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# education review

## Teaching in the future

*This issue in association with:*

*Faculty of Education*



UNIVERSITY OF  
CAMBRIDGE



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volume 21 number 1  
Summer 2008

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

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# contents

volume 21 number 1

<b>Tribute to Steve Sinnott</b>	1	<b>Classroom dialogue and the teacher's professional role</b>	
<i>Christine Blower, Acting General Secretary, NUT</i>		<i>Neil Mercer, Professor of Education, Cambridge University Faculty of Education</i>	60
<b>Preface</b>	8	<b>Never a better time to be a teacher</b>	66
<i>Christine Blower, Acting General Secretary, NUT</i>		<i>Keith Bartley, Chief Executive, GTCE</i>	
<b>Stories of hope in an age of foolishness</b>	10	<b>A Masters level profession</b>	72
<i>John MacBeath, Professor Emeritus, Cambridge University</i>		<i>John Bangs, Assistant Secretary – Education and Equal Opportunities, NUT</i>	
<b>Teachers as champions of innovation</b>	13	<b>Primary education: who's in control?</b>	76
<i>David Frost, Leading Learning for School Improvement Group, Cambridge University Faculty of Education</i>		<i>Dominic Wyse, Lecturer in Primary and Early Years Education, University of Cambridge Faculty of Education</i>	
<b>Constructing sites for learning and teaching</b>	22	<b>Treating the teacher as a professional</b>	84
<i>John MacBeath, Chair of Educational Leadership, University of Cambridge and Director of Leadership for Learning, the Cambridge Network</i>		<i>Baroness Pauline Perry, Co-chair, Conservative Party Policy Group on Public Services Improvement</i>	
<b>Building the perfect team: leadership in the twenty-first century</b>	31	<b>What have we learned from TLRP?</b>	90
<i>Steve Munby, Chief Executive, National College for School Leadership</i>		<i>Mary James, Deputy Director, Teaching and Learning Research Programme and Andrew Pollard, Director, Teaching and Learning Research Programme</i>	
<b>Teachers under pressure: the impact of Government policies on teachers' working lives</b>	39	<b>Book Reviews</b>	101
<i>Maurice Galton, Cambridge University Faculty of Education</i>			
<b>We are the future of the teaching profession</b>	49		
<i>Gerald Clark, Kendra Deacon, Lisa Lowe, Geraldine Redhead and Nick Wigmore, NUT Young Teachers Advisory Committee</i>			



# EDUCATION JOURNAL

**For professionals in children's services  
and learning at every stage**

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## Steve Sinnott, 1951-2008

**T**his edition of *Education Review* is dedicated to the memory of Steve Sinnott. Steve always took a great interest in the Union's professional journal and the General Secretary's Preface of each edition reflected his personal enthusiasms and commitment to improving children's lives through education.

Steve would have been proud of this edition on "Teaching in the Future" because looking ahead with optimism for the profession was one of his characteristics. He would also have been proud of the fact that this edition was a collaboration with the Faculty of Education of the University of Cambridge, a key partner in the Union's Professional Development Programme.

This edition contains a selection of extracts from the many tributes paid to Steve, mainly from the Union's on-line book of condolences. They show various facets of Steve's work and the high regard in which he was held by colleagues both personally and professionally.

### **Christine Blower – Acting General Secretary**

When Steve Sinnott, the General Secretary of the National Union of Teachers who died suddenly on Saturday April 5 aged 56, delivered the 2007 Hugh Gaitskell Memorial Lecture at the University of Nottingham he summed up his philosophy:

*"I think there are those who are hopeful supporters and activists for justice, human rights and equality and there are the rest. Those who exude hope and optimism generate the energy and stimulate the progress that we in education and progressive trade unionism work for. I find it is such people who are as fascinated as I think I am by the liberating power of education in this country and across the world."*

Steve was a staunch advocate of education as the means of lifting the underprivileged out of poverty. It was this vision which led him to campaign enthusiastically throughout his life for comprehensive education in England and Wales and for the right of children to education wherever in the world they lived.

Steve was born in 1951 into a working class Liverpool family with strong socialist traditions, which shaped his lifelong political outlook. His father worked in Ford's Halewood plant. When he was elected as the union's national president in 1994, he proclaimed his pride at being the first holder of the office to have attended a comprehensive school.

He graduated from Middlesex Polytechnic with a BA in social sciences

in 1974, and trained as a teacher at Edge Hill College in Ormskirk, where he joined the NUT. He taught humanities and was NUT school representative at Shorefields Comprehensive School in Toxteth, Liverpool, before moving to Broughton High School near Preston in 1979, where he was head of economics and business studies. He was elected to the Union's national executive in 1986.

In the middle of his year as national president he was elected Deputy General Secretary in November 1994 and then General Secretary in June 2004. In both offices Steve extended the scope of the Union's international work, but always insisted this should never be tokenistic, that the Union should never raise expectations it could not deliver.

He won widespread admiration for his support for the Ethiopian Teachers' Association and played a major role in the international campaign for the release of their president Dr Taye Woldesmiat, who Steve visited in prison in Addis Ababa and who was eventually freed in May 2002.

Steve worked closely with the Commonwealth Secretariat to draft a protocol on teacher recruitment. In September 2004 the NUT hosted a meeting of Commonwealth Education Ministers who signed the protocol governing the export of teachers from Commonwealth countries to fill vacancies in Britain at the expense of their own hard-pressed services.

A firm believer in the power of dialogue and reconciliation, Steve effected a meeting of Palestinian and Israeli teachers' unions at NUT Conference and went on to secure their agreement to a joint statement at the congress of the worldwide teachers' organisation, Education International. Steve was a supporter of the Holocaust Education Trust. He was too, a firm advocate for justice for the Palestinian people and all people of the Middle East.

He was a strong supporter of the Make Poverty History initiative and the Global Campaign for Education which seeks the implementation of the Millennium Goals of education for all the world's children by 2015.

Upon his election as General Secretary, Steve immediately set about uniting the Union. His enduring achievement after just four years as General Secretary has been to leave behind a more united, stronger organisation.

A strong supporter of the goal of one union for all teachers, he worked to improve relations with both the NUT's fellow teaching unions and with the Government, while continuing to oppose the workforce agreement and to campaign for improvements to teachers' pay and conditions.

It is perhaps a measure of Steve's achievement that, with the NUT planning the first national teachers' strike for more than 20 years, the Prime Minister Gordon Brown has paid tribute to Steve as "inspirational, not just for children in Britain, but around the world".

Steve often said that he planned to retire around 2014 and return to teaching. Those who knew him knew he would keep his word and that some of his future lay in a school in Africa. However, this was not to be. A committed family man, a lifelong Everton supporter, keen cyclist and caravanner, Steve will be sorely missed not only as a teacher and trade unionist but as, to borrow a favorite phrase of his, “a smashing fellah”.

The condolences of all those who knew and worked with Steve go out to his family, and in particular his wife Mary, herself a talented teacher who has supported him throughout his career, and his son Stephen, daughter Kate, and grandchildren Robbie and Freddie.

### **Bill Greenshields – NUT President**

Steve was a great teacher, a great trade unionist, and a great mate. He inspired everyone with the interests of children and education at heart. His underlying love of humanity shone through even the most routine of discussions – and when he was in full flow, he burned with passion, conviction and determination.

Steve’s leadership unified the Union, allowing us to work in new ways that really reflect our membership, overcoming divisions to turn our fire in the right direction... and, when needed, Steve the careful diplomat could let fly in a way that made the enemies of education turn tail and run.

Steve’s commitments – to state comprehensive education, to teachers, to active trade unionism and professional unity, to all children and in particular those from the toughest backgrounds, to human rights worldwide, to equalities and against all injustice – will live on and push us forward.

### **John Bangs – Assistant Secretary, Education & Equal Opportunities**

I knew Steve well for the last four years of his life. I was an unsuccessful candidate for NUT General Secretary in 2004. Steve’s election could have been very difficult for me as an NUT Official, particularly since, prior to his election, we had been ships that passed in the night. Post election, nothing could have been further from the truth. He was generosity itself to me personally. More importantly for the Union he immediately put into practice a dynamic, creative and human vision for the future of education. One of the first things he did was to ask me, with my department, to draft ‘Bringing Down the Barriers’, the NUT’s Education Statement. It was shaped by Steve’s internationalist and human rights vision and it had a powerful influence on the parliamentary coalition opposing the controversial ‘choice and diversity’ aspects of the 2006 Education Bill. In 2007 he was the driving force behind the publication of ‘A Good Local School for Every Child and Every Community’ which set out the Union’s

education polices we wanted the new Brown Government to adopt. He was incredibly proud for the Union that the Children's Plan contained a number of A Good Local School's proposals including ones on preventing the commercialisation of childhood. There are limitless examples of his educational vision both nationally and internationally – the research that the Union has commissioned; his commitment to the Union's CPD programme; the Commonwealth Teachers Group; the list is endless. The point is, wherever he was, whoever he talked to, he played to their strengths. He was selflessly inclusive which was his own great strength. Like everyone I shall miss him desperately; as a colleague and a friend.

### **Demitri Coryton – Editor, Education Journal, Publisher of Education Review**

Steve Sinnott made a profound impact on his Union in his short time as General Secretary and an unusually large contribution on the international stage, starting with his decade as Deputy General Secretary.

At the heart of his success as a teacher and leader of Europe's biggest teaching union was the simple fact that he genuinely liked children, including the difficult ones. When he taught at Shorefields comprehensive in Toxteth, a difficult inner city school, a girl who was always in trouble set fire to the school. It was Steve who reached out to her. He retained a pride in his former pupils once he stopped teaching. When he was visiting Gaza and the West Bank for the NUT, he was thrilled to find the UN official responsible for his visit was someone he had once taught. At last year's North of England conference he cut short a dinner with local authority leaders to go for a drink with a former pupil.

The NUT had always had a significant international presence but Steve raised its global profile higher than it had ever been before. He was active through the Commonwealth and it was here that he achieved his greatest international success. In 2004 he hosted a meeting of Commonwealth education ministers. While ministers at the DES would not talk to the NUT because it had refused to join the workforce agreement, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office was more than happy to make use of his services. Negotiations for the Commonwealth protocol on teacher recruitment nearly broke down and Steve's personal involvement was crucial to getting agreement. His long standing work with the Commonwealth was recognised by an invitation to Buckingham Palace where he discussed his international work with The Queen and the Secretary General of the Commonwealth.

Steve's determination to work collaboratively with people bore fruit in an unforeseen way. He involved his deputy, Christine Blower, fully in leadership decisions. As a result she has been able to step into his shoes as Acting General Secretary without missing a beat.

Steve was a man passionate about fairness, which shaped his commitment to causes from comprehensive education to the Make Poverty History campaign. It is a tragedy for his union and a misfortune for education that his work was cut short by so untimely a death.

### **Kate Allen - Amnesty International UK**

Amnesty International UK was shocked and saddened to learn of Steve's passing. We enjoyed working with him immensely and valued his passion and commitment to the struggle for a more just world. He was an ardent opponent of human rights violations around the world and both a supporter and partner of initiatives to thoughtfully enable young people to learn about their rights and their responsibilities to others. We will miss him.

### **David Archer – ActionAid International**

Steve was an inspiration not just to teachers in the UK but to educators internationally. His passionate support for the Global Campaign for Education was invaluable in putting pressure on the British Government to increase and improve its aid to education. Without Steve it is unlikely that school-children across the UK would have heard so much about the tens of millions of children out of school around the world. He championed the "Send My Friend to School" campaign and backed this up with lobbying DFID to great effect. The last time I saw him we were planning joint work to challenge the IMF about its imposition of public sector wage bill caps – that block recruitment of urgently needed teachers in so many countries. This work will proceed but we have lost our most passionate and effective advocate!

### **Karen Pollock – Chief Executive, Holocaust Educational Trust**

Steve was a true leader and campaigner, able to inspire all those around him. He always defended what he believed to be right no matter what. His understanding of the past and its lessons for today meant he was always supportive of the work of the Holocaust Educational Trust. We were honoured to be able to collaborate with Steve on a number of projects to ensure that teachers were better equipped to pass on the message that racism, intolerance and bigotry can have no place in the classroom and beyond. Steve was a great man and it is a privilege to have been able to call him a friend.

### **Sarah Veale - Equality and Employment Rights Department, TUC**

Steve was quite simply one of the best trade union leaders that I have

worked with – he will be sorely missed in the trade union movement. His commitment and dedication will remain an inspiration to us for years to come.

### **Alison Haselden - Lancashire**

Steve taught me at Broughton high school, and it was perhaps at this point that I realised that you could be a genuinely “smashing” person and a fantastic teacher. Steve always cared about the students and you always felt that he really cared about how well you were doing when he chatted with you. I was really pleased to be able to vote for him to become the General Secretary for NUT when I became a teacher. I knew that the inspiration that he provided in the classroom to me as a student could be carried through to him inspiring a whole teaching union. I was very saddened to hear of his death – he will be missed by many.

### **Jessica Gold – School Councils UK**

All of us here at School Councils UK have been shocked and saddened to hear of Steve’s untimely passing. He was a passionate and genuine advocate of student voice and student councils and really understood that participative structures enabled teachers and students to work together better. It was always a pleasure working with him. His enthusiasm and commitment were obvious to all who knew him.

### **Jacqui Smith – Secretary of State for the Home Office**

Steve’s commitment to children and to teaching shone through in the work we were able to do together when I was an Education Minister. He cared deeply that children were able to learn in well resourced, stimulating, safe and calm classrooms and that teachers were able to get on with the job! As an NUT member, I was pleased to see Steve lead the union and sad that his compassion and leadership are now lost to us. But I’m sure the loss to his family is hard to bear and my thoughts are with them. Steve made a difference in his life. I hope you will remember him with pride.

### **Reg Weaver – President, National Education Association, United States of America**

At NEA, we thoughtfully remember Steve’s concern for the privatization of public education, his leadership with the Commonwealth Protocol, and his promotion of quality education with respect for education unions. Steve’s focus on the situation of our education union colleagues in the Middle East, including Iraq, has helped to build relationships and trust. He advanced real human rights in tangible ways, impacting the lives of students and educators. This servant leader – a term first used by African American visionary Carter G. Woodson – will be greatly missed across the

globe.

### **Fred van Leeuwen – Educational International**

We will remember Steve as a passionate union leader and a dear friend. His contribution to the cause of defending universal quality public education in the UK and abroad has been exemplary. Steve strongly believed that international solidarity is crucial to the success of our movement, and always acted in the spirit of that solidarity.

We will remember him as a true champion of human rights. Teacher trade unionists around the globe, victims of repression and human rights violations, can testify to the unreserved support which they received from him and to the solidarity he was able to mobilise on their behalf.

He has left his mark on numerous areas of our international work. His friends and colleagues in Europe, in the OECD countries, in the countries of the Commonwealth and elsewhere, are very proud and grateful that he crossed their path. For them Steve will continue to be a source of inspiration.

### **Dr. Taye Woldesmiat – Ethiopian Teachers Association**

Steve will be held always in my memory for all his work on human rights and his vehement and vocal protestations of those violations. As president of the Ethiopian Teachers Association, I witnessed Steve's passionate embrace of global educational rights for children and teachers. Steve and Mary came to an international conference in Addis Ababa, and he brought the promise that NUT and other EI members would work to keep solidarity in the struggle against human rights violations and for the rights of all teachers and trade unionists to have freedom of association. In some of my darkest moments while in prison, I knew I could think of Steve and know how hard he was working for my release. His visits with me while in prison helped sustain me through some very difficult times. When I came to the NUT meeting in April 2003, it was a joy to be with Steve and all the NUT and international leaders, knowing what he and they had done to expedite my release. His passion and commitment never wavered.

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

This is a significant edition of *Education Review* as it is the first to be published since the untimely death of Steve Sinnott. This has been a tragedy for Steve's family and friends and "the worse of times" for the National Union of Teachers, to continue John MacBeath's analogy in his introduction to this edition. It is fitting that *Education Review* features extracts from some of the tributes paid to Steve by the national and international education community which will serve to remind current and future readers of the Union's professional journal just what an exceptional person Steve was and how fortunate the Union was to have had such an inspirational leader, committed to the personal and professional freedoms of teachers and the education and human rights of children worldwide.

This edition would have delighted Steve because it demonstrates the NUT working in partnership with one of the UK's most prestigious educational research and training institutions, the Faculty of Education of the University of Cambridge. It is the first time that *Education Review* has been produced in association with another organisation and it enhances the reputation of the Union's journal that members of the Faculty of Education have contributed from their latest education research findings. Professor John MacBeath continues his long professional association with the NUT by writing an insightful introduction to this edition, drawing together the common threads from an outstanding collection of articles.

The theme, "Teaching in the future", is one which unites both organisations in a common endeavour as the Union and the Faculty are committed to working for the best provision for teachers in terms of initial training and professional development. Indeed, the NUT Continuing Professional Development programme was founded on the belief that the Union has both a responsibility for and a unique insight into teachers' needs in developing their professional practice throughout their careers. Teaching is indeed a learning profession in the fullest sense.

It is appropriate that there are two powerful contributions from the NUT in this edition. John Bangs' article on the proposals for a Masters degree shows that Union policies, while being rightly ambitious for teachers in terms of encouraging the highest standards of professional development, are grounded in the realism of the pressures on teachers, particularly early in their teaching careers. These pressures are vividly described in the article which is a compilation of the contributions of members of the Union's Young Teachers Advisory Committee. Their views reflect the characteristics of the Union's membership: being lively, feisty

and passionate about education. The status of the profession, workload, workforce changes, pay, testing, OFSTED and private sector involvement are among the issues which come under the scrutiny of the young teachers. Their voices must be heard because they are indeed the future of the profession.

