic burden…* (Dehal, Eyre and Wanless 2006)

The point about 'getting it' applies not only to policy implementation but to everyone working with young children being prepared to take account of the facts and living reality of our society and recognise their significance for education, including for early years practice. 'Getting it' means understanding what racism is and what it is not. It is not about

blaming anyone, being 'holier than thou' or feeling guilty. It is not even about being prescriptive or doctrinaire over what needs to be done. It is about accepting that racism exists, has existed for centuries and that it is a worldwide phenomenon. If we wish to take respectful account of culture, ethnicity, language and faith in early years provision we need to first acknowledge the deeply entrenched nature of racism and the consequent implications for practice with all children – implications that include the involvement of everyone, children, staff, family members and all policies and procedures. Only then will respect be based in reality.

A supportive climate

Acknowledging the reality of racism can reduce apprehension; free us up to talk with one another openly and honestly; no longer avoid talking about it, be unafraid of making mistakes; and realise that the task of respecting every child's heritage equally is no longer so daunting and lies within our reach. It is not about being 'informed' about what to do but about everyone working it out for themselves. Working within a no-blame culture where the various backgrounds that everyone brings to the situation are recognised makes it easier to build up trust. Recognising that everyone has questions to ask and that no one knows all the answers may make it easier to acknowledge our own individual limitations and enable us to be more receptive to those of others while at the same time listening with open minds to what others have to say. In learning to respect and accept differences between people, respecting every child's heritage becomes just a part of that wider acceptance.

We need to relax! Before we can fully understand racism and its impact on early years education we may need to stop feeling bad or angry about it. Those feelings need to be channelled into appropriate actions outside the day-to-day setting. Only then can we understand its deeply damaging power objectively, recognise and accept how entrenched it is in society (as part of the 'system') and think constructively about how best we can counter it. We may need to stop berating ourselves (even unconsciously) or punishing others (sometimes consciously) about how ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious factors may or may not influence early childhood. Such feelings may block us thinking about what the issues really are.

Respecting and being sensitive to every child's heritage includes being aware of any child who might arrive tomorrow morning. Preparation is needed so that every child present or arriving in the future feels welcome and respected, have their particular needs met (or know where support may be found) and feel they belong. In practice this means creating an inclusive setting.

The national Early Childhood Forum (2003) agreed the following definition: Inclusion is a process of identifying, understanding and

breaking down barriers to participation and belonging.

When a child feels he or she 'belongs' it can be seen as a measure of whether his or her heritage is equally and sensitively respected. To take account of this Owen (2005) suggested a sixth outcome for the Every Child Matters agenda should be: being equal: feeling you belong.

The concept of respecting every child's heritage encompasses more that just having appropriate resources and celebrating some relevant festivals. It involves the whole ethos that surrounds all the children. It includes which children are present in the first place; the knowledge, understanding and commitment of the staff; the racial attitudes and behaviour of the children, their families and staff; and the policies, practices and procedures that underpin everything that goes on.

It cannot be respectful if racial discrimination is present; if any staff attitudes are prejudiced, judgemental or stereotyped; if assumptions about others are allowed to influence practice; if families are not fully involved in developing the setting's policy for equality; if the resources do not reflect the children's backgrounds in positive ways; if the curricular practice omits the heritages of some children; or if incidents of racial prejudice or ignorance are not addressed effectively.

The following summary highlights some of the often overlapping issues that might be involved in preparing to ensure sensitive respect for every child's heritage.

Identifying potential barriers

- Is the real extent of racial prejudice (and sometimes hatred) and community tensions in society acknowledged as possibly impacting on early years practice?
- Is the reality of racism, including institutional racism, acknowledged and accepted so that guilt, fear and misunderstandings are lessened? Do staff and families 'get it'?
- Are the policies and arrangements for admissions and employment non-discriminatory?
- Are the staff committed and able to counter any form of racism?
- Is the 'style' of working within the staff team conducive to everyone feeling able to contribute equally to discussions and respectfully disagree with others where appropriate?
- Are any assumptions and judgements about children made that reinforce stereotypes and interfere with objectivity?
- Is it accepted that the principle of learning to respect all children's heritages applies in every setting, including those sited in mainly white areas?
- Is it recognised that outside the early years field there are many people who do not recognise that children learn their racial attitudes at an

early age?

- Is it recognised that much of the printed press dismisses the importance of work done with children to enable them to learn positive attitudes and behaviour towards difference and unlearn any negative ones that they may have already learnt?
- Are the racial attitudes and behaviour of the staff, children and their families positive?

Understanding barriers

- Do most staff understand the principles of the Race Relations Act and their statutory duties under it?
- Do all staff and families know:
  - That children notice skin colour differences at about three years old?
  - That, unless there are explicitly positive racial attitudes around them, children may begin to learn to have racially prejudiced ones long before they go to school? (evidence cited in Lane 2007)
  - That children themselves may reinforce the passing on of racially prejudiced attitudes? (Van Ausdale and Feagin 2001)
  - The powerful effects on society of much of the media in denying that children learn their racial attitudes at a very young age and their belittling of attempts to counter this process?
  - Does everyone realise the damaging effects of, often unconsciously, making assumptions about others?
  - Do staff and families acknowledge the existence of tensions between some communities and seek ways of addressing them in local situations both inside and outside the setting so that the future society may become more at ease with itself? (Ouseley and Lane 2006)

Breaking down barriers

- Do all staff, families, children and other relevant people contribute to the policy for equality – do all feel that they 'own' it?
- Are children regularly helped to learn positive attitudes to differences and to unlearn any negative ones that they may have already learnt?
- Are Persona Dolls used regularly in work with children?
- Are positive and supportive opportunities provided for every child to talk about their lives with others?
- Are children sometimes encouraged to relate to children who are different from them?
- Are discussions about differences planned?
- Are opportunities for talks about fairness and justice provided?
- Are children and staff prepared, in advance, to make any child who might come tomorrow morning feel welcome?
- Are opportunities made to find out about the variety of cultural

backgrounds of children, while not assuming that all are the same nor that there is a need to know a lot in order to be respectful?
- Are children, their families and staff encouraged to be intellectually curious, to be open and broad minded, to respect the heritage of others and be respectful of their own?
- Are family members encouraged to share appropriate aspects of their lives with others (where they wish to do so) and are they included in all the above practices?