An excellent book review section completes this edition of *Education Review*. Our reviewers continue the journal's tradition of independent thinking and "telling it like it is". Their focus is on whether the books under review make a contribution to the work of teachers, either directly in their classroom practice or school management role, or indirectly by causing them to reflect and re-evaluate. Head teacher, Kenny Frederick; deputy head teacher, Alan McFadden; Executive member, Robert Wilkinson; CPD tutor, Delphine Ruston; and NUT staff members, Helen Hill and Karen Robinson, all demonstrate that busy teachers and educators can retain their intellectual curiosity and enthusiasm for learning.

This edition of *Education Review* on the theme of "Teaching in the future" is the manifestation of the productive partnership between the NUT and the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education. Long may that partnership continue to enrich the opportunities that the National Union of Teachers can offer to its members at every stage of their careers.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christine Slower". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'C'.

## Stories of hope in an age of foolishness

**T**he opening line of *A Tale of Two Cities* is more well known than the lines that follow, but it is these that capture the twin themes that run through the articles in this special issue – the age of wisdom, the age of foolishness, the epoch of belief, the epoch of incredulity, the season of Light, the season of Darkness, the spring of hope, the winter of despair.

Each of the contributors to this volume explores these recurring themes. Whether in the policy world, the academic world or the practitioner world, their separate stories converge into a single narrative of light and dark, despair and hope. We are left in the end with a message of hope but not without incredulity that so many policy measures could have been so misconceived.

The story begins with the winter of despair. The wintering of teachers' faith is contained in accounts of pressure, stress and compliance in descriptions of teachers as 'depressed', 'disheartened' (Lisa Lowe), 'exhausted', 'uninspired' (Kendra Deacon), 'deskilled' (Gerald Clark), 'inadequate' (Maurice Galton) and 'alienated' (Dominic Wyse). If the winter is to give way to the spring of hope it will, suggests Nick Wigmore, require energy, commitment, patience and resilience, the qualities needed to rise above the age of foolishness.

When did the age of foolishness begin? Twenty five years ago, we are told, when the seeds of central prescription were sown, progressive and invasive, spreading its roots into new professional territories. As Dominic Wyse recounts, it has moved insidiously from guidance to mandate, reaching its nadir in the doctrinaire adoption of synthetic phonics.

David Frost describes the 'drift' towards a conception of teachers as mere skilled technicians, but for many of those cast in that role it has felt more like an in-rushing tide, 'stifling the passion' as Gerald Clark describes it. Whatever happened to the 'why' questions, the 'magic moments' (Maurice Galton), the 'adrenaline rush' (Baroness Perry)?

'It is a baffling conundrum that schooling seems to widen rather than narrow social inequality', writes Keith Bartley. Is it because tactical teaching has 'squeezed' out the last drop of motivation to learn, and inspiration to teach? asks Dominic Wyse, arguing that 'educational standards, broadly conceived, may actually have declined in the last decade or so'. Is it because schools have been taken to a plateau of attainment where they are likely to remain until there are opportunities for an enhanced and extended professionalism? (Frost, James and Pollard).

The season of light? 'There is a new mood in the air'. 'There has never

been a better time to be a teacher', writes Keith Bartley, an optimism echoed by Lisa Lowe: 'I believe we are at the beginning of an exciting new epoch in which there will be scope for us to engage in the shaping of our profession'. We are entering the post-standardisation era, writes David Frost, perhaps as much in hope as expectation.

In this brave new future perhaps Government will be overcome by a benevolent amnesia, as Gerald Clark suggests – 'forget excessive testing, forget all testing for a while if need be. Forget the incremental sub levels that each child needs to show progress'. But first we need to revitalise the debate about professionalism.

What is good for pupils is good for teachers too. If 'talking together', the classroom protocol described by Neil Mercer, is generative of learning, then teachers too need the space, the stimulus and the structure in which to make it happen. It is not any old talk but 'exploratory talk' in which the ground rules of disciplined inquiry become internalised within the professional discourse. In Mary James and Andrew Pollard's terminology, it is founded (for teachers as well as pupils) on a sense of purpose, a developed capacity for reflection, strategic thinking, informed by evidence and a sense of one's own agency. This is what Maurice Galton characterises as 'executive control', the antithesis of resigned dependency which excessive dictat has so successfully inspired.

Executive control is brilliantly exemplified in 'construction sites', beyond the classroom, where pupils and teachers are liberated from impatient targets, depressing labels and ubiquitous levels of attainment (MacBeath). In the range of sites offered by Children's University, Playing for Success, Performing for Success, in the ground breaking work in football clubs, museums and art galleries, young people are reminded that they can learn without limits and teachers are reminded of why they came into teaching. These are not alternatives to school but vital complements to classroom learning which cannot, and should not be expected to, compensate for the failures of social policy. The new enlightenment will be an epoch of trust and growing reciprocity, 'bleeding into other partnerships and networks', suggests Lisa Lowe. In discussing the introduction of a Masters Level qualification for teachers, John Bangs echoes this idea and argues that the Masters degree should be about "enhancing teachers' professional self-confidence, autonomy and expertise. In short, it should be about the Government demonstrating that it trusts teachers." All of this does require, however, that we think more creatively outside the box, within it, and in developing the connections that lie between. It is here that social and intellectual capital is created.

'We ask for a future in which teaching is a truly grown up profession', writes Baroness Perry. We may ask but we shall not receive unless teachers, singly and collectively, assume executive control. But 'waking the sleeping

giant' will require more than the efforts of individual teachers battling against the tide to create success within the small arena of their own classrooms. It will demand, concludes David Frost, a concerted effort on the part of Government, local authorities, national agencies, researchers and those in senior leadership roles.

The ability to lead highly complex organisations, suggests Steve Munby, is premised on 'horizontal' or 'lateral' leadership, distributing the wealth of talents and expertise that exists, 'harnessing and channelling a collective strength'. This is most likely to occur when senior leaders overcome the fear of letting go, allowing the sleeping giant of teacher leadership to reawaken and to stir their sleepwalking pupils back to life and to learning.

John MacBeath  
Professor Emeritus  
University of Cambridge

# Teachers as champions of innovation

**Abstract:** *David Frost discusses how teacher accountability has changed over the years, from the relative freedom of the 1970s to the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1988 and the start of central prescription. He argues that in order to lead change and improve practice, all members of a school should be involved in influencing and contributing to the development of the school. He discusses ways in which this theory can be supported within the school, including good partnership with outside agencies, supportive conditions within the school and the opportunity to share good practice through networks such as HertsCam.*

**W**hen I first started teaching in the 1970s we had a lot of freedom. This was the age before the National Curriculum and before we had begun to talk of such things as accountability, levels of attainment and middle leadership. OFSTED had yet to be invented. In the weeks before I started my first job as a classroom teacher in a primary school, I had not been sent any schemes of work nor met any senior colleagues who might have given me guidelines about what I was to teach or how I was to teach it. On my first day, I arrived early and examined my classroom. The walls were bare. I could find no instructions or advice about anything until I opened the drawer of the desk to find a sheet of paper headed 'Procedures for dealing with vomit'. This subsequently came in handy. Apart from that it was pretty much up to me.

## **Accountability and the case for reform**

In every profession there is a tension between, on the one hand, the capacity or entitlement of practitioners for independent, creative

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judgement and, on the other hand, public accountability. This is usually mediated by working within an institution of some sort and by being a recognised member of some kind of regulatory body. This tension has been particularly evident in the teaching profession for a long time to the extent that some have questioned whether teaching can be considered a profession at all. It is important to recognise that professionalism is a highly contested and political concept. It might be used, for example, to support an argument about working conditions or it may be used by Government to try to establish new criteria for judging performance.

In the 1970s there was very little accountability and prescription. Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) published some very useful pamphlets and urged us all to review the curriculum and try to be more principled in the

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way we developed it. It was sound advice, but you could take it or leave it. Then Governments began to question the economy of such a costly national system and wondered how the profession could be held accountable for performance. The

OECD's PISA programme was still many years away but nevertheless economists were waking up to the importance of measures of scholastic attainment and Government agencies were alert to policy developments overseas. It was not at all unusual in the early 1980s, for example, for teams of HMIs to fly to New York to examine assessment systems or aspects of curriculum.

Allied to this economic pressure there was a growing body of research on school effectiveness which showed us that the ethos of the school can make a difference to learning outcomes and that positive leadership can create the organisational conditions associated with effectiveness (MacBeath & Mortimore, 2001). By the 1980s the case for determined national reform was made and with the 1988 Education Act, the era of central prescription began in earnest. The National Curriculum provided teachers and parents alike with a tight specification of what should be taught and the creation of OFSTED a few years later provided the means to insist on compliance. The link between policy for school improvement and school effectiveness research was highlighted by the review commissioned by OFSTED (Sammons *et al.*, 1995). This document listed the 11 factors of effective schools, the first of which was 'Professional Leadership' described as 'firm and purposeful'. It was only a few years later that the New Labour Government announced that there would be the world's first National College for School Leadership (NCSL). The professionalisation of school leadership was clearly manifest in the creation of the National Professional Qualification for Headteachers (NPQH).

The era of central prescription has now been with us for about 25 years

and, although there may be evidence to support the view that standards have improved significantly, there is a growing consensus that the impact of top-down reform is bumping up against its limit and that we are now entering what has been termed a 'post-standardization era' (Hargreaves, D. 2008). It has also been argued that the rise in standards has been achieved at considerable costs to teachers and their professionalism (Galton and MacBeath, forthcoming). It depends on your view of professionalism, of course. For some, the emphasis would be on careful attention to standardised procedures and adherence to policies, whereas others might emphasise values-led decision-making for example. I would argue that if we want to move on to the next level of improvement in education we have to focus on ways in which to build capacity rather than merely secure compliance. At the present time we could say that we have what Andy Hargreaves calls an 'apartheid' where some schools can be characterised as 'performance training sects' and others as 'professional learning communities' which are defined in the following way:

*"Professional learning communities exert their effects slowly, yet sustainably over time. They have clear links to improved standards of learning. Their success depends on continuing support from outside the school, compatibility with external reform imperatives, strong support in terms of instructional materials and leadership development, and a staff with sufficient levels of knowledge, competence and skill to share with their colleagues."* (Hargreaves, A. 2003)

Performance training sects on the other hand characterise schools where the urgency of 'turning around' low levels of performance leads to short term strategies such as coaching in particular standardised practices. This may be understandable but nevertheless, if we want to transform the majority of schools, we have to question the kind of professionalism that will take us to the next level and enable us to overcome the persistent inequalities in the system.

Becoming a high performing professional learning community on a sustainable basis requires the mobilisation of the whole range of teachers' creative energies as innovators and knowledge builders. However, this should not be interpreted as a call merely for better professional development for teachers. That would be too individualistic and makes relatively little contribution to organisational learning. What is needed instead is the development of interpersonal capacity and shared knowledge. David Hargreaves' model of school effectiveness is very helpful here because it shows how the mobilisation of social capital and intellectual capital lead to the growth of organisational capital (Hargreaves, 2001 & 2003b). What I think is missing from Hargreaves' model, however, is the part that teacher leadership can play. It might be

supposed that teacher leadership has been flourishing within the education system over the past 20 years or so. It is true that, compared to most other countries, we have seen the development of a complex pattern of decision making structures and roles of responsibility – team leaders, subject leaders, assistant head teachers and so forth – but in spite of the creation by NCSL of programmes such as ‘Leading from the Middle’, I suggest that we are still struggling to develop leadership capacity. The assumption remains that it is senior leaders who bear the burden of mobilising organisational capital, even though they may have systems for distributing responsibilities.

We do have some excellent examples of teacher leadership in relation to specific projects or intervention initiatives. For example in the UK the Key Stage 3 Strategy has led to the establishment of a cadre of teaching and learning consultants who act as agents of change. In the US the National Writing Project has fostered an extensive network of ‘teacher leaders’ (Lieberman and Miller, 2004; Lieberman and Friedrich, 2008). However, these depend on funding for specific initiatives and, more fundamentally, perpetuate a belief that leadership demands the kind of authority that is derived from formal role designation.

**A successful school is one in which the maximum degree of leadership is exercised by the maximum number of people including teachers, pupils, parents, support staff.**

I want to suggest that it is more productive to adopt the distributed leadership perspective that Spillane (2006) has drawn attention to. This perspective emphasises the interaction between teachers through which the functions of the school – both maintenance and development – are carried out. In his research it was evident that leadership can either be distributed by design – an approach that seems to correspond with what is said above about structures and roles – or by default. The latter he describes in this way:

*“At times, savvy administrators, specialists, or classroom teachers, acting alone or collectively, may identify an area in which leadership is lacking and step in to fill the vacuum.” (Spillane, 2006)*

Other writers, particularly in the American context, tend to refer to this as ‘informal leadership’.

I am less than comfortable with either of the terms ‘leadership by default’ or ‘informal leadership’. This rather negative language does not help us to move beyond the limitations imposed by a perspective derived from structuralist, organisational science (Ball, 1987). My preferred approach would be to start from Thomas Sergiovanni’s (1992) idea of

'leadership density' which is used to describe the extent to which, in a learning community, leadership permeates. He argues that a successful school is one in which the maximum degree of leadership is exercised by the maximum number of people including teachers, pupils, parents, support staff and so on. The conceptual framework resulting from our 'Carpe Vitam Leadership for Learning' project (MacBeath *et al.*, 2006) indicates that pupil learning and teacher learning are inextricably bound up with the exercise of leadership. Human agency is the key to understanding the importance of purposefulness and self-realisation in learning. On this basis then, there is scope for enabling all teachers to develop their capacity for leadership but this has to be about how we define what it is to be a teacher.

### **Extending the professionalism of the teacher**

My argument then is that, in order to take national reform to the next level we need to re-examine the role of the teacher and return to the debate about modes of professionalism. In the early 1970s Eric Hoyle suggested a typology in which the restricted professional could be compared with the extended professional (Hoyle, 1972). For him an extended professional had an orientation beyond the classroom, being involved in networking, concerned with both theory and practice and committed to evaluation. More specifically Hoyle said that the teacher "can act as a champion of an innovation among his colleagues" (Hoyle, 1972 in Stenhouse, 1975: 144). The argument was taken up by Lawrence Stenhouse who argued that as an extended professional, teachers should commit themselves to researching their own practice.

The idea of the teacher as researcher has been taken up with considerable enthusiasm over the years. University departments of education have adopted it as the basis of project work for a Masters degree. It has been promoted by the DfES under the Best Practice Research Scholarships scheme and subsequently the NCSL through its Networked Learning Communities initiative (Street and Temperley, 2005). There is no doubt that practitioner research has enjoyed this support partly because it has the potential to contribute to school improvement and in many cases it lives up to this promise, but my experience and research tells me that there are serious limitations to this. As I have argued elsewhere (Frost, 2007), the academic context within which such projects are conducted leads to a number of difficulties, for example the adoption of methodologies that make a poor fit with the professional context of the school. The main difficulty, however, is that research does not necessarily entail deliberate and strategic action to influence others; in other words, the challenge of leading change is left to others such as the head teacher.

In contrast, the language of 'teacher-led development work' (Frost and

Durrant, 2003) alters the emphasis away from research and towards leadership. It is in essence about teachers taking the initiative and managing projects in which they consult and collaborate in order to influence colleagues and improve practice throughout the school. Inquiry plays its part in the development process but it is the servant of the process of development rather than an end in itself. Since developing this approach in the 1990s, my colleagues and I have gathered a substantial body of evidence showing how teachers can act strategically to embed innovations in practice in their schools. More recently the launch of the *Teacher Leadership* journal has provided the means to broadcast accounts of such work.

### **Supporting teacher leadership**

If the case for teacher leadership as a dimension of the identity of all teachers is persuasive, we need to think about strategies to support its development. I suggest that there are at least four dimensions to this: an appropriate methodology, partnerships with external agencies, cultivation within the school and the creation of contexts for knowledge building.

#### *An appropriate methodology*

I have already argued that the traditional research methodologies make a poor fit with school life even where they adopt the language of action research. The idea of teacher-led development work provides a step-by-step approach in which particular materials and techniques are used to model and guide a process of values clarification, reflection on development needs, consultation with colleagues about development priorities, negotiation of strategic action plans and the leadership of development work.

#### *Partnerships with external agencies*

Support from external agencies is important, whether this be the local authority or bodies such as the National Union of Teachers or the General Teaching Council. University departments of education have a special role to play because of their independence, access to literature and skills for guiding reflection, but it must be stressed that any external support has to be mediated through genuine partnership arrangements so that external agencies do not simply replicate their normal habits of thought and operation.

#### *Cultivation within school*

Teachers are unlikely to sustain their capacity for leadership or successfully undertake a development project unless they have active support from their colleagues and in particular from the senior leadership

team. There is a growing body of evidence that illuminates the role of senior leaders in facilitating teacher leadership. There are very specific things that head teachers do, such as making additional time available or helping to facilitate opportunities for collaboration, but the more fundamental task is concerned with culture building or creating the conditions in which teacher leadership can flourish (Frost, 2004).

### *Contexts for knowledge building*

The nature of professional knowledge and the means by which it is generated are crucial in shaping professionalism. If teacher leadership is agential – if it is about the role of the teacher being extended such that all teachers can contribute to the development of professional practice – then it has to have a knowledge creation dimension. Support for this can be provided through networks and communities which exist to enable teachers’ accounts of their leadership of development work to be articulated and broadcast. One example is the HertsCam Network in which a partnership between schools, the local authority and a university provide a context within which teachers can share their practice, engage in dialogue and publish authoritative accounts (Frost, 2008).

### **Awakening the sleeping giant**

It is over ten years since the publication of the delightfully titled book, *Awakening the Sleeping Giant: Helping Teachers Develop as Leaders* (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2001). The authors set out their vision for a future in which distributed leadership would be the norm, technology would enable teachers to access the latest professional knowledge easily and share their knowledge through electronic networking and unions would recognise the importance of teacher leadership for improving teaching and learning (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 1996 and 2001). Using their vision as a convenient benchmark, I think we have considerable room for optimism. After all, teachers are being encouraged by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority to engage in creative curriculum development, the National Union of Teachers have launched their Learning Circles programme and the Government’s Children’s Plan calls for the teaching profession to become a “Masters level profession” (DCSF, 2008). However, if we really want a “world class” education service I believe that we have a great deal more to do to awaken the sleeping giant of teacher leadership.

We need first of all to halt the drift towards the conceptualisation of the teacher as a mere skilled technician and revitalise the debate about professionalism. In my view, being a teacher should involve more than leading learning in the classroom. I am convinced that the future development of the education system depends on teachers’ leadership of innovation and their contribution to the building of professional

knowledge within and beyond their schools. This is not an activity that should be the preserve of the talented few or limited to those with formal positions. Every teacher has both the capacity and the right to be influential and to make their contribution to the transformation of educational practice. To realise this potential – to wake the sleeping giant – will require a concerted effort on the part of Government, local authorities, national agencies, researchers and most importantly, those with senior leadership roles in schools. The key to all this, in my view, is to see leadership as a part of the definition of what it is to be a teacher.

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# Constructing sites for learning and teaching

## John MacBeath

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**Abstract:** *John MacBeath discusses how different environments affect children's learning. He argues that the conventional classroom environment can restrict creativity and spontaneity in teaching and learning, discouraging teachers from utilising their knowledge of children's interests, attitudes and prior learning. He predicts that alternative learning sites will become more common in future, including the use of virtual networking sites. These varied settings, he says, will allow teachers to become more flexible and creative in their teaching.*

**C**lassrooms are places for learning and that is where you will find a teacher, possibly before a blackboard, the focus of attention, however provisionally. Yet that archetypal image of instruction is increasingly dissonant with the world in which young people are growing up and sits uncomfortably within an uncompromising policy world which demands transparency, quantifiability and accountability.

So teachers find themselves caught in the cross-fire between impatient policy and reluctant students who lack the perseverance required of a curriculum too far removed from life as they know it.

*"Children and young people live nested lives, so that when classrooms do not function as we want them to, we go to work on improving them. Those classrooms are in schools, so when we decide that those schools are not performing appropriately, we go to work on improving them, as well. But those young people are also situated in families, in neighbourhoods, in peer groups who shape attitudes and aspirations often more powerfully than their parents or teachers." (Berliner, 2006)*

## Compartmented learning

We attach our learning to the place in which we acquire it. Home and peer knowledge rarely travel to school with us. Knowledge acquired in one subject classroom often fails to travel to the next. What is “learned” in maths often does not make it across the corridor to science. Scientific principles find no place in geography, PE or art and design. History is history.

In a London school, included in a study of schools in exceptionally challenging circumstances, (MacBeath, Gray, Cullen, Frost, Steward and Swaffield, 2007) teachers spoke of “groundhog day”, a reference to the Bill Murray movie in which he wakes up to relive the same day over and over again. It was as if knowledge, apparently acquired yesterday, had simply dissipated overnight and was required to be taught all over again today. For teachers, such a vicious cycle can quickly become professionally dispiriting because the emotional neutrality of school learning is unable to compete with the emotionally charged nature of learning out of school.

“*Knowledge to go*”, as David Perkins puts it, has proven to be deeply problematic. Put simply, children can be taught with a high degree of reliability to solve problems when those problems are structured appropriately by the teacher and presented to them within a recognisable frame. Indeed it may be possible to achieve 100 per cent success for all with well designed problem-solving tasks in the classroom. However, in an unstructured open field outside of school the success rate may fall to as low as five per cent, says David Perkins (2006). This he ascribes to three key factors. One, students have to be able to spot the problem for themselves. Two, they need to be motivated to want to engage with the problem. Three, they then need to have the ability to select and use the most appropriate tools to solve the problem. This is why Perkins places so much emphasis on dispositions, because without a desire to engage, learning will always be at second hand with a pitiable half-life in memory.

This is depressing news for teachers, striving assiduously to engage 30 restless minds, deploying every device and strategy to entice children into learning. Their efforts are frustrated because the legacy of schooling is to limit classroom endeavour to just one or two of Howard Gardner’s multiple “intelligences”. The overriding demands of tests and exams relegate the creative and spontaneous magic to the peripheral “creative” subjects, to the extra-curricular domain, to fields, forms and modes of inquiry which have no place in the pressure cooker classroom.

For centuries teachers have worked within the conventional bounded classroom, making the best of what they have to work with. While they have sometimes achieved spectacular success it has been in spite of the inhibiting constraints of schooling, most acutely problematic within the fractured day of the secondary school. Where teachers have been able to

create an authentic learning environment within their classrooms, it has been by swimming upstream, against the currents of political orthodoxy and often against the limiting expectations that their pupils bring with them. They recognise the conventions that limit impact and they struggle against the inevitable compromise that 'the system' demands.

Good teaching, as we found over the course of four successive studies for the National Union of Teachers (see Maurice Galton in this volume) is relentless and energy sapping work. Targets, testing and a prescriptive curriculum serve to de-skill and de-professionalise teachers who, as a consequence, feel less and less in control of their own work. Inclusion of children with complex needs within the mainstream classroom simply intensifies the pressure and exploits the goodwill of professionals who, while welcoming such a move in principle, resent the lack of support, resourcing and intelligent thought that comes with it. Catering for the full spectrum of attitude and aptitude throws into sharp relief the inadequacy of the conventional time-and-space bounded classroom.

### **Beyond the classroom**

Simple measures to raise standards, beloved of policy makers, fail to explain the mercurial nature of learning which escapes from the classroom and is continuously reshaped as it travels between home and school, within the local community and, most powerfully of all, within the peer group. It gives the lie to "value added", the largely futile attempt to measure what is "added" by the school since it is impossible to control for private tutoring, the growing popularity of tutorial centres (Kumon Centres, for example), and most powerfully of all, the "family" – nuclear, extended, fractured or dysfunctional.

One of the most telling insights from effectiveness research is the "compositional" effect (Gray *et al.*, 1990). This describes, although fails to really explain, the social mix of the pupil body, a critical mass of motivation or disinclination, engagement or disengagement, a precarious balance, and tipping point into either order or anarchy. It is, as teachers know to their cost, the nature of peer relationships that affects the shifting ebb and flow of school and classroom life, receptivity to or disengagement with, the learning process. It overflows the boundaries of the classroom into corridors, playgrounds and toilets and into the underlife of the school, which teachers and senior leaders rarely get to glimpse. A critical mass of needy, damaged or difficult children have a capacity to derail lessons disproportionate to their numbers. Teachers speak of a "good year" or "bad year". Like crops at the mercy of the prevailing climate, each annual cohort of young people constitutes a major ingredient of the classroom climate, the "feel" of the school, often tangible to the visitor who steps through the door for the first time. Without more imaginative provision, teachers have

to work within limits as to what a school can and cannot do to counter the influences brought with them by the children from outside, sometimes referred to as “the real world”.

Good teachers understand the complexity of children’s lives and ways in which these are shaped by the various layers of “nesting” which contain and define children’s identity. They acknowledge what children bring with them – their prior knowledge, their current interests, their attitudes, values and predispositions, yet to teach is to experience the constant frustration of having to put such insights to one side in order to “cover”, or “deliver”, the curriculum – that ruthlessly cumulative body of content that distances and disembodies the teaching/learning relationship and is often as dissatisfying to teachers as it is to their pupils.

We are offered deep and compelling insights into these issues in Weiss and Fine’s collection of essays in their book, *Construction Sites* (2000). As these collected essays illustrate, where and how children construct their understanding of the world is intrinsically bound up with place and people. The home, the street corner, the club, the café, the countryside, all offer different kinds of learning opportunities. The relationships we form with “significant others” – siblings, friends, peer group, parents and grandparents, as well as our teachers – allow and disallow certain kinds of knowledge and expression of emotion. Classrooms have rarely been friendly to emotional expression, with limiting assumptions about “intelligence” and “ability” – impoverished and hugely powerful inert ideas – which do their daily insidious work.

When we grasp the nature of “nested lives” and the implications this carries for how children learn, we can begin to address the future of teaching. The embrace of the extended school is underpinned by the knowledge that learning itself can extend when it is able to escape from the classroom, saturated as it is with constraining belief systems. Teaching in out-of-school, out-of-classroom contexts will become less and less an extra commitment before or after school. Teaching and learning will more routinely and systemically be carried out in a wide range of different locations, tailored more sensitively, and sensibly, to what we know about the nature of learning.

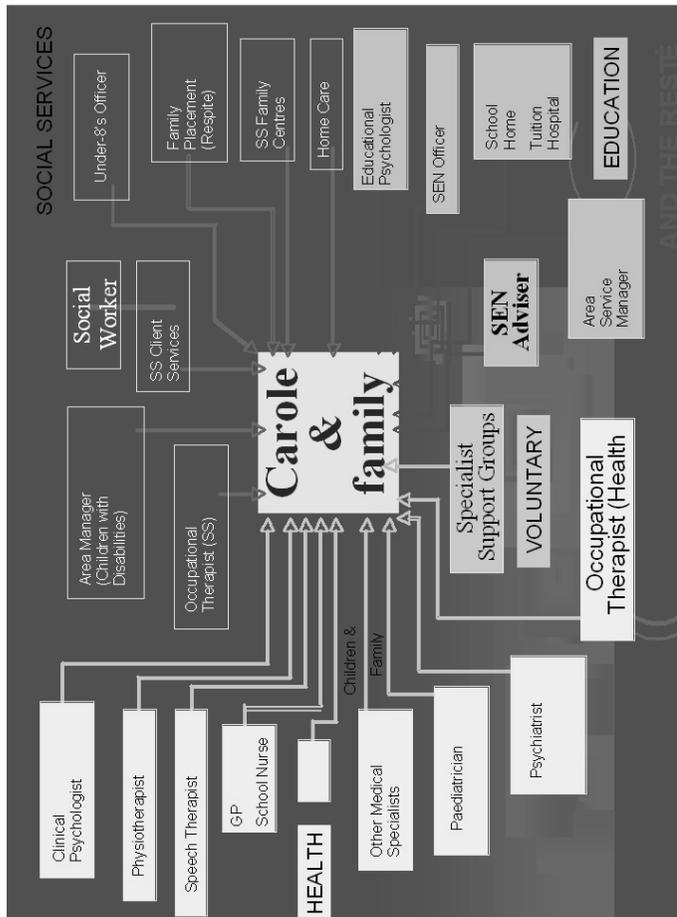
### **Learning to be**

Conception marks the first major transition, bringing into the world a set of predispositions already powerfully shaped by a nine month struggle for survival in either a nurturing or a hostile environment. Domestic violence, stress, diet, smoking, alcohol and addictive drugs can effect irreparable damage even before the hugely formative pre-school years. An infant’s first few years “on the outside” may offer compensatory opportunities or further exacerbate the congenital legacy. This is a critical period for making

sense of the world and of one's own place in it. Formal schooling comes, in a sense, late in one's lifetime. In some cases too late.

This is perhaps too bleak; a counsel of despair. It is nonetheless true for all that, and sends some key messages to policy makers. Stop blaming teachers for failures to close the gap because the gap is a systemic one and has to be addressed by less divisive social policies. Stop blaming parents because, for many, their inadequacies are a legacy of their own schooling and the lack of joined up services. This was graphically illustrated by Ray Shostak when he was Hertfordshire's Director of Children, Schools and Families in his depiction of Carole and her family (Figure 1). This exemplary case of tortured service delivery was a catalyst for the establishment of one of the first local authorities to address schooling and families – ten years before the re-badging of the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

Figure 1 Carole and her family



The metamorphosis from the Department for Education and Skills to the DCSF is a belated recognition of the school-community interface. It was a symbolic and studied decision to interpose “schools” between “children” and “families” in the re-naming of the Department. It signalled the primacy of schooling but recast as an extended “offer” in which the classroom diet is complemented and enriched by other learning opportunities. Extension may, however, assume two quite different forms. On the one hand, it may bring more and more of community agencies and statutory agencies into the one campus, a “full service” one door entry super-school; on the other hand, it may decentralise, pushing services out from a central hub, creating learning satellites on more human scale local sites.

Taking education out of school as well as bringing the community in will be a growing trend in the future. Libraries, internet cafes, advice centres, community centres, storefronts, tutorial agencies, book groups, sporting clubs, health and fitness centres, are all potential construction sites. Three decades ago Ivan Illich described such informal non-institutional sites and networks as “convivial”; convivial because they are

## **Where and how children construct their understanding of the world is intrinsically bound up with place and people.**

people-friendly and learning-friendly. Many of these already exist and will proliferate in future as imaginative teachers create opportunities to teach in contexts other than the classroom, expanding the communal pedagogic repertoire. Illich could not have foreseen the virtually networked world in which young people spend so much of their lives. While not all of the sites or networks that young people access could be described as “convivial”, they have important implications for learning and teaching. This has been recognised in the Highland Region of Scotland where teachers are initiated into the world of blogs, wikis and podcasts and how to use them as vehicles for pedagogical purposes.

In the year 2008 many hard pressed teachers are voluntarily taking on teaching commitments outside of school hours, in breakfast clubs, homework clubs, study support, site visits, extra-curricular activities and residential experiences of various kinds. This apparent paradox is explained by successive studies (MacBeath *et al.*, 2001) which have found that, however tired a teacher may be after a full school day it is re-energizing to sit alongside young people in a congenial and relaxed environment, observing learning at first hand. In these informal contexts learning rather than teaching assumes centre stage and “personalisation” begins to acquire real meaning.

In Glasgow a group of teachers, graduates, technology experts and museum personnel are collaborating on a ground-breaking initiative to exploit the resource of the museum as a construction site. It is very much in its pilot stage but its primary purpose is less about the content of what is on display than on enhancing the self-esteem and “can do” attitude of young people. Many have low aspirations. Many have already given up on themselves as learners. The museum offers an alternative and less threatening environment than the classroom. In creating a dynamic learning experience the teaching team have exploited innate curiosity, the ambiguity principle, the impulse of the treasure hunt, the challenge of problem solving, flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) and state of the art inter-active technology. This is simply one example of public sites grasping

**Teachers cannot simply be pressed into new moulds dissonant with the demands of the curriculum, resourcing and the unforgiving nature of the school timetable.**

the educational potential, enjoying a degree of freedom difficult to realise within the conventional classroom. Working full time in this context has proved attractive to teachers who have struggled to come to terms with classroom-based learning

but have, nonetheless, something special to offer to young people within another kind of relationship.

The same is true for learning sites in Premier League football clubs. These may seem unlikely places to find a teacher but for half a decade now major football clubs have been providing spaces for young people to study out of school hours with tutorial support and consultancy from school staff. The Playing for Success initiative uses the lure of football to engage young people in literacy and numeracy. Number work revolves around the myriad statistics, full time and half time scores, league tables, averages, ratios and probability. Literacy is addressed through match reports, heroic stories and biographies. Manchester City FC uses its rooftop conference centre for urban geography, affording a bird's eye view of the cityscape. For fathers who might never darken the door of a school, a football club offers an inviting opportunity.

A further example of extending the locus of teaching to venues other than schools is the Children's University. Founded originally in Birmingham and reborn in 2007 with funding from the DCSF and the Sutton Trust, the Children's University targets young people in the 8-14 age range, providing out-of-school-hours learning opportunities in community venues, recreation and sports centres and university accommodation. The 8-14 age range covers a critical period of transition from childhood to puberty and from primary to secondary school. The institutional transition continues to remain highly problematic for many

pupils who not only experience regression in their learning but also in their social and emotional lives. For teachers who work within the Children's University, either full-time or part-time, it is liberating not to be confined within curricular subjects but rather to enjoy opportunities to work from children's interests or to teach children things that interest teachers themselves: subjects as diverse as film, photography, dance, philosophy. Like everything else taught well in an appropriate context, philosophy has been a surprise hit with primary age children (see for example Winkley, 2002).

### **Widening the learning experience**

These are the seeds of an infrastructure which will be developed to complement, and in some cases replace, what is offered in school. It will mean taking education to where children, young people and adults are, to where they feel most predisposed to learn, where they feel most comfortable but also most stimulated. The ability to work flexibly, fluidly and spontaneously will characterise teaching in these varied contexts. It will draw on the skills of counselling, mentoring and coaching, redressing the imbalance between talking and listening, rising to the ultimate pedagogic challenge of bridging where pupils are and where teachers would like them to be, mediating who they are and who they could become. It will be more of a collaborative enterprise with a greater respect for the inherent capacity of children to lead their own learning and that of their peers. It will recognise the power of technology as well as its limitations with an understanding of myriad ways in which learning is mediated and the role of the teacher as the key pedagogical architect.

And what of the conventional much-loved classroom with its 30 or so desks, its teacher chair, its enclosed space with its own distinctive codes and rituals? Will classrooms continue to survive in the immediate future, held in place by convention, vested interest, locked into a set of procedures, designed, like the qwerty keyboard, to serve a less technologically sophisticated age? Classrooms may disappear at the hands of ambitious architects but if we have learned anything from three decades of school building, it is that teachers cannot simply be pressed into new moulds dissonant with the demands of the curriculum, resourcing and the unforgiving nature of the school timetable. There are too many examples of schools which have been built to some futurist vision but with too little understanding of the deeply conservative nature of curriculum and assessment, pushing teachers continually back to the transmission mode.

Building Schools for the Future is a major plank in Government policy. There is a danger, however, that without radical rethinking of the pedagogic architecture, it may prove to be a regressive move, cementing a future generation of teachers more tightly into institutional structures.

While we are constantly reminded of the unpredictability of the future, the evidence points to a world in which teaching will be at an even greater premium but increasingly adaptable to the changing landscape of learners.

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# Building the perfect team: leadership in the twenty-first century

*Abstract: Steve Munby describes the expanding role and responsibilities of twenty first century school leaders in an era where the expectations of both government and the public are increasingly ambitious. He explains how school leaders will need to demonstrate the ability to build the perfect team, rather than striving to be the perfect leader, if they are to meet those expectations. He recognises that successful modern leaders possess collaborative skills, leading with influence rather than by instruction, in order to build those key relationships crucial to achieving the best outcomes for our children and young people.*

**T**he concept of school leadership is evolving before our eyes. We are moving ever further away from the familiar, traditional twentieth century style of leadership to one that is compatible with a highly ambitious and complex twenty first century system. The transformation of our public services over the past decade has meant that public sector leadership has had to adapt accordingly.