Childhood is a one-off opportunity. Thinking about the processes involved in working towards inclusion means working towards 'getting it'. If all children are to benefit from positive and respectful support and learning opportunities then 'getting it' matters. It is a concept worth thinking about.

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Empowerment, learning and schools: reflections from psychology

Christopher Arnold

Dr Christopher Arnold is a senior educational psychologist in Sandwell, West Midlands. He has worked as an educational psychologist for over 20 years and currently manages a multiprofessional team of teachers, assistants and educational psychologists. He is a regular contributor to conferences and journals. His recent publications include *Psychology for Teaching Assistants* (Trentham Press, 2005)

Abstract: *Research studies show the crucial impact of empowerment and motivation on students' learning. Strategies for combating bullying which focus on whole school approaches and which include pupils, parents and carers are also more likely to be empowering and successful for those involved.* ***Christopher Arnold*** *draws on his experiences as a teacher and educational psychologist to emphasise empowerment as an essential not just for pupils but for the teaching profession as well.*

Introduction

Consider the following:

- Residents in a care home where emphasis was placed on choice and self-determination and where there were opportunities to participate in decisions about the running of the home reported a higher sense of personal wellbeing and satisfaction than residents of care homes in which staff took more responsibility. (Langer and Rodin, 1976)
- Animals, such as dogs, quickly learn to avoid discomfort; unless they have previously been in situations where discomfort was unavoidable. These animals just sit and accept the discomfort even if the way to avoid this is demonstrated. (Seligman, 1975)
- Students who self regulate their behaviour when studying have more interest, confidence and persistence compared to those whose learning

> is externally controlled. They also use deeper learning strategies (in which meaning and significance are sought) and get better results. Externally controlled students are less interested in the material, less motivated, and use more superficial learning styles (such as learning by rote). They perform less well in examinations. Students who find their courses useful for themselves as well as future jobs get more excited and more task orientated than those who see it as simply useful for being a student. (Simons *et al*, 2004)

Empowerment

The common feature in these findings is empowerment. I could cite hundreds of additional studies. Not only is a sense of empowerment a highly positive one, the lack of it can have serious dangers to personal health. The opposite of empowerment – helplessness – can lead to depression.

Psychologists have studied the link between perceptions of helplessness and depression. In particular, they have focused on the differences in the ways that people explain their involvement in negative situations. Where such explanations are in terms of stable and global factors – such as "I am thick" or "Everybody else is always beating me" – the sense of empowerment is low. There is little belief that the individual is able to change outcomes and this is more associated with depression. On the other hand, people who attribute negative outcomes to external, unstable and specific causes are more likely to see an opportunity to create a different outcome if the situation arises again.

Empowerment and Learning

Amongst students, there is some evidence of a link between disempowering attributions and poor performance in exams. We must conclude, therefore that engagement and empowerment are positive features for learners. Let us deepen the analysis with particular respect to learning.

Simons *et al* (2004) observed that students are motivated by very different kinds of goals – extrinsic and intrinsic, immediate and delayed. According to the self-determination theory of Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier and Ryan (1991), people who act because they are externally regulated are controlled by specific external contingencies. They work to avoid punishment or to gain a specific reward. Those who are regulated by internal factors feel free to follow their own interests and engage in the actions spontaneously and of their own volition. The latter group tend to have more interest, confidence, excitement, persistence, better performance and better overall understanding of the materials studied.

The other important dimension is the 'immediate' versus 'future' focus of the goal. Some students might study because the course is compulsory

and perceived as only having utility during the period of study. Others may see a course as useful in order to reach future goals; for example, getting a job because you have completed a course well.

Combining the above dimensions of usefulness (immediate or future) and motivation (internal or external) creates four possibilities:

- immediate/external – *"I have to study to avoid failure and I will be rewarded if I pass"*;
- immediate/internal – *"I am interested in this and it helps me now"*;
- future/external – *"I need this qualification to get a job"*;
- future/internal – *"I want to do this and it will enable me to do the job well"*.

As will hardly surprise, Simons *et al* (2004) found that students do better when internally regulated. They are also more interested and excited by their work. Students do better if they see the long term benefits of their studies for their future job prospects compared to those who are simply meeting short-term needs of passing exams. The group that performs least well are the 'immediate/external' who see only short-term benefits and are working because they have to.

These findings transcend nationality. Cano (2005) identified similar findings from research in North America, Australia, United Kingdom, Italy, Finland and Hong Kong. Students whose motivation to learn is based on the fear of failure use more superficial strategies and are less successful than those who are motivated by interest in their subject and who see the long term value in learning.

These motivations and approaches do seem to change over time. During their secondary years, many students' enthusiasm for school-based learning reduces and some rationalisation seems to occur. Those students who are aiming at a career in which academic success is important may become more enthusiastic, whereas those for whom the future value is less clear may simply do what is necessary to get by. Students adapt their behaviour to their own needs and the demands of the educational system.

Not only is a sense of empowerment a highly positive one, the lack of it can have serious dangers to personal health.

The link between learning and personal empowerment is clear. If you work because you are interested to see the long term benefits, you are likely to perform better. Personal empowerment is positive.

Empowerment and Behaviour

Potter (2006) studied schools in which children reported very low rates of bullying. The measure used was 'factor 1' in the PASS survey (W3 Insights Ltd. 2002) which measures feelings about school.