An increased emphasis and focus on delivery, as well as the various changes in society and its increasing expectations, have had a considerable impact across the public sector. Our public service 'consumers' expect modern, personalised services that achieve their own consumer standards

## Steve Munby

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– adding to the pressures on our services and to the demands placed upon their leaders.

The widening range of leadership responsibilities that underlie these developments and increased expectations are extremely challenging. Here is a flavour of what seems increasingly to be expected of our public service leaders:

- the ability to lead and manage highly complex organisations;
- the creativity to develop a compelling vision which will move the organisation forward and which will generate enthusiasm and commitment;
- the attributes to provide “horizontal leadership”, leading collaboration and joined up strategies with other bodies in order to address the users’ needs and expectations (providing a comprehensive service);
- the operational understanding of strategies that will turn the vision into real action and achieve delivery;
- the capability to ensure delivery of seamless, personalised services;
- possession of the wisdom to be able to read the broader local, national and political environment;
- the financial expertise to ensure that resources and public money are used efficiently and effectively;
- the knowledge to keep abreast of ever-evolving technological changes.

And, of course, public service leaders are seen as accountable for everything in the organisation and, if things do not go well, they are seen to be expendable.

### **Distributing leadership within the school**

In light of the above, the model of the sole head teacher taking on the entire responsibilities of a modern school and being equally good at all aspects of leadership is no longer realistic. It makes the job feel too hard and threatens work-life balance. It fails to attract talented and creative people to want to become leaders and, most importantly of all, ultimately it does not serve the public best – in the case of schools, children and young people and their parents.

Successful leaders of modern public service organisations are authentic; they are honest about what they can do well and, crucially, what they cannot do so well. They provide inspiration, and most significantly of all, they communicate and instil consistent values and vision through the distribution of responsibilities and accountabilities amongst their senior team.

The National College of School Leadership’s leadership literature and research tells us that the best way to run schools is through sharing and distributing leadership, but our culture still continues to glorify the

charismatic leader. Many of those around the school – staff, parents, governors, local authorities, National College for School Leadership (NCSL), Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) – still seem to think that unless they deal directly with the head teacher the issue is not seen as a high priority by the school. Sometimes we are our own worst enemies. No one person could possibly stay on top of everything, but the fear of appearing incompetent makes many of us try to cling on to the model and exhaust ourselves in the process. The argument goes something like this, and it is an easy trap to fall into:

*“I am accountable for everything in the organisation and if anything goes wrong it will be my responsibility. Therefore I cannot afford to let anything slip; therefore I must attempt to make all the decisions. Moreover my staff already work too hard and have enough on their plates – it will be quicker if I take responsibility myself.”*

Many leaders have realised that, in light of the increasing responsibilities placed upon school leadership, it is far more important to create the perfect leadership team than be the perfect leader. As leaders we need to overcome this trepidation and fear of devolving responsibility, however unnatural it may feel. One of the crucial things that needs to change, and it still has not happened sufficiently in every school, is for leaders to delegate strategic responsibility and accountability as well as management and operational responsibility – ideally to people with greater expertise in a specific area than they have themselves. Increasingly, head teachers are choosing which areas they are going to lead and be accountable for; which areas others in their team are going to lead and be accountable for and, indeed, which areas others will report upon directly to governors.

### **School business managers**

Distributing leadership is about devolving responsibility to someone with expertise and capacity in that specific area. This should in theory ease the burden and improve the outcomes. In many independent schools the second most important person in the school is the school business manager or bursar who leads on all the human resources, finance, site management, health and safety and internal operational aspects of the organisation. It is a common theme among many head teachers that these kinds of issues take up far too much of their time. I see highly effective business management in many state maintained schools, but in others the head teacher is still expected to manage the budget, take lead responsibility for a capital programme, write bids for funding and even conduct water testing and count dinner money!

Most maintained secondary schools and almost half of all primary

schools say they have school business manager support but only 60 per cent of secondary schools have someone on their leadership team with responsibilities similar to those found in most independent schools. In primaries that figure is fewer than 13 per cent.

One of the many enjoyable tasks that I have as Chief Executive at NCSL is to present awards at our school business managers' graduation ceremonies. They are talented people but not enough schools have access to their expertise or, to be blunt, are using them as well as they could. Our research suggests that if strategic school business manager support were to be available to all schools then head teachers could cut their workload by up to a third – leading to better work-life balance and giving them more time to concentrate on making a difference to children's lives. This will be music to many head teachers' ears!

NCSL findings show that school business managers tend to identify significant savings in school budgets and bring more income into the school. I recently visited a secondary school in Washington which has been transformed through the Building Schools for the Future initiative and boasts the latest performing arts facilities in line with its specialist status. The head teacher was keen to stress that the leadership of the school's business manager had played a vital role in securing sufficient funding.

NCSL research also suggests that small schools which might struggle to employ their own full-time school business manager could jointly employ school business expertise with another school, leading to benefits from the purchasing of services and equipment at a greater scale. Research shows that this approach can go a long way towards funding access to expert school business management. In other words, this has the potential to pay for itself.

The NCSL provided advice to the Secretary of State about the future of primary school leadership in August 2007 and we received the response from ministers later that year. Both documents are available on the NCSL website. The advice included proposals to move all primary schools towards gaining access to strategic school business management expertise. I am delighted to say that the Secretary of State has endorsed these proposals.

From early 2008, NCSL will run 'demonstration projects' at 24 locations around England to explore the potential of new school business manager roles – advanced school business manager and school business director. These roles will operate across small and large groups of primary schools (such as federations, a cluster of two or three small schools or a trust) or in a single large primary school. These positions will normally be accountable to the head teacher in each school. In the case of a trust or a hard federation, they may be accountable to the chief executive. We truly believe that this initiative has the potential to make a significant difference

to the quality of school leadership in this country.

### **Distribution of school leadership across schools and agencies**

A fundamental shift is occurring in the nature of our education and children's services leadership. We are moving far away from the familiar top-down leadership approach that has been prevalent at both a national and a local level for so long, to a style that regards collaborative and multi-agency working as the key to success. This is a change encapsulated in the Government's Children's Plan (DCSF, 2007), which envisages a system where our schools and agencies work together, encompassing all stakeholders, to achieve improved outcomes for all our children and young people. It is a shift that has brought to the fore leaders whose natural style is to lead laterally and in partnership with others and who are comfortable with leadership through influence rather than leadership through instruction. It is leadership rooted in harnessing and channelling a collective strength of moral purpose from which great things can be achieved.

Examples of this type of leadership are becoming more and more common. School leaders are working in collaboration with other schools, taking responsibility for leading common areas and achieving goals to the benefit of each school.

The first crucial point to note, and something which NCSL fully appreciates, is that no one model of collaboration or partnership can be considered to be the ideal solution – this is reflected in the diversity of successful models up and down the country. An effective school leadership model is one which is developed with full regard to the locality and the context of the schools involved.

It has been my privilege to visit many outstanding schools over the last year. I have been to a large secondary school in Hartlepool where the inspirational head teacher is hands-on and knows every single child's name. I have seen many schools where the traditional model of one head teacher per school is working very well indeed. There is no need to change something that works well simply for change's sake.

However, I have also been to a family of schools in Sheffield where five primary schools and the secondary school in a local area have collaborated to make joint appointments – where the co-ordinator for modern foreign languages across the family of schools is a primary school teacher; where they have a co-ordinator for sport and music, and a school business manager who works across the family of schools. Earlier this year I visited a cross-phase federation in Kent encompassing a primary school, an infant school, a junior school and a secondary school, where the executive head leaves the day-to-day leadership and management to the 'heads of school'

whilst he himself focuses on the federation's overall strategic leadership and direction. What is more, the roles of head of the infant and the junior school within the federation attracted a stronger field of applicants than the traditional primary headship role has tended to attract, with applicants keen to be part of a senior leadership team rather than the single isolated leader.

This increase in collaborative working reflects the fact that school leaders are being asked, and indeed are independently willing, to take on greater responsibility for improvement of the system as a whole. This essentially amounts to the aim to improve provision across all children's services. School leaders have a unique responsibility here. We know that schools are regarded across children's services as being the hub that will provide the impetus for achieving the aims of Every Child Matters (DCSF, 2004) – based on the simple but important fact that schools remain the

one universal service for children and young people. For many children, it is where their individual needs and issues of well-being come to the fore. It is in school that the first steps

**An effective school leadership model is one which is developed with full regard to the locality and the context of the schools involved.**

towards making a real difference can be taken. And so it is from here that the agenda is being, and in many cases should be, led.

For schools to meet the expectations placed upon them by Every Child Matters, they require leaders who are able to build strong, effective and influential relationships with other key agencies – their 'partners' in achieving improved outcomes across the lives of their children and young people. If they are to meet the expectations of Every Child Matters, head teachers need to ensure that their working relationships with partners are well integrated and consistent. At the same time they must be willing to empower their own staff, who have the expertise and collaborative skills required to address, or begin the process of addressing, children's needs.

This approach to leadership will also be crucial if leaders are to succeed in providing a truly user-centred service for their children, young people, families and the local community. Leading engagement, partnership and communicating openly and bi-laterally with the community is absolutely crucial if school leaders are to identify what the real needs are and how best the school can work to address these needs.

Collaborative leadership also has the potential to improve outcomes for our most underperforming and challenged schools. If we are to address the variation that exists between our schools, we must harness the desire amongst our school leaders to improve the system and distribute the wealth of talent, experience, skills and expertise that exists, especially in our most outstanding schools and amongst our most outstanding school

leaders. National Leaders of Education and National Support Schools, and the London Leadership Strategy are excellent examples of how high-performing schools are collaborating with under-performing schools, sharing their leadership, resources and best practices to achieve improved outcomes for children and young people. Schools involved in these initiatives, both supporting and supported, are demonstrating significant improvements in results, illustrating how system-wide leadership can work to improve some of our most serious issues such as variation between schools.

But the benefits do not end there. System-wide and distributed leadership is providing a framework in which we can address the present and imminent need to develop future leaders, and in a far more effective way than we have done before. Through leading together, in partnership, we can create an environment in which the talent of potential future leaders can be nurtured and developed with an appreciation for what is required to achieve truly successful outcomes for our children and young people. Aspirant leaders have, in a collaborative setting, greater opportunities to work both across schools and a variety of agencies – all absolutely key to sustaining a school that provides successful outcomes for its children.

The expectations both from Government, parents and children themselves have never been higher. The demands of increasingly complex and demanding public services are pushing us towards new forms of leadership. But the imagination and moral purpose of school leaders is also pulling us towards those new forms of leadership. We are seeing greater empowerment and sharing of leadership responsibilities in and across schools with an increasing belief in the need for a perfect team, rather than a perfect head teacher. We are seeing better use of school business management expertise and greater distribution of accountability. Through collaboration between schools, based on moral purpose, the profession is beginning to take responsibility, not just for each individual institution, but for the whole of an increasingly diverse and joined up system. This new world of distributed and collaborative leadership is both exciting and full of potential. It is a different type of leadership for a different type of school system and it is the one that we now need to help future leaders to develop. If we work together, with creativity, ingenuity and moral purpose, we can transform the system and school leadership as we know it and provide for children and young people the learning opportunities that they need to be effective citizens in the twenty first century.

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# Teachers under pressure: The impact of Government policies on teachers' working lives.

***Abstract:** Maurice Galton places the experiences of individual teachers under pressure within a world-wide context. He argues that the dramatic changes in society have forced the teaching profession to change too. The reaction from the Government has been to introduce further testing. Workforce changes have had both a positive and negative impact on teaching. Teachers stated that preparation, planning and assessment time was highly beneficial, yet expressed concerns about the extension of the role of teaching assistants beyond their remit in supporting teachers and pupils. At the same time, teaching and learning strategies such as Learning to Learn and Assessment for Learning require a high level of teacher input and experience if they are to be effective and raise pupil achievement.*

## **A life in teaching**

Teaching is not what it used to be. While, for some, there is nostalgia for the mythical days of high standards, compliant children and purposeful pedagogy, it is generally recognised that teaching has had to rise to the

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challenge of a world in which the pace, nature and contexts of learning have been radically transformed. Teachers entering the profession today may expect classrooms to be like the ones they attended but, although a teaching space may look surprisingly similar on the surface, the quality and dynamics of what happens there are not what they used to be.

The curriculum may have a reassuring familiarity, but its value is now measured less in intrinsic terms than as a proxy for a school's or a teacher's effectiveness. "Delivery" is the word in common usage, placing the teacher as intermediary between a body of required knowledge and pupil performance, but stripped of the creative and interpretive role that teachers could play given a degree of latitude, creative diversion and a genuine sense of ownership. The research evidence clearly suggests that pupils are increasingly de-motivated by such offerings (Pell *et al.*, 2007). The contemporary world is one in which young people are less and less inclined to be simply at the receiving end of a delivered curriculum. Yet, for governments, the solution seems to lie in greater containment, stricter testing regimes, and ever increasing pressure on teachers to "raise standards", leading to what is described as "intensification".

This is not a purely British phenomenon. It is familiar in North America, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Hong Kong and Japan. For example, Shimahara, (2002) characterises Japanese schools as experiencing "the troubled relationship between the children who are the main actors in the educational process and the system itself".

*"Intensification refers to the loss of autonomy, caused by prescribed programs, mandated curricula, step by step methods of instruction combined with pressure to respond to various innovations and diversification of students' academic and social needs." (Shimahara, 2002)*

In Japan intensification is seen as coming from within, as teachers adhere to the collectively defined ethos of teaching, accepting what is termed *shukumei*, an acceptance of your lot, a situation not to be challenged. Shimahara quotes a teacher:

*"In our work there is neither beginning nor end because it just continues. It would be best to complete everything at school but it is impossible. I have to bring my work home and spend one or two hours on it every day." (Shimahara, 2002)*

One finds a similar situation and attendant stoicism in Hong Kong schools where a powerful normative culture discourages teachers from departing from the mainstream of practice. In the English context too, in which teachers are more inclined to voice their discontent, there also exists a great deal of outspoken complaint about policy, pressure and de-

professionalisation yet at the same time a dutiful compliance to the inevitability of the situation (Galton and MacBeath, 2002, MacBeath and Galton, 2004).

Living with intensification often expresses itself simply in resentful resignation. As research studies show internationally, teachers are leaving the profession in unprecedented numbers. An Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Education (OECD) Policy Analysis (2001) warned of a 'meltdown scenario' caused by a growing teacher exodus from the profession, often following a short period in post. Ingersoll (2003) describes this as the 'revolving door syndrome'. Teaching is a profession that loses new recruits very early and schools are, he says, suffering from lack of autonomy and flexibility in addressing pedagogical issues creatively. There is a substantive body of evidence to suggest that compliance stifles creativity and initiative and that consensus can close down creative alternatives (Surowieki, 2004).

### **Workloads: It's the same the whole world over**

Intensification and exodus from the profession stems in large part from the additional workload. This appears to be a world-wide problem. In Canada, for example, the Canadian Teachers' Federation Workplace survey (2003) found that 60 per cent of teachers reported that their jobs were more stressful than two years previously, with increased workload cited as the cause of stress and a primary reason for leaving the profession. In New Zealand, 71 per cent of class teachers reported that workload affected the quality of their teaching and 66 per cent said they were unable to find the time to give professional help to colleagues (Ingvarson *et al.*, 2005).

The above accounts all tell a similar story. Workloads are rising and teachers feel under increasing pressure as a result of several factors. These include the various reform agendas, particularly the consequences of inclusion policies, increased accountability procedures, increased parental expectations and the decline in student behaviour. However, the stress appears not to be a direct consequence of increased hours of work but from frustration at not being able to accomplish required duties (particularly teaching) in a manner which leaves them satisfied 'with a good job done.' This is coupled with a sense that policy makers no longer trust their professional judgments. Reforms tend to be mandated rather than introduced, as in the past, through extended consultation and the use of extended trials (Galton and MacBeath, 2002, MacBeath and Galton, 2004).

### **Teaching in the English Context**

In 2001 PricewaterhouseCoopers was asked by the Department for Education and Skills to identify the main factors determining teachers' and head teachers' workloads and to develop a programme of practical

action to eliminate excessive workload (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2001). A key finding was that teachers and head teachers worked more intensive weeks than other comparable managers and professionals. Teachers without management responsibilities worked around 52 hours each week during term time, compared with around 45 hours for other U.K. managers and professionals. While the teachers surveyed regarded this workload as a reasonable commitment it was the *intensity* and unrelenting pressure of the teacher's working week, however, that emerged as the significant issue.

Following the publication of the PWC report (2001), the Labour Government began negotiations with the teacher unions and with local authority employers aimed at restructuring the teaching workforce. The process which has become known as *remodelling* aimed, according to Stevenson (2007), at "reconfiguring teachers' work and remuneration to create a new division of labour within the pedagogical process and thereby focus teachers' efforts on the core tasks of teaching and learning" Central to this process was the increased use of non-qualified staff to work alongside teachers in what were described as "various supporting roles".

### **Learning on the cheap?**

As part of a follow up to our earlier research (Galton and MacBeath, 2002, 2005, 2006), we revisited some of the schools to ascertain the effects of the new working arrangements. Conversations with teachers and teaching assistants (TAs) reveal that the Workforce Agreement has had some tangible benefits. Planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time has been highly welcomed in most schools and it has apparently brought a sea change in the culture of the school and the morale of staff. A half day "off" per week (often at home) was described as time for reflection, renewal and for planning, and was undertaken 'without resentment'. This liberation of teachers was nonetheless bought at a price. In part it has created extra pressures for senior managers but more significantly has extended the role of unqualified staff, many of whom are the first to admit to their lack of requisite expertise and the anxiety that a teaching job involves.

*"I am just thrown in to do a lesson and when it's over I often say to myself 'God, I'm rubbish' and feel totally inadequate stepping into someone else's shoes like that. Three days training didn't quite do it for me."* (HLTA, 10 years experience)

TAs and cover supervisors (often one and the same thing) typically receive in-school development courses on behaviour management but this is time consuming and a further cause of pressure on teaching staff, as some are clearly not suited to the role, compounded by a high rate of turnover among cover supervisors. "They get demoralised and leave", said one member of staff, lamenting a constant cycle of training, retraining and

support for new appointees. As a matter of necessity, cover supervisors are obliged to operate without adequate training or support, falling back on common sense and family experience.

While teachers would like to draw on TAs for the range of support promised, they often find that the TA has been fully occupied with a child with complex needs, “glued” so tightly, as one teacher put it, that she was unavailable to teaching staff.

*“At the beginning of the year we didn’t have enough TA hours at all. I’ve got a full time TA in my class because I have a very autistic child so she is one to one. She has to be glued to his side – so that in a way takes out the TA time that I could have had from her – doing little jobs for me.”* (Key Stage 1 teacher)

Weighing the balance between time ‘off’ and time with the class, some teachers felt that the loss of quality teaching was too high.

*“Sometimes it would be easier to teach rather than have PPA.”* (Key Stage 2 teacher, 28 years experience)

*“PPA time benefits me but it doesn’t benefit the children. When there are specialists like the Italian teacher or the drumming lesson, that’s OK but we leave ‘easy’ work for children to do when TAs are taking the class.”* (Key Stage 2 teacher, 8 years experience)

While some schools had created a career path for TAs, including appointment as special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs), with the possibility of attaining advanced level status in pastoral care, for many the combination of low pay, greater responsibility, high workloads and lack of advancement prospects added up to a lowering of morale and a search for more satisfying employment. While remodelling of the workforce appears therefore to have significantly altered the structures of schools, liberating teachers from many of the tasks which previously accompanied teaching, there is little evidence to suggest that approaches to pedagogy, discipline and inter-personal relationships have been remodelled as a consequence.

### **What will teachers be doing ten years from now?**

Writing in the Sunday newspaper, *The Observer*, Mary Riddle (2007) recounts an incident when Gordon Brown invited the then Education Secretary, Ruth Kelly, to hear his vision of education for the twenty-first century. In the course of the discussion he asked Ms Kelly, “What will teachers be doing ten years from now?” She is said to have replied, “They’ll be managing learning; not teaching.”

Whether this will be indeed be true in ten years is a matter for debate.

Predictions of a brave new world have been in the ether since the invention of school radio broadcasting; each new technological advance bringing with it the promise of liberating teachers from direct instruction. With each new technology there have been those who have prophesied a changing role for teachers whereby they become supervisors rather than instructors of pupils' learning.

While the rhetoric and official guidance has continued to place the role of teachers at centre stage, the introduction of PPA time and differential staffing roles now sees teachers, both by default and design, managing learning at a distance. It has been widely accepted that in some instances, (in practice it would appear to be the majority) teaching assistants, with a further short training period, are able to stand in front of a class and deliver sections of the curriculum. Most primary schools have chosen to

**There is little evidence to suggest that approaches to pedagogy, discipline and inter-personal relationships have been remodelled as a consequence.**

interpret this as referring to lessons other than numeracy or literacy, hence the prevailing practice of using afternoons for PPA time when, by tradition, these core subjects are rarely

timetabled. The different timetabling structures of secondary schools, however, means that there is not the same distinction between morning and afternoon sessions and unqualified staff can, and do, stand in for teachers who are ill, on PPA time or other forms of planned absence. In some instances, however, there is still a categorical refusal by head teachers to allow unqualified staff to stand in front of a whole class, although as some school leaders have told us, this is likely to be unsustainable in the future as costs of cover become prohibitive and as some unqualified staff demonstrate exceptional inter-personal skills and develop a high level of expertise in supporting pupils' learning.

Throughout the history of reform under the New Labour Government there has been a determined effort to link liberalisation of the curriculum, greater emphasis on creativity, higher order thinking and formative assessment with the need to extend the standards agenda. Teachers are encouraged to explore new ways of motivating pupils so as to halt the decline in the attitudes to key subjects such as science, mathematics and modern languages. At the same time they are told to maintain continuing pressure on those pupils who are not meeting the required targets at Key Stages 2 and 3. This despite the fact, as is clear from research evidence, strongly supported by the Primary Review's Community Soundings (2007), that most teachers attribute the lack of motivation among their pupils to the target driven regime.

In a recent survey of schools attempting to implement personalised

learning, (Sebba *et al.*, 2007) the most frequently mentioned strategies were incorporated within *The Learning to Learn and Assessment for Learning* framework (Black and Wiliam 1998; Black *et al.* 2003, James *et al.* 2006). Together with a greater emphasis on 'pupil voice' this suggests that rather than becoming a simple 'division of labour' into 'low' and 'high' order tasks, teaching will in the future become even more demanding at all levels. Crucial to the *Learning to Learn* approach is the need to support the pupils' initial attempts to become *metacognitively wise*, using supportive scaffolding that embraces teaching strategies more sophisticated in nature than the usual demonstration or 'guided discovery' (Galton, 2007). The same is true of *Assessment for Learning* if it is not to be mere tokenism with a range of techniques such as wait, time, no hands up, traffic lights (pupils to post a red signal when they need help and a green one when they don't) (Black *et al.*, 2003). Questioning which promotes learning is not a simple matter of applying a period of wait time but requiring what Alexander (2006) has termed "dialogic teaching", the engagement of young minds in a critical discourse of which their teachers are part, reflecting and inquiring together.

Alexander's experience suggests that, even after further training, teachers still find it a challenging task to improve their teaching skills to a point where they no longer resort to what Edwards and Mercer (1987) characterised as cued elicitations. Teaching in the immediate and longer term future will be characterised by more highly developed expertise nurtured by high quality continuing professional development. Alexander (2006) suggests that dilemma of how to achieve the perfect marriage between pedagogical form and content is central to questions of what and how to teach. He quotes: "*the bottom line for learning, what ultimately counts, is the extent to which instruction requires students to think, not just report someone else's thinking*" [author's own italics] (Nystrand, Gamoran, Kachur and Prendergast, 1997). According to these authors, the what of instruction, the content and subject matter, is critical to learning as well as the how of instruction – the question/answer sequences evidenced in face-to-face interaction. What then are the chances of even the most skilled of higher level teaching assistants (HLTAs) achieving this level of competence after only several post-school training sessions?

Both the approaches enshrined in *Learning to Learn* and *Assessment for Learning* suggest a reduction in the amount of initial planning and subsequent marking of written assessments. First, this is because planning has in some cases to be a joint activity between the teacher and the pupil and second, because in the process of becoming *metacognitively wise*, pupils have to be able to acquire what psychologists term "executive control"; that is they have to learn to spot their own errors rather than have them pointed out by a teacher in the form of written comments when s/he

marks the exercise books.

The more pupils assume control of their own learning the greater the pedagogic insight and skill it will require of the teachers. The more pupils become independent and inter-dependent learners, the greater the strategic resourcefulness it will imply for those who lead and shape their learning. The more there is a genuine sense of agency among learners the greater the need for an agential capacity on the part of teachers. While conventional teaching, such as rapid question and answer sessions, demonstrations and direct instruction, will still form part of a teacher's pedagogic repertoire (although a smaller and complementary part) it will rest on fine judgement as to when, where and how to intervene in the learning process and to what end.

Clearly, the above scenario does not fit easily with the 'division of labour' approach and the bartering of PPA time out in exchange for having your pupils taught or supervised by unqualified staff. The value of the teaching assistant lies in a form of partnership with the teacher both in the planning and teaching/learning process, coupled with a shared intelligence as to strategies which meet the diverse needs of students, needs arising spontaneously and unpredictably during the course of the lesson. That is the kind of support the teachers that we interviewed valued most.

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# We are the future of the teaching profession

**Abstract:** *In an edition of "Education Review" focusing on the future of the teaching profession, it is important to hear from those who will be the most involved in the future. Members of the Union's Young Teachers Advisory Committee were invited to contribute their views, which would draw on their experiences in the classroom so far, as well as looking ahead to the future. Submissions were received from a number of young teachers, both secondary and primary, working in various parts of the country. This provides a representative collection of the thoughts, concerns and ideas of those members of the profession who are in the early stages of teaching.*

## **Teachers**

The last ten years has seen an increase in the number of people joining the teaching profession, with an increase of approximately 35,000 teachers between 1997 and 2007. However, NUT young teachers were increasingly concerned about the rise in the number of people choosing to leave the profession, many of them within the first three to five years of entering the classroom.

Lisa Lowe pointed to Conservative Party findings (BBC, December 2007) which suggest:

*"more than 100,000 teachers had left the profession between 2000 and 2005. These figures are twice as large as those for the previous five-year period. Many education officials and MPs made comments and took educated/uneducated guesses as to some of the causes: a rise in bureaucracy in the classroom, a decline in discipline and an increase in Government micro-management were amongst them."*

Various suggestions were made as to the causes of teachers leaving the profession. Gerald Clark believed simply that:

*“excessive workload and a stifling of the passion that caused many of us to start in the first place has now caused us to wander away.”*

Lisa Lowe argued that financial pressures were another factor:

*“a teacher’s income [is] being cut year on year creating a problem with being able to afford housing and day-to-day living costs. This in turn agrees with the statistics that many of our past colleagues remain in the education sector but in an administrative capacity; the pay is in direct proportion, rather than inverse, to the workload.”*

The financial pressures that face newly qualified teachers in particular were also picked up by Nick Wigmore who suggested:

*“new teachers entering the profession should preferably have few family commitments, and an understanding partner with a good salary.”*

### **Workforce issues**

Increasing numbers of teaching assistants have been employed in schools in order to help reduce teacher workload and raise pupil achievement. The role of teaching assistants has seen some significant changes over recent years as they support individual pupils, small groups and even supervise whole classes. However, there were concerns from young teachers that a change in the role of teaching assistants had resulted in a loss of day-to-day classroom support to teachers and a blurring between the roles of teacher and teaching assistant.

Geraldine Redhead commented on working in the primary environment:

*“There seems to be no recognition. . . .that there is no-one to fill those extremely important roles that enable the primary classroom to operate effectively. This is a real problem for primary teachers and it seems as more paper work is piled on from one direction, from the other comes the jobs that should be done by someone else. In the primary classroom, teaching assistants appear to be the new ‘teachers’ and teachers are the new managers, with paperwork taking a prime position.”*

Nick Wigmore agreed that the introduction of larger numbers of teaching assistants had not been an entirely successful or supportive measure:

*“Our professionalism is being undermined and devalued by the introduction of unqualified and underpaid teaching assistants and learning managers – a change symptomatic of a Government committed to teaching and learning on the cheap.”*

### **Status of teachers**

Inevitably, the young teachers voiced opinions about the status of teaching, which was were not afforded equal status to other professions.

Lisa Lowe argued:

*“In times past, being a teacher was something to be proud of and you were respected and waged in line with the likes of medical practitioners and other professionals. Today, newly qualified teachers are paid less than the average graduate salary, yet they work on average many more hours each week.”*

Kendra Deacon was clear about respect and professionalism:

*“Teachers need to be treated with the respect they deserve. The Government needs to put money into the future of this country by believing that teachers know what is best for their pupils and funding it accordingly.”*

Nick Wigmore agreed that it was vital for the Government to prove its commitment to teachers:

*“If the Government truly valued teaching and learning, this would be reflected in their attitude towards teachers’ pay, towards the level of autonomy and professionalism afforded to teachers, and towards the conditions under which teachers work.”*

Lisa Lowe, however, was also optimistic about the future:

*“I believe we are at the beginning of an exciting new epoch in which there will be more scope for us to engage in shaping the future of our profession. We are beginning to witness, and hopefully there will be more of, active encouragement of development from the grass roots upwards. There will be a greater trust in the skills and professional judgements and knowledge of our colleagues. Good practice will be shared throughout; support will be given where needed and sharing good practice will become common practice. Reciprocity will grow and this will bleed into other partnerships and networks. Teachers will continue to show great commitment and self-discipline and will be infectiously enthusiastic for their work.”*

### **Work-life balance and workload**

Lisa Lowe suggested that an increase in workload has had implications for teachers’ quality of life:

*“Workload is a huge burden on teachers and although the recent workload agreement has come into force, it is still a fact that most secondary school teachers continue to work over 52 hours a week. This leads to an increase in stress levels and often a decline in mental health which is followed by time off for recovery; resulting in more cover lessons, and workload for colleagues.”*

Kendra Deacon echoed this concern:

*“Everyone deserves to have a job they enjoy and life outside of that job for themselves. If there is no life outside of teaching then what kind of message is that for the next generation? Our lesson plans and marking have taken up evenings and weekends. If workload remains the same or continues to rise then there will be many exhausted, uninspired teachers”.*

The workload on young teachers as they establish their teaching methods and routine was raised by Geraldine Redhead:

*“In my experience, work-life balance is non-existent for many new teachers and as I continue establishing myself I am finding myself with an increasing workload to ensure that progression and performance management targets are met.”*

### **The impact of targets and league tables**

A common concern for young teachers was the pressure schools and teachers faced to succeed in the league tables. It was felt that this not only affected local schools and communities, but also had consequences for a teacher's ability to provide pupils with a broad and balanced curriculum.

Some felt that a school's success in the league tables did not necessarily mean that it provided the best learning environment for every child. Gerald Clark argued this point:

*“...a school that tops the league tables is merely a school that has an intake that is very good at passing exams and a staff that is very good at enabling them to. It doesn't mean that it is the best school for the average child – for the average parent's child.”*

Gerald Clark also emphasised the targets and testing regime as being an integral and damaging part of teachers' lives:

*“In 2008 teachers face more challenges than they have ever faced before as a profession. We have to meet ever more stringent targets for pupil literacy and numeracy – and have to meet them under more strongly dictated terms. We are being judged on our own performance by many different criteria, not the least of which is how well our pupils are performing in the very tests that exist supposedly to*

*measure their literacy and numeracy, but also to rate our performances and our schools.”*

He suggested that the current method of Government-imposed policies needed to change:

*“Rather than the ‘top-down dictated-to’ approach, what education needs is a bottom-up approach. Forget excessive testing, forget all testing for a while if need be. Forget the incremental sub-levels that each child needs to show progress against in core subjects over a term, or half-term.”*

## **OFSTED**

Inevitably, OFSTED inspections featured in young teachers’ comments.

Gerald Clark felt that OFSTED inspections could have useful aspects for schools, but he also argued that a good inspection report was not a guarantee of a school’s ability to cater for all young people:

*“OFSTED are well set up to make good judgements on schools. Even under their new, more relaxed criteria, they spend an intensive three days in a school. They challenge the school’s own vision of who they are and where they’re at. They view some or most of the teaching and talk to many of the school’s responsibility holders about what they’re planning and how successful they’ve been.*

*“However, is this enough to see more than a snapshot of a school? Will it show that this is a school where your children would do fantastically well – if you sent them here; a school that does the very best it can day in and day out under very challenging circumstances?”*

## **Curriculum and pedagogy**

The competitive nature of league tables undermining the ability of schools to work together and share expertise was remarked upon by Lisa Lowe:

*“League tables weaken and undermine the profession as we would like it to be, inspiring rivalry and strain rather than raising the rate of shared good practice. Schools cannot be the best if they spend their time assisting those they are trying to beat in the league tables.”*

The emphasis on testing and passing exams was seen by young teachers as having a negative effect on their ability to be creative with the curriculum.

Gerald Clark commented on the de-skilling of teachers:

*“[I have] a very real fear that our young teachers of today are being de-skilled in the art of teaching. What is required in Year 6 to get all your students through maths,*

*English and science SATs with a Level 4 is not teaching in the old-fashioned sense of the word (of course it is not merely for the students' benefit, but for the teacher's and the schools)".*

He also referred to the academic/vocational divide and the early identification of children to follow a certain career route:

*"Surely we should be using the creative parts of the curriculum to capture the passion in our students. Sadly though, the new curriculum wants to split those areas of the curriculum too. It will create a further split between 'academic' and 'vocational' subjects and will ask children, and presumably their parents, to choose at the age of 14 which direction their lives will take them."*

Lisa Lowe argued that teachers were unable to use their professional judgement about learning and teaching because of Government targets:

*"The national literacy and numeracy strategies can be seen to diminish professional practices as they are insufficiently flexible in employing the pedagogy which teachers employ using their judgement and knowledge about individual students' learning needs. Throughout time some teachers have defied these changes, some have become depressed and disheartened and have tried to accommodate the changes, and others have simply lost their faith in the profession, given up and left."*

### **Pressures on children**

In February 2007, Unicef reported that of 21 industrialised countries, children in the UK were the lowest in terms of happiness and emotional well-being. This was later reinforced by Cambridge University's Primary

**Being a good parent is not innate. We need to make it acceptable that you can ask for help or learn more about how to bring up children.**

Review research reports, which found that children were suffering from 'deep anxiety' about modern life.

Members of the Young Teachers Advisory Committee

voiced their concern about the pressures facing young people in school, including the impact of testing and exams on children.