Potter wanted to test out three propositions that might lead to fewer

instances of bullying:

- prevention and management strategies which include parents and carers are more effective;
- organisational tools and structures which facilitate effective communication about approaches to bullying are more effective; and
- schools using whole school prevention and management strategies are more effective.

Support for all three was found in the evidence gathered from the 'low-incidence' schools as the summaries below illustrate.

> *"School staff feel that parents are included in the management of bullying. They also suggest that good home-school communication exists. Parents were able to list a range of preventative strategies further supporting the claim that levels of communications are high. Quantitive responses from parents suggests that most feel that they are included to some extent in decisions taken by the school. The majority of parents felt that they would be well supported by the school if their child was bullied."*

> *"Responses from school staff suggest that communication between them is good. Some organisational structures such as School Council, assemblies and year group teams facilitate communication. Communication between staff is usually informal. The hierarchical structure of the school allows more serious instance to be communicated to senior members of staff. The Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) materials are used to provide a focus for action to develop children's social and emotional skills."*

> *"The School Council is mentioned by all groups of respondents. All groups also mentioned Playground Pals who are children allocated responsibility for ensuring that other pupils enjoy their break time. When pupils were asked to describe bullying, all year groups were able to give clear descriptions that included most of the elements found in the standard definition taken from the DfES document 'Bullying: don't suffer in silence'. This ability suggests that bullying is a topic they have discussed before. Pupils were also able to list actions that could be taken if a child felt bullied. The anti-bullying policy states that one of the roles of the head teacher is to ensure that all children know that bullying is wrong and is unacceptable behaviour in the school."*

My experience in schools reinforces the conclusions that can be drawn from these summaries. The important factors in reducing bullying are local and empowering. There is relatively low influence from national initiatives and agencies external to the school.

If children and their parents feel involved and 'listened' to, the

outcomes are more positive. The importance of positive ethos and focus on anti-bullying strategies seems clear and empowering. It is speculative to link the alternatives of disempowerment and bullying, but new studies are needed. Bullying and disempowerment might be linked, the former being used to compensate for the latter.

Empowerment, decision making and schools

It is time to apply some of the ideas outlined above to the current position in schools in the UK. I have suggested that there is evidence that empowerment is positive. An essential element to empowerment is the degree to which an individual can make decisions for themselves. So let us consider the situation for schools, teachers and headteachers by analysing decision making in education over the 30 years since I qualified as a teacher.

		Decisions about the ...				
Date	Initiative(s)	Curriculum followed	Methods of teaching (lesson plans)	Selection of key performance indicators	Reporting of progress (Junior)	Reporting of progress (Senior)
1976	[Author entered teaching]	HT	CT	HT	HT	LEA
1988	National curriculum	DfES	CT	DfES	DfES	DfES
1998	Literacy + numeracy strategies	DfES	DfES	DfES	DfES	DfES
2003	MFL/PE/ Music strategies	DfES	DfES	DfES	DfES	DfES
2005	Rose Report prescribes synthetic phonics	DfES	DfES	DfES	DfES	DfES

Key: HT – Head teacher, CT – class teacher, LEA – Local Education Authority, DfES – Department for Education and Skills.

The trend is clear. There is increasing use of centralised direction to make decisions in education, however there have also been some signs of empowerment. I consider the establishment of the General Teaching Council as such a development for the profession, but few would suggest that decision making in education has become more devolved. There may now be signs of returning some decision making to individual teachers, but the empowered organisation seems to be the DfES. Yet, the stability of staff

at the head of this organisation is much less than is the case for most schools. Headteachers last longer than their political counterparts. Indeed, if a school had turned over a similar number of head teachers as the DfES have turned over secretaries of state for education, OFTED would be likely to question the viability of the school.

It seems to me that there are dangers in this centralisation of decision-making for teachers and head teachers. If education is being externally driven towards meeting targets externally set, then the easiest approach becomes the setting of short term strategies designed to get staff and students through the next hoop. In short, the best strategies are likely to reflect short term needs (such as meeting targets) and are less likely to relate to a deeper understanding of the essential relationship between children, learning, culture and teaching.

With regard to children, I have shown that such disempowerment is associated with superficial and short term learning and the poorest long term outcomes. In addition working in an environment in which high profile targets are externally set could lead to a bullying culture. The psychology of empowerment is well established. The relationships between empowerment, educational achievement and reducing bullying are clear. What we now need is an open discussion about re-empowering teachers and head teachers. The continued centralisation of decision-making in the UK is unlikely to facilitate this.

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Joseph Dilnot

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CRACKING THE HARD CLASS (2nd edition)

Bill Rogers, Paul Chapman

SAGE £19.99 ISBN: 1-4129-2356-5

Giles Barrow

Giles Barrow is a teacher, transactional analyst, supervisor and trainer working to support professionals in getting the best from children, young people and families.

It was interesting to receive these three titles for review just before the Christmas break. There's something increasingly familiar about titles on classroom behaviour. I wonder how it is that with all the millions spent on the dozens of government initiatives, the profession remains preoccupied, and arguably paralysed by the issue. It certainly fuels the market for these titles under review and a theme emerges across all three books which began as an irritation and resulted in being a real concern. They each buy into a general contemporary tendency to denigrate or problematise children. There's also a concurrent worry I have, which is the potential for 'dumbing down' the complex and relatively under-explored relationship between the purpose of education as projected in our society, the function of the teacher and the relationships between them and children in contemporary schooling.

Let's start with Fintan O'Regan's *Can't Learn – Won't Learn – Don't Care*. Of the three titles reviewed, O'Regan is most clearly at ease in labelling children. Systematic accounts of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder and Conduct Disorder provide the opening three chapters. What stuck me most was the uncritical treatment of this approach. There is no suggestion of a counter-perspective, nor acknowledgement of the debate surrounding the contemporary pathologising of young people. There is, however, plenty of detail about strategies for children with such diagnoses and treatment routes.

O'Regan also recommends an effective model he came across in Scotland, which for many readers, will be fairly familiar. A combination of

behaviour contracts and a carefully targeted and monitored reward scheme is the core of what clearly has been successful but again there is little critique offered regarding the impact of wider contextual factors, and specifically for readers working in the English school system.

This was a book that I just didn't get along with. There are frequent unsubstantiated judgements and too frequent mentioning of research which is then not supported with accurate referencing. This is a significant point given the author's tendency to argue on important and controversial themes. For example:

> *"The other issue [in addition to a range of specific disorders] is that we now believe many developmental issues may be genetically linked within the family gene pool. Therefore we could also have the situation of a 'double whammy effect' of a developmentally dysfunctional child from a home with one or more developmentally dysfunctional family members. It could therefore be said these parents 'can't' as opposed to 'won't' set traditional rules, boundaries or expectations because they really don't know how to this [sic] in a more traditional way."* (p. 8)

In addition to being poorly proofed and edited as illustrated in the above, the book's conclusion is a most peculiar and random web-sourced adage.

O'Regan is absolutely committed to rooting his work within the context of the Steer Report and Every Child Matters. This contextualising by authors is an increasing risk given the here-today-gone-tomorrow nature of many central government initiatives in the field of behaviour and I suspect this is a book that will swiftly lose its currency. Still, accounting for the importance of engaging specialists, inter-agency work and looking at behaviour in wider context all constitutes good advice.

I am unsure who might be best served by reading this book. There are plenty of other better written titles on specific disorders – including some by O'Regan – but this book has bolder, wider ambitions on the broader theme of 'challenging behaviour' and these are simply not realised; I cannot recommend it.

A request to review Sue Cowley's book, *Getting the Buggers to Behave*, is problematic and I groaned when I saw it in the collection. The difficulty lies in the title not the content. Obviously it's a great marketing ploy to refer to children as buggers but it has it implications. We tend to get what we seek and if buggers are how we frame students then trouble's what we'll get. The shame of the title is that Cowley writes well and with good material. It's clear that the author is experienced, confident and full of humanity. She emphasises the importance of effective relationships, the quality of teaching and lesson preparation. She explores beyond the more

limited parameters of behaviour management which is a necessity for anyone seeking to do more than a couple of terms in the classroom. Cowley has a crisp style, plenty of humour and a reassuring self-deprecation.

Cowley offers lots in terms of practical advice and ideas both on the nitty gritty of classroom control, responding to conflict and pre-empting trouble. She opens by sharing a candid observation – that children misbehave either because 'they are bored, or they don't understand'. Her book is essentially geared at ways in which teachers can be increasingly engaging and clear in their relationships with pupils. As with the other authors reviewed here, she attends to the implications of operating within a whole school context and considerations for working alongside colleagues in busy environments.

Cowley's approach is eclectic in that she is clearly borrowing from the central tenets of behavioural theory with cognitive and systemic ideas thrown into the mix too. I picked up the scent of her predecessors in the field, Bill Rogers, Peter Hook, Andy Vass and others who have done much to humanise the blunter tools of behaviourism in the classroom. However, Cowley offers no references or further reading, which is both a little surprising and disappointing. Nevertheless, the content of this book will be useful to most in the profession at some point in their career and will be worthwhile returning to. It's already on many teachers' bookshelves and not simply because of the title.

Bill Rogers is such a popular name in the field of behaviour that reviewing any title by the master seems a redundant task. Most teachers have heard of him, thousands have seen him in action and the well-established understanding is that here is someone who knows his stuff, is highly practical and has bags of humour to boot.

So, what is there to add on the basis of this second edition of one of his key titles, *Cracking the Hard Class*? Well, again, there's that title; an awkward, morale-sapping bunch of kids is out there and only a nut-cracking approach will do the trick. As with Cowley's work, Rogers' title lets down an otherwise sensible collection of ideas for building effective relationships in the classroom. As in his other work, Rogers tends to overlook the importance of quality of teaching and veers towards the solid and familiar ground of positive behaviour management, which he is very good at. And there's a thing with Rogers' approach. It's not quite behaviour *management*; as with Cowley, there's plenty of humanity in his work too.

There are lots of techniques, lightly rolled with sound underpinning principles written in his amicable style. For those who want to look behind and beyond technique – a tendency I fear that is waning in the profession – Rogers provides a decent bibliography which again combines theory and practical references. It's easy enough to forgive some of the antipodean references to year groups and 'relief' teachers, when the quality

of the behaviour management material is so consistently sound.

A really valuable and central theme in this new edition is on working with fellow teachers and a call to professional collaboration is always welcome advice. Rogers as ever demonstrates a keen eye on how teachers have the potential to persecute themselves and encourages us to be satisfied with what is good enough – a sentiment also echoed in Cowley's writing.

On reflection, I am becoming increasingly bothered by the tendency of publishers to support titles that position dealing with behaviour at the margins of professional dialogue. Can we imagine a similar process in medical literature; *Getting the Bloody Minded Patient to do as They're Told*, *Cracking the Awkward Patient*, *Can't Heal, Won't Heal, Doesn't Care about Getting Well*. Or, how might it be if the target group being referred to were incompetent teachers instead of children? How would teachers respond to *Behaviour Management for Dummies*? It just doesn't come across as especially professional and it lacks integrity. What values, or guiding principles, inform the thinking behind these types of titles? What does it say about our identity as educators? If our profession wants its concerns to be taken seriously, then we had better get grown up about how we talk about them. There's challenging behaviour.