Gerald Clark argued that the pressure to perform well in league tables affected children as much as staff:

*"Children are not all very good at exams. Exams present stress and children are not all very good at coping with stress either."*

In addition to the pressure of achieving academic results, children face

increasing commercial pressures. Nick Wigmore stated:

*“Children in our schools...are increasingly subjected to unscrupulous marketing strategies which often reduce rather than enhance the well-being of the individual, be it fast food, alcohol or mobile phones. Equally the celebrity culture acts in direct opposition to the aspirations of educational values – add to this the crippling burden of debt suffered by those whose aspirations are to enter higher education, and one concludes that children today should feel little compulsion to achieve academic prowess.”*

### **Professional judgement**

One of the concerns raised by the members of the Young Teachers Advisory Committee was that teachers were not given ample opportunity to use their professional judgement in the classroom. As Kendra Deacon pointed out; those who have chosen to enter the teaching profession had undergone three or four years of training:

*“Teachers have entered the profession because they care for children’s education, wellbeing and future. We have had to think hard about why we want to teach and what our education philosophies are. We understand we have never finished learning or improving, but we hope that we have reached a good level of professionalism and we know how to evaluate our own performances and the children’s learning so that we can plan for future lessons.”*

Society’s demands on teachers are examined by Lisa Lowe:

*“Teachers are not free agents and have not had the choice of creating the profession as it is now nor creating that of the future. Our political and socio-economic environment can aid or restrain the kind of professional we seek to become and what our profession grows into. Previous skills and values have been extremely prescribed and the profession has been moulded not by us but by external agencies and developments. Recently, all areas of education have become more heavily prescribed owing to our fear of failing or being labelled as ‘satisfactory’ by inspection outcomes.”*

### **Teachers as learners**

The idea of “teachers as learners” was raised by a number of young teachers. It was strongly felt that those teachers who were themselves keen to learn would be better able to communicate ideas in the classroom.

Lisa Lowe, for example, suggested:

*“When looking at improving the shape of the future of teaching, we need to be individually and collectively focussed. We need to take risks, be brave and view*

*ourselves as not only teachers, but also as learners. In the future all teachers will be able to extend their knowledge and understanding through real continued professional development. This CPD would come about through partnerships between schools, further education colleges, local authorities and higher education institutions, providing further professional development such as integrated courses and MA qualifications. This knowledge can then be dispersed with positive implications for the colleagues' schools and regional partnerships. Teachers should be able to inspire each other, working co-operatively within schools as well as drawing expertise from outside agencies and organisations. Teaching and teacher training should respect contributions from all colleagues, with no favouritism for those in specific locations or with a longer service history."*

### **Qualities that teachers need**

Nick Wigmore suggested that there were specific qualities that teachers needed to possess in order to meet the challenges of the classroom:

*"New and young teachers entering the profession must have energy, commitment, patience, resilience, an ability to 'manage learning' rather than to teach, and the ability to sustain long and unsocial working hours."*

### **Parents**

Kendra Deacon felt it was important that parents and schools worked together to make a positive impact on a child's learning:

*"We need a Government which addresses family values and as a society we need to work together to acknowledge that bringing up children is a tough, but rewarding and very worthwhile job. Being a good parent is not innate. We need to make it acceptable that you can ask for help or learn more about how to bring up children. Parents need to work with teachers and not blame them for their child's difficulties."*

Gerald Clark felt that the Government's position on the role of parents was a confusing one:

*"The Government speaks of the importance of involving parents and communities in education as much as possible but doesn't seem to have a clear idea of what it means by this. Does it mean that parents should be running our schools? Then why expand the Academies programme, in which only the very richest of parents could consider such a thing? Does it mean that parents should understand their child's choices and support them as best they can to develop into the adults they want to be? What parent wouldn't want that anyway?"*

*"The only thing I recall the Government providing as an answer is parent choice. The right to choose which school their child attends, which school is the best equipped to help their child become the adult they want to be. But does the*

*Government give the parents an adequate tool to make that choice. In my opinion, no. Instead they give them OFSTED and they give them league tables.”*

### **Political framework**

The highly political nature of education policy which continues to be a key battleground between the Government and opposition parties had inevitable consequences for the young teachers. As active trade unionists, they were alert to the changing context of Government policy.

Nick Wigmore argued that the rapid and continuous changes in education policy placed pressure on teachers:

*“Teaching continues to go through changes at a pace that is demanding and at times bewildering. New Labour and the Conservative Party are battling over education policy, both promising a change from a culture of uniformity and rigidity, into one of creativity and pupil centred learning. Whatever the outcome of such politicising, changes to the curriculum, technology, and the role of the teacher will herald increasing expectations from Government, governing bodies, management, parents and pupils. Hence the future for teachers is a daunting one, in which a new form of pedagogy is expected to achieve in ever diverse fields of core and vocational subjects, as well as providing socially, environmentally, and economically aware pupils who all enjoy going to school!”*

He also referred to the increasing involvement of the private sector in education which was damaging local schools and communities and encouraging a class divide in education.

*“Perhaps the most worrying change we face in the future of teaching is the dismantling of the state education system into the hands of private sponsors. One of the alarming aspects about the establishment of Trust Schools and Academies is that there remains a great deal of misunderstanding about how they operate, even amongst teachers.*

*“Some will argue that spending on education is higher than it has ever been; yet much of this spending has been bankrolled through pay cuts, and through private financing which has the effect of removing the costs of new buildings and school refurbishment from the balance books. Such financing is hugely expensive to the public purse, but very profitable for the private sector.*

*“The corrupting influence of Academy and Trust Schools on local communities and on comprehensive education is certain; selection by faith, aptitude, or even economic background will create a two-tier education system. Pupils may be prevented from attending their local school. Many of the most deprived families will find that the choice agenda does not extend to them. If the Government truly believed that every child matters, then it would not be responsible for creating a system of choice which effectively excludes many of the*

*most needy and vulnerable children in society”.*

### **Involvement with the Union**

Geraldine Redhead was keen to emphasise the role of the NUT in campaigning for change in education and lobbying Government. She argued that it was vital that young teachers were involved in union activities stating:

*“It is a great concern of mine that many young teachers I come across do not understand the true value and purpose of the union body. They do not see that campaigns of the past have ensured and safe-guarded our present and they are naïve to the importance of standing up for our rights.”*

She acknowledged that the pressures placed on young teachers can make active union participation more difficult:

*“I have seen at first hand the demands and expectations that are put onto newly qualified teachers and those who are establishing themselves as teachers.”*

However, she is equally keen to warn young teachers that the profession:

*“will be very different if the Union is not upheld and it is refreshing to know that the Union has recognised the need to preserve and develop through the Young Teachers Advisory Committee. Let us hope that more young teachers will campaign to safeguard the many issues facing us not only now, but in the future.”*

### **The future**

Despite their many concerns, members of the Young Teachers Advisory Committee were positive about their future as teachers. Their commitment to teaching, their motivation to improving the life chances of their pupils and to make a difference to society nationally and globally shine through.

As Lisa Lowe said:

*“We are the future of the profession; those of us who are here now paying due care and attention and wanting to increase the achievement of all of our students and those who follow. We, who are at the brink of an exciting era in which knowledge is expanding at a staggeringly increasing rate; we teachers and our students, who now more than ever before can be connected nationally and globally, with the chance to communicate the profession worldwide.”*

## Members of the Young Teachers Advisory Committee

### *Gerald Clark*

Gerald Clark is Vice-Chair of the Young Teachers Advisory Committee. He has taught at Haverstock School in London for 8 years, primarily as a maths teacher, but is also involved in teaching Music Technology.

### *Kendra Deacon*

Kendra Deacon is in her fifth year as a primary school teacher in West Norfolk. She is an Assistant Division Secretary, a member of the National Executive and she is Chair of the Young Teachers Advisory Committee. She came to teaching after working two years with the Wildlife Trust.

### *Lisa Lowe*

Lisa Lowe is 26 years old and is in her third year of teaching mathematics at Filton High School, South Gloucestershire. She is currently researching for her MA Education dissertation on “The Retention of Young Teachers in the Teaching Profession”.

### *Geraldine Redhead*

Geraldine Redhead is in her third year of teaching and currently works at a small primary school in Cheshire teaching Year 1 and reception classes and co-ordinating three different areas of the curriculum.

### *Nick Wigmore*

Nick Wigmore has been teaching for seven years and currently teaches Year 4 at St Mary’s Church of England Primary School in Rochdale. Nick previously worked for the Royal Mail, where his interest in trade union activity began.

# Classroom dialogue and the teacher's professional role

## Neil Mercer

Neil Mercer is Professor of Education at the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education. He is a psychologist with a special interest in the role of language in the classroom.

***Abstract:** Neil Mercer explores the importance of classroom dialogue for children's development. He raises concerns about the lack of social interaction that some children experience at home and stresses the importance of providing all children with the opportunity to take part in good classroom discussion, the characteristics of which he explores. He discusses the outcomes of his classroom-based research projects, "Thinking Together" and advises teachers on how they might provide opportunities for reasoned discussion in their classroom.*

**W**hat life skills do you hope that the children you teach gain from their school experience? Of all the things you might include, one might be the ability to communicate effectively and work well with other people. Another might be the ability to become good at thinking independently and solving problems when working alone. Surprisingly, perhaps, some recent school-based research has shown that the development of both these kinds of ability is linked to one aspect of children's school experience – their involvement in classroom talk. To be more precise, research has shown that the quality of classroom dialogue can make an important contribution to the development of children's communication skills and their thinking skills, as well as to their attainment in school.

The reason for this connection is that there is a vital link between language use and cognitive development, whose psychological and educational significance has only become clear fairly recently. Language is

not only a means for communicating, it is also a tool for thinking: it provides a means for representing what we experience, to ourselves as well as others. We can use language to make problems explicit, consider them rationally and creatively, and devise some possible solutions. Through using language and hearing how others use it, children learn how language can be used to describe the world, to make sense of life's experience and to solve problems. Research suggests that they internalise the dialogues they have been involved in as models for their own thinking. As I will go on to explain, the development of this link between language and thinking is something that teachers should now see justifiably as a very important aspect of their professional role.

Research on the relationship between language, thinking and learning has involved investigators of various backgrounds, including neuroscientists, anthropologists, linguists and psychologists as well as educational researchers. And while this research has highlighted the importance of involvement in dialogue for children's learning and development, it has also revealed that many children have little opportunity, out of school, to learn some potentially valuable 'ways with words'. This can have a significant effect on their attainment in school. The good news is that schools can help children become better at using language for thinking and learning, through giving them the opportunity to get involved in some good discussions. So how would you recognise a 'good discussion' in a classroom if you heard it? In professional development sessions with teachers, I have often asked this question. People's responses are usually quite similar. Here, for example, is a set of characteristics of a good discussion which were generated by a group of primary teachers:

- all group members are participating and people keep on topic;
- everyone has a chance to speak and is encouraged to do so;
- people share all the relevant information they have;
- people show that they are open to new ideas;
- if something is not clear, people ask a question;
- the talk and body language show that participants respect and value other people's opinions and feelings...
- ...but people challenge what they hear if they believe they have a good reason to do so;
- speakers explain their ideas clearly and give reasons for their views;
- when people disagree, the best reasons (not the loudest voices!) are used to decide the outcome.

If you record children working together in small groups in school, as I have often done, you will sometimes capture conversations which have many of these characteristics. All the children participate; they pick up

each other's ideas and consider them critically. They may disagree, but if so they resolve their differences through further discussion. They provide reasons for their views. The group seems to achieve more than the sum of the individual contributions, and the opportunities for participants to learn and to practise effective ways of communicating are quite apparent. The children are 'thinking together'. But – as my own research and that of many others has shown – in most classrooms, those kinds of discussions are extremely rare. Most of the time, classroom recordings capture discussions in which children don't listen to each other, in which one person dominates the proceedings, in which they argue unproductively, or in which participants seem happy to go along with whatever anyone says without any reflection or debate.

So there is an apparent paradox: teachers are able to specify what constitutes a good discussion, but such discussions occur very rarely in most classrooms. Why should this be so? One likely reason is that, as teachers, we assume that most students know how to talk and work together and so rarely give them explicit guidance or training. We rely on children's existing social experience to provide them with the resources for using language to think together. But if that experience has not included much reasoned discussion, they may not understand its value, or know how to make it happen.

### **How can we improve the quality of classroom talk?**

Over the last 15 or so years, along with Rupert Wegerif, Lyn Dawes, Karen Littleton and several other colleagues, I have been involved in a series of classroom-based research projects in which we have worked closely with teachers. In these investigations we have combined a scientific interest in language and thinking with a search for an effective, practical approach to helping teachers ensure that, in their classrooms, talk is being used to develop children's speaking, listening and thinking skills. We have studied what happens if children are given explicit guidance by their teachers on using talk for solving problems and engaging in other kinds of intellectual activity. We then have observed what effects this has, not only on how well they talk and work together, but also on the development of individual children's thinking skills and academic attainment.

Early in the research, my colleagues and I designed a programme of lessons for increasing the incidence of good discussions. These *Thinking Together* lessons consisted of a carefully-planned combination of teacher-led, whole-class activity and work in small groups. Working first with Key Stage 2 teachers, we planned each lesson to begin with an introductory plenary session in which the teacher set out explicitly aims for the lesson which related both to the subject topics being studied and to the aim of achieving productive discussion. The middle part of the lesson consisted of

children working together in threes on specially-designed group activities; and each lesson ended with a whole-class plenary in which the teacher and children reviewed what they had learned and considered how successful their discussion activities had been. The teachers involved in our research then followed the complete series of lessons with their classes.

We called the kind of talk we wanted to encourage children to use in their discussions “exploratory talk”. Teachers were expected to model exploratory talk in whole-class sessions, for example by asking “why?” questions, giving reasons for their views, and encouraging children to give reasons to support their own opinions and suggestions. They also established with their classes a set of ground rules for making exploratory talk happen during joint activity. In this way, in the first five lessons of the programme (related to the speaking and listening/literacy strand of the curriculum), the teachers helped develop their students’ awareness of how they could use talk to get things done. We wanted the children to then use the ground rules whenever they did any group-based work (not just, say, during the literacy hour), and so, for the later lessons, activities were designed which were related to the Key Stage 2 curriculum for maths, science and other subjects.

## **Children are given explicit guidance by their teachers on using talk for solving problems and engaging in other kinds of intellectual activity.**

Using video-cameras, we observed children during their group activities as the *Thinking Together* lessons progressed, to see if the quality of their talk changed. We compared the talk of children who followed the *Thinking Together* programme with that of children of the same age in other, similar schools where teaching and learning carried on as normal. We also gave the children in our project schools and those in the comparison schools tests of reasoning, maths and science before the *Thinking Together* lessons began. All the Key Stage 2 children involved were tested again, after our project schools had been carrying out *Thinking Together* activities for at least 12 weeks, to see if there were differences emerging between the two sets of children (those who had done the *Thinking Together* programme and those who had not).

### **What have been the outcomes?**

We have now carried out this kind of research with classes at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 3 as well as Key Stage 2. Overall, our research has shown that it is indeed possible to encourage much more exploratory talk. The children who followed the programme also became better at solving problems together than the children in the other schools. What is more, tests showed

that on average the individual children in the project classes made significantly larger gains on tests of reasoning, science and maths than the children in the comparison schools. That is, our results supported the view that language use has an important influence on individual learning and development – and for the first time we showed clearly how teachers can direct this influence. We now have some tried-and-tested ways that teachers can help children learn to communicate and reason more effectively.

For an example of the exploratory talk that our teachers successfully encouraged, look at the example below. It comes from a recording of three Year 5 children from one of the project schools, who were working together on a science investigation about the effectiveness of different materials for blocking out light. At the point it begins, they are predicting how many sheets of tissue paper will block out a light source.

- Ross OK. (*reads*) Talk together about a plan to test all the different types of paper?
- Alana Dijek, how much did you think it would be for tissue paper?
- Dijek At least ten because tissue paper is thin. Tissue paper can wear out and you can see through, other people in the way, and light can shine in it.
- Alana OK. Thanks.
- Alana (*to Ross*) Why do you think it?
- Ross Because I tested it before!
- Alana No, Ross, what did you think? How much did you think? Tissue paper. How much tissue paper did you think it would be to block out the light?
- Ross At first I thought it would be five, but second -
- Alana Why did you think that?
- Ross Because when it was in the overhead projector you could see a little bit of it, but not all of it, so I thought it would be like, five to block out the light.
- Alana That's a good reason. I thought, I thought it would be between five and seven because, I thought it would be between five and seven because normally when you're at home if you lay it on top, with one sheet you can see through but if you lay on about five or six pieces on top you can't see through. So that's why I was thinking about five or six.

This is not perfect exploratory talk – but we can see that the children ask each other for information and opinions, they seek reasons and provide them, they share their thoughts, and they evaluate the proposals that are made. All members of the group are involved. And their science

investigation was, in the end, a success.

### **What are the implications for teachers?**

Opportunities for engaging in focused, equitable, reasoned discussion may be rare for many children, and so then are their opportunities for developing important communication and thinking skills that help their educational progress and which are also valuable for life in the wider world. Teachers can provide such opportunities, and they can do so in three main ways. First, teachers (and not just those teaching English) can take an active role in guiding their pupils' understanding of how talk can be used for learning and thinking collectively. They can model exploratory talk, engage children in extended discussions of topics, and encourage them to see that responding to a teacher's question need not simply mean providing the 'right answer'. Plenary sessions can be used to help children reflect on their activities and consolidate their learning about using language for thinking and learning. Secondly, teachers can establish an appropriate set of ground rules for talk in class, on the basis of their exploration of what makes a 'good discussion' with their students. And third, group activities can be designed to allow children to practice their developing talk skills in the pursuit of their own learning. These should be collaborative activities which require children not only to interact, but to "interthink". In these ways, we can enable children to become more effective communicators and thinkers and to get more benefit from their time in school.

For more information, see: Mercer, N. and Littleton, K. (2007) *Dialogue and the development of children's thinking: a sociocultural approach*. London: Routledge.

Information, activities and video examples are also available at: [www.thinkingtogether.org.uk](http://www.thinkingtogether.org.uk), or email [nmm33@cam.ac.uk](mailto:nmm33@cam.ac.uk)

# Never a better time to be a teacher

## Keith Bartley

Keith Bartley is a former teacher and Her Majesty's Inspector. He was appointed Chief Executive of the General Teaching Council for England in 2007.