CREATING LEADERS IN THE CLASSROOM: HOW TEACHERS CAN DEVELOP A NEW GENERATION OF LEADERS

Hilarie Owen

Routledge 2007 Paperback £18.99 ISBN 00 41 539995 5

Vivienne Baumfield

Vivienne Baumfield is a former teacher. She is currently Reader in Pedagogy at the Institute of Education, University of London.She was until recently Director of the Thinking Skills Research Centre in Newcastle.

Creating Leaders in the Classroom presents an approach to transforming schools which allows the untapped leadership potential of young people to be realised. The book is the outcome of a research and development project in primary and secondary schools, which aimed to explore existing attitudes to leadership amongst pupils and teachers and identify where the opportunities and constraints lie within school structures. The book is written for teachers and school managers and is divided into three sections: the teachers' perspective on leadership; the children's perspective on leadership; and guidelines for developing the next generation of leaders.

The author does not come from an education background but is an expert in leadership in the corporate sector and has completed studies of effective organisations in industry, including teams such as the RAF demonstration flying corps the Red Devils. She is the founder of the Institute of Leadership, which is described as having a unique philosophy based on over 20 years study of leadership. Four principles are prioritised in the book:

- Every human being has some leadership potential regardless of role or position. We are all leaders and followers at different times.
- No two people express leadership the same and therefore should not be confined to a single way. There is a richness of diversity in the individual expression of leadership and the world needs this today.
- Leadership is a lifelong learning journey and as such is not something one learns on a week's course. The process begins when we are born and continues till we die and includes our experiences in school, university and work.
- In order to sustain leadership and encourage all to participate, organisations need democratic transformation throughout. Control is replaced with trust while enforced or grudging compliance is replaced with creativity and personal responsibility.

Hilarie Owen has found these principles to be important in all forms of organisation, including schools.

The fact that the author is not from a teaching background is both a strength and a weakness. She is able to look at schools with an outsider's eye and ask the questions that appear obvious but are rarely asked by those immersed in the professional culture. Conversely, her suggestions can seem naïve and the team conducting the research and development intervention, which included the author, are perhaps too ready to attribute any resistance from staff to cynicism or wilful obstruction of their well-meaning intentions. Such reservations aside, it is refreshing to see an example of the active engagement of people with a wide range of expertise in schools and it would have been helpful if more detail was given regarding the actual processes of working with the teachers. One of the most interesting chapters is Chapter 7 where the patterns emerging from the research are outlined and a busy teacher could start here and then use the index and short summaries provided at the end of each chapter to follow up any points of particular interest.

Perhaps the most useful function this book serves is to provide external validation for the aspirations of teachers who are already convinced of the importance of the underlying principles of leadership outlined by the Institute of Leadership. I am less sanguine as to its potential to provide workable methods for teachers and in this respect it is a pity that the author was not more familiar with the literature on schools as learning communities. In the end, I do not think this book quite fulfils its aims and given the constraints of time and money in schools, it would not be in my list of essential reading.

MISSING MEN IN EDUCATION

Mary Thornton and Patricia Bricheno

Trentham Books £18.99 ISBN 1 85856 344 5

Rosamund McNeil

Rosamund McNeil is Principal Officer (Gender) for the NUT.

This is a persuasive book which reports on 10 years' research by the authors into men in teaching.

There is much debate, and much worry, at the moment about boys' underachievement in schools compared to girls. The authors set out convincing evidence that attributing this to the low numbers of men in teaching is based on assumption and panic and not on hard fact. This book calmly looks beyond the hysteria surrounding boys' supposed under-achievement.

In contrast to pervasive assumptions that boys' challenging behaviour is a new phenomenon there is a wealth of historical research evidence in this book which suggests that differences between boys' and girls' behaviour has been a perennial issue. The book acknowledges that the evidence available on the question of teachers' gender and pupil behaviour is quite limited and that further research is needed to explore this question. Whether boys' behaviour has actually deteriorated over time is difficult to prove. The continuing rise in boys' and girls' exclusions suggest that it has deteriorated, but this may relate to other changes such as increased accountability, public measures of performance, such as league tables and an inspection regime which penalises schools that tolerate poor pupil behaviour.

Perhaps the most important contribution made by this book is the strong evidence put forward to refute the current claims about the feminisation of teaching. The authors remind us that the predominance of women teachers is not new and that women have always been in the majority. If teaching is indeed feminised purely on the basis of numbers, then it must have been feminised for the past 100 years, including the long period when boys' achievements at age 16 exceeded those of girls as well as the current period when their achievements have clearly improved albeit not as fast as those of girls. The book puts forward strong evidence that concerns about the behaviour of boys and the so-called feminisation of teaching are not new, and can be traced back to the start of the previous century.

Education, the curriculum, teaching styles and assessment have, if anything, become considerably more masculinised through an emphasis on testing and assessment, performance indicators and stratified and hierarchical management and administration structures. Surely, the authors contend, if education is being masculinised, boys' achievements relative to girls' should be increasing and teaching should be a more attractive career for men. The really interesting question raised is why, at a

time when, in fact, it is masculine features of education which are in the ascendance, there is a steady and continuing decline in the number of men teachers.

The authors argue that for more men to be encouraged into the teaching profession, the homophobia and misogyny that are responsible for the current perceptions of primary teaching as "women's work" have to be challenged.

The book identifies some of the reasons why men are increasingly missing from education, particularly from primary schools. Relative to other graduate careers pay has been eroded, status is low, and social structures and cultural expectations work against men entering predominantly female occupations such as teaching, whether they are actually feminised in practise or not. Men who teach are vulnerable to accusations of child abuse and homosexuality: a climate of suspicion surrounds them. Male teachers must find ways in which to integrate and function effectively within a predominantly female domain: this frequently results in male teachers heading for adapting stereotypically masculine activities within school, such as leading sport or taking on IT responsibilities.

The conclusions have important implications for future government and TDA policies on recruitment, retention and career progression. This book reminds readers that although teaching remains an unlikely choice for men, when men do take this pathway, they do disproportionately well. Men in education, as else where, are more likely to seek and achieve promotion to achieve higher salaries and higher status positions than women.

The book indicts the ill-conceived attempts by the TDA and the Government to increase the numbers of men in teaching, which rely on stereotypical masculine images and characteristics and by omission effectively imply that the contribution of women teachers is flawed. The authors warn the Government not to seek to entice potential male recruits with masculine stereotypes that emphasise sport and athleticism and intellectual stimulation and challenge.

The book reminds us of the simple truth: it is the quality of teaching and learning in education which is of the utmost importance. This does not hinge upon the gender of teachers. While there are surprisingly few studies exploring the differential impact men and women teachers might have on children's learning, those that do exist find no discernible differences. Despite assertions to the contrary, the presence of men teachers appears to have no direct or significant impact on boys' attitudes to school, their behaviour or their academic achievement. What matters is not teacher gender but teacher quality, alongside the degree of social advantage or disadvantage of the pupils concerned. There is no substance

to support popular assertions that more men teachers will improve boys' behaviour and achievements in schools.

The book concludes that under increasingly female oversight, educational achievements have risen dramatically, even if some boys have not yet reached the level achieved by some girls. This is a success story for women teachers which is not acknowledged sufficiently, because it is hidden by continual concerns about male absence. Women teachers in search of a morale boost and validation of their experiences should reach for this book!

It is succinct and well-argued and it compresses into relatively short chapters a wealth of clear and accessible information about gender patterns in education. Although primarily exploring the careers of men teachers it also sheds light on the challenge to school leaders to remember the behavioural, learning and emotional needs of the young women in their schools at a time of national debate on the fate of young men.

The conclusions of this book have practical implications for future policies of recruitment, retention and career progression. It is a relevant book for all teachers who want to promote equal opportunities in schools or who want to be reminded about the case for equal opportunities; it should be read by school governors and school leaders, and especially by careers advisors and those teachers organising work experience.

RADICAL ENCOURAGEMENT: CREATING CULTURES FOR LEARNING

Steve Williams & Rupert Wegerif

Imaginative Minds Ltd 2006 £13.00 ISBN 1-904806-03-1

THINKING AND LEARNING WITH ICT: RAISING ACHIEVEMENT IN THE PRIMARY CLASSROOM

Rupert Wegerif & Lyn Dawes

Routledge Falmer 2004 £16.99 ISBN 0-415-30476-9

Brian Terry

Brian Terry is an independent education consultant and accredited Edward de Bono trainer.

We would all like to believe that educational attainment and success is more than reaching or exceeding the Key Stage targets in all their manifest forms. As a professional educator for over thirty years, my experience tells me that government targets ought to be able to be met and exceeded by 'joined-up' approaches that amount to the best of education practice rather than teaching to tests.

The authors of *Radical Encouragement – Creating Cultures for Learning* attempt to set out "how education can be creative, supportive and motivating while at the same time rigorous, methodical and challenging" based on the N-RAIS (Northumberland Raising Aspirations in Society)

Education and Training Project.

Steve Williams is editor of *Teaching Thinking and Creativity* magazine, and has taught and written widely about Philosophy for Children (P4C) and thinking skills. Rupert Wegerif is Professor of Education at Exeter University with a main research interest in the practice of dialogue in teaching and learning. With this pedigree readers should expect a challenging, well-reasoned and readable experience, and I believe that is what is delivered.

Radical Encouragement is defined simply as "an approach to learning in schools and communities through developing dispositions, skills and strategies that lead to success in learning". Those school leaders seeking to work in partnership with other schools and across phases will find the strategies and approaches set out in this book of considerable interest, and they will, perhaps, be inspired to take a similar route. This book does not have an appeal limited only to those with a strategic overview. It describes a holistic process but it can be used to support those introducing coaching in all its dimensions including working with parents, philosophy for children and thinking skills.

The meat of the book is well structured with a first chapter that explains *Radical Encouragement* in terms of the dispositions required for success and how a culture of encouragement is essential. The following chapters on *Philosophy for Children*, *Coaching* and *Teaching Thinking Skills* explain how *Radical Encouragement* is put into practice. Each chapter gives the key ideas to be applied and includes case studies and examples of practice in classrooms and schools. Examples come from both the primary and secondary phases and are scattered with summary pages of key ideas and supporting quotes from teachers, parents and children. I would, however, like to see a bit more flesh on some of the case studies but they do succeed in giving a flavour of the work carried out in delivering the project. The positive quotes from OFSTED inspections are really a delight to read. I would, however, take issue with the 'cherry picking' of two de Bono thinking tools from the CoRT1 Tools (CAF&PMI) rather than using the whole toolset as intended.

The chapters listed above are followed by a refreshing view of the process of introducing the change in a classroom from the perspective of the class teacher. The chapter title *Teachers Need Encouragement Too* is perhaps a motto to be remembered by all those introducing change. Encouragement, radical or otherwise, is essential for the individual teacher through the introduction of new learning/teaching processes, and this is a nice counterpoint to the next chapter which gives the overview of the N-RAIS project *Radical Encouragement* in practice.

The interim external evaluation appendix is disappointing in its scope, but there is the promise of a full and final report on the N-RAIS website

www.rais.org.uk. This book deserves a place in all school CPD book collections from where its readership should be directed as appropriate.

Thinking and learning with ICT should be read by every primary teacher looking to improve curriculum delivery through the better use of ICT.

It starts from the premise that no matter how good the software, a child working alone at a computer will gain little or nothing in terms of thinking skill development. If working with others, and without active guidance, then the form of dialogue necessary for thinking skill development may also not be present. ICT programmes can encourage competition rather than discussion; argument may replace reasoned and structured talk; or one child may dominate the keyboard while another acts passively as a scribe. These are all scenarios that I have observed when children have been using ICT in the classroom. What Rupert Wegerif and Lyn Dawes seek to do is to show how to develop productive and effective talk around the use of ICT, and how this will then lead to thinking skill development. Having developed the argument for their approach in the first half of the book, they go on to look at specific applications in key curriculum areas.