**Abstract:** *Keith Bartley celebrates the increase and variety of resources in schools, including new styles of CPD such as mentoring and coaching. He discusses the various 'route maps' introduced by the Government, but raises concerns that increased testing and the introduction of league tables have not stopped the widening achievement gap between the social classes and that this has resulted in conflict between trying to achieve higher standards and children's well-being. He stresses the importance of the General Teaching Council for teachers and discusses the development of the GTC Teacher Learning Academy, which will offer a system for recognising and celebrating teacher learning and development. He comments on the CPD needs of overseas trained teachers and supply teachers and considers the introduction of 'active' registration, which would reflect teachers' continuing commitment to updating their own professional practice.*

**W**ith the recent publication of the Government's ten year Children's Plan and the plans for the school workforce, it is worth pausing to reflect on the resources, route maps and, more importantly, the values on which we will rely as we pursue our aspirations to help children and young people achieve ever higher learning goals.

## Resources

Our resources are many and impressive. We have a profession of over 500,000 qualified teachers, and we are working with a growing band of teaching assistants and colleagues from many disciplines across the

children's workforce. There has never been a better time to be a teacher. We are working in new and refurbished buildings, with better ICT and resources than we have ever had before. The workforce has grown substantially and the quality of our new teacher colleagues is impressive. They are well trained and motivated and, increasingly, come into schools with other professional experience and life skills under their belt. They expect to be life long learners and they expect their employers to develop, nurture and stretch them.

For longer standing members of the teaching profession, there is also a new mood in the air. We are at last close to having a real entitlement for teachers to continuing professional development (CPD), something that has been much heralded in the past, but never fully delivered. The GTC's regular surveys of the teaching profession show a steady improvement in access to CPD over the last four years. This should improve significantly as the new performance management framework beds in.

More significantly, there has been a sea change in the types of CPD that teachers are experiencing. Mentoring and coaching have become firmly established. Peer observation is seen as a source of help rather than correction. Networks, both formal and informal, enable schools and teachers to share what they are learning about effective practice and to reinforce and consolidate that learning.

### **Route maps**

The public services are not short of route maps, cunningly disguised as national strategies, initiatives, policies and planning guidance. The trick is to select a map for the direction you actually want to travel in, and stick to it, absorbing or ignoring all the other helpful hints and way finders en route. This is not an incitement to ignore national policies or legislation, but to apply your own judgement and, where possible, to set your own pace. The Children Act, 2004, and the ten year Children's Plan (DCSF, 2007), are two route maps which appear destined to endure. The Children Act is a bold and radical new approach to services for children and young people. Starting with the needs and priorities young people themselves identified, its aim is to build services around young people, rather than the other way round. It asks professionals to work together and to look at the needs of the child in the round.

So far, so good; this chimes with the values that brought teachers into teaching in the first place. But many schools and teachers expressed concern at the apparent tension between attending to the child's well-being and pursuing high standards of achievement. I have never accepted that the two are in tension, but the pressures inherent in high stakes testing and league tables have made them appear to be in potential conflict. The Children's Plan is, among other things, the Government's attempt to

reconcile these two imperatives – to square the circle.

As a result, it attempts to intervene in every dimension of children's lives, almost it seems from the moment of conception. Many of the measures, such as an additional 20,000 nursery places for disadvantaged children, are designed to overcome the overwhelming influence of parental income, occupation and class on children's life chances and to narrow the widening gap in educational achievement between the social classes.

It is a baffling conundrum that schooling seems to widen rather than narrow social inequality. However you cut or recast the figures, the statistics are stark and challenge us all. The achievement gap between rich and poor widens as the child passes through school. Attainment often dips at the start of secondary school. This implies either that the child's learning level, as measured at the end of Year 6, was not secure, or that learning gains are lost on secondary transfer, or both. Either way, precious time is lost and those most at risk of disaffection from school and from learning fare worst.

Part of the Government's response may be derided as rhetoric and wishful thinking. It talks about creating a world class education system at the very moment when international comparative studies – the Progress in International Reading Literacy Strategy (Mullis, I.V.S., Martin, M.O.,

Kennedy, A.M. and Foy, P., 2007) and the Programme for International Student Assessment (2007) – suggest that England is slipping down the international rankings in reading and science. Some of it seems punitive at first sight. Government says it intends to work with the GTC to remove

incompetent teachers from the classroom. Of course it is in no one's interest for incompetence and poor performance to go unchallenged and uncorrected, but for many teachers, this type of language revives uncomfortable memories of the former Chief Inspector of Schools' regular salvos against inadequate teachers or more recent suggestions that there could be many thousands of incompetent teachers working in our schools.

I do not believe that this is the case. No one can deliver 'the perfect lesson' and no one can maintain an exemplary level of performance every single day. But to extrapolate from that and imply that there is widespread incompetence is quite simply a travesty. Early support and intervention, and the full deployment of constructive performance management, should enable many more teachers to succeed and thrive.

Only a tiny minority of teachers will ever appear before a GTC disciplinary hearing. Most of the cases relate to professional conduct, rather than incompetence. But, if I could pull out one simple lesson from

**Continued professional learning ... must be at the centre of teaching's professional values, since learning is our shared endeavour.**

our competence hearings, it is this – teachers must be willing to seek and accept help. This single piece of advice, if followed, would obviate the need for capability procedures and for referrals to the GTC in many if not the majority of cases.

### **Professional values**

There is an important underlying principle at stake that relates to our shared understanding of what it means to be a teaching professional.

For many teachers, the way they express their professional values and commitment is personal and local. It derives from their commitment to improve the life chances of their pupils by helping them to achieve and to enjoy learning. These teachers support their own school as the linchpin of the local community. But those personal, self constructed values have a wider resonance and significance as part of the Code of Professional Conduct and Practice that governs, or should govern, teaching. Currently, we have a Code of Professional Conduct (GTC, 2007) and a Statement of Professional Values and Practice (GTC, 2006). Over the next year, we will be consulting teachers and our partners on a new version of the Code of Professional Conduct and Practice to see how best we can capture our shared values in a single vision.

For me, one essential element of any professional code is a responsibility to seek opportunities for continuing professional learning. It must be a hallmark of any profession, whether medicine, law, engineering or teaching. Perhaps above all, it must be at the centre of teaching's professional values, since learning is our shared endeavour.

At the GTC, we are working to give practical expression to this commitment by lobbying for better access to CPD, by disseminating the evidence on what makes effective CPD and by developing the GTC Teacher Learning Academy as the first national system for recognising and celebrating teacher learning and development.

The Teacher Learning Academy has already attracted 7,000 teachers and we have trained TLA leaders in more than 500 schools. Over the next 18 months to September 2009, we are working with our partners to develop the TLA into an open system for teacher learning which the whole education community can share, own and develop together. The NUT has been an important, supportive and active partner from the outset, and as the system develops we will build on our current tally of 45 national partners, to embrace ever greater numbers of schools as well as higher education institutions, subject associations and others.

Over the next few years, the General Teaching Council for England will be working to invest new substance and meaning in the concept of being a registered, qualified teacher. I want teachers to feel it is important to be registered and to be part of an independent, but publicly accountable

professional body. I want Government, parents and employers to see teaching in a new light, according a new respect to the contribution that teachers make to change, development and success in our society.

I hope that by adding value to teachers' professional lives right across the span of our remit to raise standards, teachers will increasingly see their professional and regulatory body as an important aide to the profession.

Already, 60,000 teachers are part of our professional networks. Through these and through the work of our policy groups on pupil learning and on accountability, I want to see the GTC providing teachers with greater opportunities to influence education policy. The voice of the practising classroom teacher needs to be at the heart of professional debate and development.

Over the next 18 months, it is likely, subject to final Government consultations, that trainee and overseas trained teachers will be required to provisionally register with the GTC. That provides an ideal opportunity

to welcome entrants to the profession at an early stage, as the teacher associations have always done, and strengthen their confidence that they have

## **I want to see the GTC providing teachers with greater opportunities to influence education policy.**

made the right choice of profession. Other changes in registration also need to be debated. Arguably, it would make more sense for 'full' registration to be conferred when a teacher successfully completes the induction period, as this is the point at which they should be meeting the core standards for professional competence embodied in the new professional standards framework.

The concept is not mere administrative 'tidying up'. It signals that the standards of practice against which teachers are to be judged at school level marry up with those applied by the GTC in the rare cases where a teacher's professional competence is so seriously in doubt that a GTC hearing is required. Thus the bar for professional practice is raised, demonstrating to Government, opinion formers and the wider public that the teaching profession is on a path of continual improvement.

I would also like to see the development of much clearer, supportive requirements for teachers returning to practice after a substantial career break, to demonstrate that they meet the core standards required of their peers. Currently, return to teaching courses are patchy and voluntary. Supply teachers struggle to gain access to CPD and the advent of the performance management framework could continue to exclude them. Therefore, they too need supportive structures that enable them to maintain and develop their practice. All these ideas sit within an emerging debate about 'active' registration through which teachers demonstrate, primarily through the performance management framework, that they are

continually refreshing their practice and actively demonstrating their fitness to be registered teachers.

We will be actively engaging with the NUT and with NUT members as we work on these ideas for teaching in 2012. I look forward to hearing your views – please send them to [chiefexec@gtce.org.uk](mailto:chiefexec@gtce.org.uk)

A final note – as we move forward over the next four years, I believe strongly that teachers' professional judgement and professional self-confidence are key to improving standards and closing the achievement gap. The GTC appeared recently before the House of Commons Select Committee Inquiry into assessment and testing (2008). I argued that schools need permission to innovate and even, sometimes, to try things that 'fail'. That's true for pupils and it's true for teachers too.

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# A Masters level profession

**Abstract:** *The Government's proposals for Masters Degrees for teachers is analysed by John Bangs. He argues that the situation for teachers in England cannot be compared with the situation in Finland, where the Masters Degree is part of an educational vision which includes the quality and status of the teaching profession. He refers to positive initiatives in this country such as the Union Learning Fund, as well as those which should be developed further like teacher exchanges, scholarships and sabbaticals for teachers to undertake their own research. The NUT's work in this area shows that coaching, mentoring and "buddying" schemes are the most effective. For the Masters Degree to be successful, the Government needs to show its trust in teachers and make it an optional entitlement with funding rather than a time-limited bureaucratic requirement.*

**N**o organisation has highlighted more consistently the vital lessons to be learned from the Finnish education system than the National Union of Teachers. Finland has a system which focuses, above all else, on the quality and status of its teachers. The Finnish Government does not roll out initiative after initiative. Rather, it provides the conditions for achieving high quality education. The fact that all Finnish teachers are required to have Masters Degrees is part and parcel of this approach.

Finland's pre-eminence at the top of the international league tables has meant that policy-makers from other countries have beaten their way to its door, eager to cherry-pick success.

One such cherry appears in the recently published Children's Plan (2007). The Plan proposes: "a Masters level profession with a Masters level qualification building on recent performance management measures."

While the Children's Plan has a number of positive ideas, including its central contention that schools are at the centre of their communities,

## John Bangs

John Bangs is Assistant Secretary – Education and Equal Opportunities of the National Union of Teachers.

there are just five paragraphs on the future for teachers.

The one thing the Children's Plan does not do, therefore, is inspire with a vision for the teaching profession for the twenty first century; a vision which Finland most certainly has and one adopted by Scotland more than seven years ago.

These are not conditions for encouraging teachers to take on a new qualification, to put it mildly. Simply telling teachers that they are expected to acquire a Masters Degree within a three to five year period could be greeted with hostility by a profession already over-burdened with requirements and initiatives.

Such a situation is entirely avoidable.

### **Government trusting teachers**

Firstly, surely it is time, after nearly 11 years of a Government with education as its top priority for a strategy for the future of the teaching profession to be developed?

If the Masters degree is an idea whose time has come then it has to be about enhancing teachers' professional self-confidence, autonomy and expertise. In short, it should be about the Government demonstrating that it trusts teachers.

The potential for creating the conditions for an autonomous teaching profession are already there. The Union Learning Fund (ULF) has been a tremendous success. The professional development programmes of teacher organisations such as the NUT's have demonstrated that it is entirely feasible for unions to offer national communities of learning for teachers. Indeed, the ULF represents a template for the future funding of learning communities by teacher organisations themselves.

Teachers do not have a sense that their own innovations in pedagogy are valued or fed into a continuously evolving bank of national practice. Another idea, therefore, which could be adopted is the development of a teacher-owned pedagogic bank.

The enormous learning potential for teachers through teacher exchanges, sabbaticals and scholarships, both at home and abroad, needs also to be tapped. The Government could make available, through Voluntary Service Overseas and the British Council, a range of opportunities for experienced teachers to work in developing countries for a year. A scholarship programme could include the allocation of scholarships for professional development overseas.

Secondly, any idea that the new 'M' level can be introduced by using the classic, centralised roll-out delivery model, should be dropped. The 'M' level should be genuinely optional and genuinely an entitlement for all teachers. It should be seen as one part of a range of professional development provision tailored to teachers' needs.

The Government needs, therefore, to work with teachers to establish a model for the qualification which creates the conditions for teacher ownership. To gain acceptance, it should be developed in partnership with the teaching profession and its representatives.

Teachers' entitlement to CPD needs practical substance. Every teacher should receive annually a personal professional development grant whose allocation is not constrained by a single prescribed model. All teachers should be entitled to regular sabbaticals to conduct research into effective classroom practice. After all, it is 37 years since the James Report on teachers' professional development proposed that all teachers should be entitled to a termly sabbatical, once every seven years, to conduct their own research.

### Research as an incentive

Thirdly, it needs to be understood that CPD can only be effective if its relevance and purpose is owned and understood. All the evidence from the NUT's own research scholarships, including the late lamented Best Practice Research Scholarships, is that research-based inquiry into classroom practice not only contributes positively to the body of knowledge about pedagogy, but that teachers taking part in it see it as a powerful incentive to remain in teaching.

The NUT's own 'Learning Circles' partnership with Cambridge University has been tremendously successful. In the 'Learning Circles', teachers have established their own inquiries which are mentored by university tutors. Cambridge, alongside other universities, have established elective modules which offer 60 credits. Those credits also stand in their own

**Simply telling teachers that they are expected to acquire a Masters Degree within a three to five year period could be greeted with hostility.**

right as accredited qualifications.

Setting a time limit on achieving the 'M' level not only appears to undermine the potential for flexibility in accredited learning, but it also raises a big question mark over whether the time and space for the new qualification can be integrated without bringing excessive workload into teachers' daily lives. The GTCE's Teacher Learning Academy accreditation rate is a better model since accreditation is not predicated on the achievement of all TLA levels. Therefore the 'M' level has to replace, not be in addition to, the unnecessary work teachers are expected to do.

If the 'M' level is to be rooted in teaching and learning, then it should not come laden with criteria which have to be met before teachers receive the 'M' level grants. The last thing teachers need is a new qualification so hedged around with boxes which have to be ticked against every

Government priority that the potential for innovation is closed down and the qualification gets suffocated in external bureaucracy.

The development of a new qualification has to involve all stakeholders. It cannot be confined solely to organisations which define themselves as Government social partners. Neither should opportunities for funded professional development be focused solely on teachers in their first five years of teaching. The evidence is that it is teachers in the later stages of their careers who are discriminated against in terms of the professional development opportunities available to them.

### **Working together works**

Peer coaching is vital to learning and can be a stepping stone to taking on the role of expert CPD tutors. Such a role is different to that of mentoring which is about enabling teachers to interrogate their own future learning needs. The recently published Government document, 'Being the Best for Our Children' fails to make the distinction between mentoring, tutoring and collaborative learning.

The NUT's experience from the BPRS scholarships is that 'buddying,' with two or more teachers working together on an investigation, can really boost learning. Separate from that, teacher learning can benefit from external input particularly from university tutors. The role of external tutors should not be just to assess progress, as 'Being the Best for Our Children' proposes, but to provide input, perspective, research knowledge, and experience.

These are just some ideas which could underpin support from teachers. The potential is there but there are also dangers. Of course, there are many teachers who are already taking Masters Degrees voluntarily. Teachers in their first five years of teaching will hardly welcome any additional expectations if they look more like requirements than entitlements. Indeed, unless the conditions are in place to create a genuine entitlement for all teachers, they will feel that the new 'M' level is just another damn thing and treat it accordingly.

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# Primary education: who's in control?

**Abstract:** *Dominic Wyse considers the effects of increasing Government control of the curriculum from 1988 onwards on the primary sector. He argues that the statutory assessment system has resulted in a narrowed curriculum with less opportunity to focus on foundation subjects and has lessened schools' ability to provide quality teaching and learning. He calls for a critical review of the outcomes of state control and continual change on the primary curriculum and assessment system in terms of value for money, comparison with other countries and impact on teachers and pupils, which would also use research evidence as a vital component.*

## Dominic Wyse

Dominic Wyse is a lecturer in Primary and Early Years Education in the University of Cambridge's Faculty of Education. He has acted as a research consultant to the Primary Review and wrote an analysis of literacy policy following the Rose report on the teaching of literacy.

**P**rior to 1988 the state in England had little formal control over the curriculum, hence the well known description of the primary classroom as 'a secret garden'. While it is true that primary teachers and schools had a great deal of autonomy over the curriculum and its teaching, this was not completely without external influences. Local authorities were influential in shaping the kinds of curricula that schools delivered through their contact with schools and through in-service training, HMI had influence through the inspection process and through their publications, and initial teacher education had influence during teacher training and as part of in-service training. Following Prime Minister James Callaghan's Ruskin College speech, pressure was intensified for Government to assume more control through the establishment of a national curriculum. In due course the Education Reform Act 1988 (ERA) gave statutory power over the curriculum to the Secretary of State for Education. The proposals for a national curriculum and associated testing system were controversial as an analysis of the consultation responses showed (Haviland, 1988).