Part one of the book considers the importance of structured talk in promoting thinking skills development in general and linked to ICT in particular. The key strategies of *Initiation*, *Discussion*, *Response*, *Feedback* (IDRF), *Exploratory Talk* and *Talking Together* are well explored, with excellent snippets of classroom dialogue in support. This would enable the classroom practitioner to listen analytically to the pupil discussion around an ICT activity and assess its effectiveness. The strategies are then well laid out for the class teacher to then set about improving that discussion and thereby improving the quality of thinking skill development. There is some reflection on the choice of ICT programme but the emphasis is on 'It ain't what you choose, it's the way that you use it. That's what gets results' to paraphrase a popular song

The second part of the book focuses on the curriculum applications. I was somewhat sceptical about teaching citizenship through the use of ICT but was won over by the *Bubble Dialogue* approach put forward. The chapter on citizenship has a range of school-based examples, snippets of exemplar dialogue, links to National Curriculum, a clear conclusion and summary. This excellent structure is duplicated in the chapters that follow which cover science, mathematics and literacy. The software examples are carefully chosen to be those readily available to the majority of schools. There is also a chapter on learning through dialogue in the wider ICT curriculum, which covers such issues as ICT use in the library, conferencing, email and use of interactive whiteboards.

The conclusion is as well argued as the opening chapters. The challenge is to analyse all pupil/pupil discussion in the classroom and improve the

quality of this dialogue. To then combine effective dialogue with ICT gives a powerful new approach to improving thinking and learning.

Footnote

NUT CPD's eBookclub is re-launching to coincide with the publication of this edition of *Education Review*. The first book will be the Wegerif/Dawes publication reviewed above. Request details by email: nutcpd@nut.org.uk.

WHY STUDENTS UNDERACHIEVE: WHAT EDUCATORS AND PARENTS CAN DO ABOUT IT.

Regalena Melrose

Rowman and Littlefield Education 2006 ISBN –13: 978-1-57886-440-9

Meryl Thompson

Meryl Thompson is a former secondary history teacher. She was Head of Policy at the Association of Teachers and Lecturers until 2004, with a special interest in teachers' CPD and professionalism. She is currently a member of various educational bodies and a school governor.

Do not be misled by this title which, taken at face value, suggests that this is the book that all teachers and parents should read. It is, in fact, foremost a book for specialists in the education of emotionally distressed children and also requires that the US terminology and context are translated for the relevance to our schools. It also touches on highly contentious areas, such as the management of posttraumatic stress and crisis intervention. Chapter 10: a critique of crisis intervention strategies, aimed at preventing or ameliorating trauma following distressing public events, will be of particular interest to local authority personnel with responsibility for policy and is a reminder to everyone involved in school management and governance that immediate, competent and sensitive leadership must always be available.

Despite this caution in suggested readership, it is a thought-provoking and challenging book, particularly if we are really meant to personalise learning. The author's intent, as a school psychologist with 13 years' experience, is to ask and answer whether we have identified all the possible barriers to learning that limit success in school. Following a brief survey of the recognised barriers to learning – autism, developmental delays, specific learning disability, emotional disturbance, traumatic brain injury and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) – she contends that there remains a 'misunderstood' child. Such children demonstrate, usually sporadically, erratic and volatile behaviour, which exhibits a low level of frustration tolerance. The author argues that this is triggered by the child's high level of anxiety which leads to sensory overload and that this anxiety is a symptom of unresolved posttraumatic stress. Since the source of trauma may be from early experiences in utero or very early childhood, an intimate history from parents or carers is, she concludes, a critical element is supporting the child's learning.

Trauma is defined as 'any event – real or *perceived* – that is terrifying or threatening to them' and can include domestic violence, emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, physical neglect, foetal distress, invasive medical procedures, accidents, natural disasters, witnessing or hearing about violence, bullying and prejudice.

The link between trauma and behaviour lies in an understanding of the brain and its development. The youngest part of the brain – the neo-cortex – which controls language and cognition is not there at birth and is still developing at the time the child enters school. The second and older part of the brain – the limbic brain – is largely responsible for our emotions. But it is the oldest reptilian brain or brain stem, directed by the amygdala, and activated by sensations – the physical way the body feels – which controls the flight or fight response triggered by traumatic experiences. Melrose gives a timely reminder that the brain is hardwired first and foremost to survive, whereas educators tend to think of the brain as more 'naturally' involved in learning, thinking and cognition. Therefore, the disassociated behaviour of the traumatised underaroused child and the hyperactivity, agitation and hypervigilance of the traumatised overaroused child will not be susceptible to the conventional approach to improving learning and behaviour in school based on reasoning and cognition, since it originates from the most basic sensory activity of the brain.

Talking, reasoning, anger management, punching a pillow, power struggles, time out, and losing points and privileges will not work. A child's inability to respond to approaches based on reason should not be construed automatically as defiance. What works is offering few words but a quiet safe place, compassionate containment, a sense of community and belonging and positive acknowledgement and encouragement; and providing boundaries, rules and predictable consequences, chances to start over again, and opportunities to earn rewards, be successful and enhance feelings of competence. It is perhaps reassuring that many schools aim to establish such an ethos and consequently provide support for these vulnerable children.

But teachers in the UK are unlikely to feel that they could or should follow the author's advice on dealing with these 'misunderstood' children. That is, therapeutically through 'psychophysiological first aid' and what she describes as 'resourcing', including visualization, relaxation, movement and rhythm and experiencing the comfort of safety through physical sensations. However, since it is now widely appreciated that high levels of anxiety do interfere with concentration and memory, and thus learning, this book reminds us that there are complex barriers to learning that must be taken seriously if every child is to matter.

Special needs advisers and trainers, education psychologists, and many SENCOs should find Melrose's analysis and advice both supportive and

challenging. In an ideal educational world, they would then act as catalysts mediating the ideas and providing training and support for classroom teachers and others in techniques to reduce and re-balance anxiety and stress. They would also provide leadership in the ethical dilemmas of exploring sensitive areas with parents and carers.

In this ideal world, too, an understanding of the brain and its development would be a fundamental element of the education of all educators. For, surely, solving underachievement and personalising learning cannot just be achieved by 'one to one' contact with a sympathetic adult? This book convincingly provides a case that such solutions miss the point. The barriers to learning created by anxiety and stress are complex and unique to the individual experience. If every child matters, it is the school and its personnel which need support and resourcing to provide an environment to reverse the potential underachievement of children who bring with them into school the unresolved traumas of chance and circumstances.

LEARNING TO TEACH WITH A HANGOVER

Jon Barbuti

Continnuum £9.94 ISBN: 0 8264 9233 9

99 CLASSROOM CALAMITIES

Tabatha Rayment

Continnuum £9.99 ISBN: 0 8264 9157 X

SURVIVING AND SUCCEEDING IN DIFFICULT CLASSROOMS

Paul Blum

Routledge ISBN: 0 -415-39720-0

Julie Wymer

Julie Wymer is a primary teacher and NUT Union Learning Representative.

Not being a great drinker myself, I was not grabbed by the title *Learning to Teach with a Hangover*. As soon as I started to read, however, I found myself smiling and soon realised that it didn't matter, so don't be put off by the title.

It is a very humorous read, containing personal anecdotes from Barbuti's experience of a PGCE course with useful tips and advice for the trainee teacher. As I read, I did wonder when would be the best time to read the book – before or during training? I didn't feel it was the kind of useful reference book you would dip in and out of; rather you would read it, enjoy and pass it on to somebody else.

Although chapters 1, 2 and 3 I found contained pretty much common sense advice and chapters 4, 5 and 7 had some valuable and realistic advice and tips, I couldn't see the point of chapter 6. Also, I think, for the trainee,

the further reading list at the back could also prove useful prior to training. As Barbuti says in chapter 8 "I can only offer advice that, with hindsight, I wish I had taken. Work hard at the start of the course. Where, initially, there probably will not be too much work, beware the workload suddenly rises like a tsunami …"

After all the doom and gloom of the PGCE course, I think Barbuti sums up the rewards of the job well in his last paragraph on p.177, "When you see your pupils actively engaging in your lesson, or when, years later, past pupils thank you for being such a great teacher, you will know that all the hard work is worth it."

99 Classroom Calamities is a very easy read. It is teacher-time friendly because it is divided into sections so you can flick to any reference you need advice on. Another easy reference point is the use of icons to draw your attention to helpful tips or warnings.

But, please, do NQTs or new teachers need to be told things like "some students are much better than others at organising their time …" (p. 100); "never take anything too personally" (p.72); or "as soon as you know, or even suspect, you're going to be late, telephone someone at the school …" (p.52)?

I found there was a lot of the obvious stated in the book and found myself wondering what sort of person would need much of this type of advice. Somebody, perhaps, who was in a school without policies or procedures, or who had nobody to talk to, no social interaction and not the common sense to join a union? The list of useful websites on pages 132 and 136 would be a better place to start I feel. And of course there is Teachers' TV these days … all of which are free.

In the introduction, Rayment tells us very few books "tell you about the real problems teachers face. For example, how would you cope with a wasp in the classroom?" The advice "keep calm" (p.39). Easier said than done I often find!

Surviving and Succeeding in Difficult Classrooms is written for teachers and is full of useful checklists and strategies and do's and don'ts. The book has been divided into clear sections making reference easy. I am sure, as one comment on the cover states, it is a book you would refer to regularly. Not only offering advice for new and less experienced teachers, it was a reassuring read for a more experienced teacher like myself. In talking about time-management, Blum confirms what we all know but are often afraid to say –there are not enough hours in the day "… for even the very best of teachers, unless they cut corners in many significant ways!" (p.136)

Although written from a secondary perspective, most of the advice, particularly in part 1, is equally relevant to primary teachers. It would most certainly be helpful for all teachers where they feel they are facing a difficult classroom or situation. Not only can you find useful tips but you

can also take comfort from the fact that many of the things you are doing are the right ones for survival. I don't think one staff room copy would be enough!

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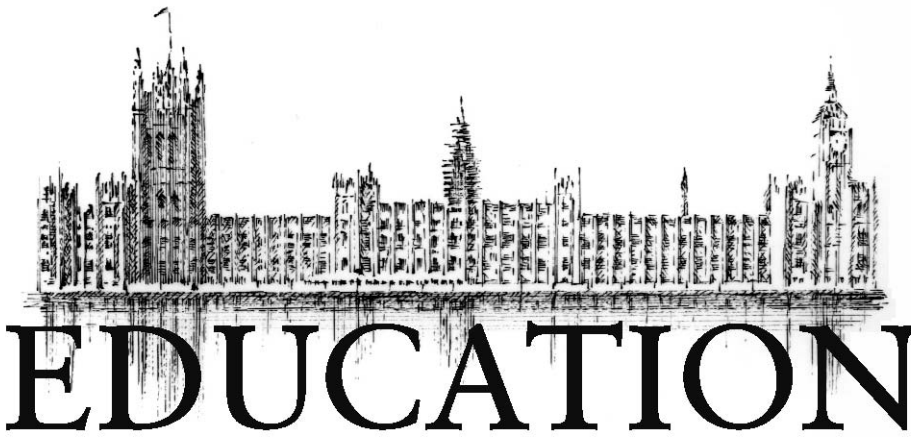

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