1997 marked another shift in the nature of state control. Whereas the ERA had limited its control of the curriculum to programmes of study, attainment targets and statutory testing, the introduction of the national literacy and numeracy strategies specified in great detail the content of the

curriculum and its sequence in a series of 'objectives'. Teaching methods were specified to the extent that a lesson was prescribed as one hour, and that the hour should be divided into timed segments which broadly represented introduction, main activities and 'plenary'. A frequent observation made about the national strategies was that they were non-statutory. Technically of course this is accurate. However, words such as 'compliance' and 'fidelity' were frequently used at the time. Also, the role of the inspectorate had changed, with the result that the inspection process was becoming more punitive. Strong expectations were expressed that schools, and teacher education departments should be following the prescriptions of the national strategies. Local authorities which previously had 'advisory teachers' now had 'consultants' whose main role was to ensure that teachers showed fidelity to the strategies. Finally, in 2006 Sir Jim Rose produced his report which recommended that synthetic phonics should be the method of the teaching of reading (Department for Education and Skills, 2006). This resulted in another first for Government: control over the method of teaching. The recommendations of the Rose Report were acted upon very quickly and with considerable force. One aspect of this was to ensure that the curriculum for the youngest children, as represented in all documentation, followed the recommendations. So, in September 2008, the Early Years Foundation Stage will move from its status as 'guidance' to become a statutory curriculum for the first time.

### **Evaluating state control of the curriculum**

For the period from 1988 to the present we are now able to draw on a range of evidence in order to evaluate the success of this unprecedented period of state control of the primary curriculum and its teaching. The implications of the reduction of teacher and pupil autonomy over the curriculum are clearly seen in research. Galton *et al.*'s two studies (Galton, 1980 and Galton, Hargreaves, Comber, Wall and Pell, 1999a) were carried out before and after the introduction of the National Curriculum and so provide a longitudinal dimension to the picture of changing state control. They observed that, after the introduction of the National Curriculum, open or speculative questions were still rare in teacher-pupil interaction and that the programmes of study of the National Curriculum were too onerous, resulting in teachers reducing the amount of pupil participation in order to 'get through' the curriculum (Galton *et al.*, 1999b). Webb and Vulliamy's work also has a longitudinal dimension as it features a direct comparison of the period after the introduction of the National Curriculum with the period after the introduction of the national strategies in 1997 (Webb, 1993; Webb and Vulliamy, 2006). They noted that the impact of increased prescription which was part of the national strategies:

*“challenged the one remaining area of teacher expertise not previously subject to government prescription and further undermined teacher competence and confidence. Notwithstanding the strong resentment of such government imposition still felt by many teachers, they expressed approval of aspects of the NLS and over half ‘strongly liked’ the NNS” (Webb and Vulliamy, 2006)*

Other studies from the period also identified the issues of control and ownership of the curriculum as significant. Although the Primary Assessment Curriculum and Experience (PACE) research found that at first the National Curriculum may have had a positive impact on curriculum coherence and teacher professionalism as teachers collaborated to plan implementation, at the same time many teachers felt alienated from their work as they struggled to comprehend central prescription and implement curriculum content with which they might not agree. They also reported significant curriculum overload and work overload. In the later stages of the PACE research, a picture was drawn of a “pressurised classroom context” (Osborn *et al.*, 2000), which was more intense than hitherto and highly teacher controlled, with little scope for pedagogic flexibility and little pupil autonomy.

## **Testing**

One of the most controversial areas of evidence in relation to the success or otherwise of the primary curriculum is the statutory testing system. Its implementation from 1988 onwards was immediately problematic as teachers boycotted the tests due to excessive workload. As a teacher of a mixed year 1 and year 2 class for the first three years of the tests, I still remember well the difficulties that these caused, in particular the dramatic change of role from teacher to formal assessor which was difficult for children to comprehend. The testing system has consistently attracted controversy, particularly its high stakes nature fuelled by the publication of league tables of schools.

In recent years opposition to the tests has grown resulting in an increasing divergence between the views of politicians and other sections of society about the tests. This has been most marked when comparing the views of politicians with more objective evaluations of the implications of the test results. At a political level the rise in test scores is regarded unproblematically as evidence that standards of primary education have shown consistent and dramatic rises. But a number of researchers have questioned this (cf Torrance, 2003; Tymms, 2004; Tymms and Merrell, 2007; Meadows *et al.*, 2007; Wyse, McCreery and Torrance, 2008). There seems to be growing consensus academically that the explanation for modest gains up to 2000, followed by a plateau of tests results can be explained by the idea that teachers were initially unprepared for national testing, learnt

very quickly how to coach for the tests, hence results improved, but any benefit to be squeezed from the system by such coaching has long since been exhausted. Research suggests that coaching for the tests has restricted curriculum coverage and the quality of teaching and learning overall, and that as test scores have risen, educational standards, broadly conceived, may actually have declined over the period addressed in this article.

### **Subject variations**

One of the interesting features of the post 1997 period is how the different subjects have fared. There has been a relentless focus on literacy and numeracy which has resulted in less of a focus on the foundation subjects in particular. With regard to the core subjects (a questionable distinction itself, see Alexander, 2004) science is an interesting case in that there is some evidence that science teaching and learning has fared rather better than maths and English, despite not having a national strategy devoted to it. The numeracy strategy has generally been regarded as more successful than the literacy strategy (Earl, Watson, Levin, Leithwood, Fullan, Torrance, Jantzi, Mascall, and Volante, 2003; Webb and Vulliamy, 2006). Arguably this

## **Consultation should be just that, with great care taken to encourage a high level of response followed by rigorous analysis, and action fairly based on the outcomes of the consultation responses.**

is because right from the start there was a less partisan approach to the subject, and more equitable involvement of educationists in the ideas underpinning it. The numeracy strategy addressed most aspects of the National Curriculum but the literacy strategy did not, as speaking and listening were omitted. Another difference between maths and literacy included the more appropriate emphasis of the elements of the numeracy lesson compared to the literacy hour. It is difficult to see a rational reason for the differences between the prescribed teaching of core subjects.

There are already some signs that these historical differences between the pedagogy of maths and English are set to continue. For example, the recent interim report for the review of mathematics says: "The review believes that it is not possible to define a single 'most effective' approach, and instead, focuses on the essential aspects which, taken together, constitute best practice." (p. 62) This is in sharp contrast to the Rose Report on the teaching of early reading which said: "Having considered a wide range of evidence, the review has concluded that the case for systematic phonic work is overwhelming and much strengthened by a synthetic approach." (Rose, 2006: 20). This tension will need to be resolved

by the Government's review of primary education. It would be untenable to have a report on the primary curriculum which offered contradictory ideas about a single method versus a number of methods. In my view, the maths conclusion concerning effective teaching approaches is the one which more accurately reflects research on primary pedagogy and could usefully, although belatedly, be applied to the teaching of reading, and the wider curriculum.

The intensive emphasis on the core subjects since 1997 has been at the expense of an intellectually rigorous vision of the primary curriculum as a whole. One aspect of the National Curriculum that needs rethinking is the move to teaching subjects as part of a core/foundation divide. The idea that primary teachers should be subject experts in ten subjects and more, as the increasing subject specific demands seem to be leading towards, is neither tenable, nor necessary. The priority should be more on the whole teacher and the whole curriculum. Much more needs to be made of the links between subjects, for example through the teaching of skills, and consequently less of the content of particular subjects. Primary teachers teach the whole curriculum, and this needs to be unified by a coherent approach that appropriately links the teaching of different areas, however these are expressed as part of national curricula.

### **A genuine review**

There is a need for politicians to review, on the basis of evidence, whether the level of state control of primary education has been, and will be, an efficient use of state funds. We need to move away from the idea that there is no alternative to the kind of top-down approach that has been a feature of education in England since 1988 and look to other countries for inspiration for devolved curricula. These countries exist on our doorstep but are also spread throughout the developing and developed world.

The number of initiatives and the pace of change needs to be subject to critical review. More time needs to be taken in the development phases for curriculum reform (although the signs are not too promising in relation to the latest review of the primary curriculum). A genuine sense of inquiry needs to underpin curriculum development. Teachers should continue to be strongly involved but so should educational researchers whose work includes scholarship in relation to the curriculum. Consultation should be just that, with great care taken to encourage a high level of response followed by rigorous analysis, and action fairly based on the outcomes of the consultation responses.

Empowerment is an overused word but there is an urgent need for pupils, teachers, and educational researchers to have greater control over their curriculum. One aspect of this could be the concept of a 50/50 curriculum. Part of the curriculum could reflect the state's democratically

informed view, but the other half could be controlled genuinely by pupils, teachers and schools. A small example of this might be the encouragement for teachers to use their personal areas of expertise to motivate and excite pupils to learn in a new area. For pupils this could mean that with each new primary teacher who taught them a unique area of knowledge and understanding would engage them. However, it will be important to be mindful of Secretary of State Kenneth Baker's speech to the House of Commons in 1988, in view of the subsequent problems with an overloaded curriculum:

*"We do not intend to lay down, either on the fact of the Bill or in any secondary legislation, the percentage of time to be spent on the different subjects. This will provide an essential flexibility, but it is our belief that it will be difficult, if not impossible, for any school to provide the national curriculum in less than 70 per cent of the time available ... The national curriculum will provide scope for imaginative approaches developed by our teachers."* (Haviland, 1988)

But perhaps the most pressing need is for changes to the statutory assessment system. There is robust evidence of the negative effects of the testing system in England. The change to a system based on sampling is one very promising future possibility (and one that was successfully used in England by the Assessment of Performance Unit (APU) in the 1980s). However, in spite of many optimistic signs that re-thinking is taking place, it is difficult to see how politicians will dismantle the current system given that its tendrils are so comprehensively entwined in the work of teachers and pupils. We must hope that the Government's latest review of the primary curriculum really does examine these issues, and in so doing draws on the wealth of scholarly evidence that is available.

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Ad

# Treating the teacher as a professional

## Pauline Perry

Baroness Pauline Perry is a member of the House of Lords. Appointed to HM Inspectorate of Schools in 1970, she was promoted to Chief Inspector of Schools in 1981. She co-chaired David Cameron's Policy Group on Public Services Improvement in 2007.

**Abstract:** *Baroness Perry argues that the status and motivation of the teaching profession has been damaged by media images and the Government's introduction of league tables, targets and a culture of naming and shaming. She expresses concern that unless change occurs, the profession will stop attracting teachers who excel. She discusses the Public Services Improvement Policy Group report, "Restoring Pride in our Public Services", which suggests ways in which the status and motivation of the profession can be improved. This includes proposals for a four-stage accountability model, appointment of a Chief Education and Skills Officer and establishment of a Royal College of Teaching. Baroness Perry argues that the merger of the General Teaching Council, Teacher Development Agency and National College for School Leadership would further raise morale and standards in the teaching profession.*

**T**he great eighteenth century writer, Alexander Pope, asks that we "let such teach others who themselves excel" (Pope, A., 1711). I can think of no better prescription for the members of our profession than those words. Leaders of the profession, and ministers in Government, could use these words as a guide for the people we seek, and so often find, as the teachers of the future.

What makes a teacher? It is someone who loves learning, as well as loving the task of awakening curiosity and understanding in those who learn; someone with infinite patience with those who find learning difficult; someone who feels an adrenaline rush when encountering the rare moment when a truly gifted learner leaps ahead beyond the teacher's

own understanding. All this makes teaching a rewarding experience. Education and training are essential, but they must build on the individual's passion for the task and for the subjects they will teach.

These seem to be the permanent truths of teaching, and I hope fervently that the future of the teaching profession will not change them. Technology and school organisation have of course changed many aspects of the teacher's job over the past century, but once the classroom door is closed, it is what I call the "magic spark" of interaction between teacher and pupil which is the heart of teaching quality – and that should never change.

As one of Her Majesty's Inspectors, on a daily basis I was privileged to sit in on classes where the professional exercised her or his skills, and where the young responded, as they do, with varying degrees of enthusiasm to what was offered. I saw many examples of truly inspired teaching. The excitement which a teacher can generate for the subject matter of the lesson, and for the experience of learning, is a joy to behold. Some of those moments will stay with the young throughout their lives. They may even determine their career choices, and guide their future behaviour in citizenship, parenting and friendship.

## **My vision for the future is of a profession in which the first guarantee of excellence is the teacher's own accountability to her or his professional standards, values and ethics.**

Isaac Asimov said that the great moments of scientific discovery come not when someone shouts "Eureka!" but when someone says reflectively, "that's funny". Instilling in children that curiosity, that reflection on experience, the need to discover "why?" is the most important task in the world. Without it, we would have no invention, no innovation, no entrepreneurship, indeed no advances in civilisation. The human race depends on the "that's funny" reflections of the curious and clever to take it forward. Curiosity can also provide protection. Back in history, Troy might never have fallen if some Trojan had been around to say "that's funny" when the horse was wheeled into their city. We depend on the alert curiosity of our intelligence forces today to question the unusual or odd and investigate in time to prevent disaster. For me, the chance to foster that curiosity is why teaching is the most important and most rewarding job to which anyone could aspire, a job for those who themselves excel.

### **The status of the profession**

For the future of the profession, then, we require not only those who have a passion to teach, but those who genuinely "excel". It is interesting to

reflect that the most successful educational achievement in the advanced world is in Finland. Teachers there are not better paid than in other European countries, but entrance to training for the profession is so competitive that only the highest achievers, and those with the best personal attributes, are selected. Despite the relentless criticism of teachers from British politicians and the media, we do still manage to attract some of our brightest and best into the profession. How much easier it would be to achieve the competitive position of Finland if politicians would start to say positive things about teachers, and get the message through to the media about the true nature of the work they do. Too many high achievers are put off teaching by the image presented in the press, and by the culture of targets, inspection, naming and shaming, which has done little to raise standards, and much to demotivate the profession and its potential future members.

In our Conservative Party report, *Restoring Pride in our Public Services* (2007), we have suggested ways in which the profession's pride and status and motivation might in the future be slowly improved, and through this

## **The self-monitoring of performance against the values cherished by the professional is the surest guarantee of high quality.**

the attainment of pupils better guaranteed. First and foremost, we have talked about a future in which Government forms a 'New Partnership with the Profession'. By this, we mean

that professional teachers, head teachers, teacher educators and researchers should have a real voice in the policy-making about education. We want to see teachers at the heart of Government, contributing their knowledge and experience to decisions about what targets are realistic; what measures of accountability are demanding enough and appropriate enough to ensure they truly raise standards in the long-term; what should be the required core of the National Curriculum and what can and should be left open to allow teachers freedom to follow the curiosity and excitement of their pupils.

The way in which this could be accomplished is, we suggest, through the appointment of a Chief Education and Skills Officer (CESO) on the model of the Chief Medical Officer or the Chief Scientific Officer. The CESO would have a professional team inside the Department of Children, Schools and Families, able to advise ministers with a non-political voice which is also respected by the profession, and able to act as a bridge between Government and the profession. Government has long accepted that it needs a professional to advise in health or scientific matters. How strange it is that they cannot see how vital it is to have a similar relationship for education.

## Teacher accountability

We accept, as does the profession, that there must be accountability, but we suggest a new model of accountability. Instead of Government taking all accountability to itself, there would be different levels of accountability. My vision for the future is of a profession in which every individual accepts responsibility for his or her own performance, and in which the most important and first guarantee of excellence is the teacher's own accountability to her or his professional standards, values and ethics. Our Commission's report says:

*"absorbed and internalised through the best of initial training, and reinforced by professional experience and the collegiality of the staffroom, the teacher recognises his or her responsibility to pupils, parents and the community, and polices his or her own behaviour and professional performance."*

This self-monitoring of performance against the values cherished by the professional is the surest guarantee of high quality, since it is always present even when no-one else is present.

The second level would be the professional colleagues in the team with whom the teacher is in regular contact. We ask for a future in which teaching is a truly 'grown up' profession, which recognises that covering up known incompetence is unprofessional and damaging to the children in their care. Although we do not endorse the climate of "whistle-blowing", we feel strongly that a team of professionals should be ready to take whatever action is necessary to deal with a failure of professional standards in a colleague unable or unwilling to take action themselves. The action could well be early retirement, for example, for a colleague tired and unwell, or a course of up-dating and refreshment for one whose initial education and training was no longer adequate for the role they were being asked to fill.

If these two essential layers should fail – and we would very much hope that this would be a rare phenomenon in the newly revitalised teaching force of the future – then the head teacher and management in the school would have to step in. Their role is to maintain the overall educational standards in the school, and taking action in time, before children's education is damaged, must be their responsibility. It is to be hoped that they would always encourage stages one or two by the professional team to be taken before rushing in to assert their authority, as too intrusive an intervention would diminish the responsibility of the teacher and his colleagues. Nevertheless, it cannot be too often stated that standards of teaching and learning are the prime responsibility of the head teacher, before even finances and buildings. The bureaucracy of Government and the oppressive judgements of OFSTED have tended too often to distract

management from the core business of the school: pupils' learning success.

Where there is true failure within the school by the professionals, only then should governors, who are responsible for the educational character of the opted-out school, or the local authority, who commission the community school's provision of education, step in. They are the fourth level of accountability, and indeed they are accountable in law for the standards of the schools in their charge. In the future, I would hope for a strong governing body, with a trained and senior Chair, who would both accept their responsibility fully, while respecting absolutely the difference between governance and management, and allowing the independence of professional judgement where appropriate, and where the profession was delivering the standards agreed.

It is my firm belief that only in the very rare cases where all these levels of accountability have failed, should OFSTED or Government be involved. Once the appropriate mechanisms and ethos for professional and local accountability have been established, Government should step back and

## **An important step in the future would be to assert the excellence of the profession through the creation of a Royal College of Teaching."**

allow those to whom it has delegated authority to act.

My experience and conviction tells me that teachers who are treated with suspicion and an absence of trust will find it

difficult to respond with the professionalism which is their gift to their pupils. In our report we state our belief that "treated as professionals, teachers will be professional in their judgement and outlook".

### **Royal College of Teaching**

An important step in the future would be to assert the excellence of the profession through the creation of a Royal College of Teaching, like the Royal Colleges in the medical profession. This would provide a structure of prestige and expertise for the most senior ranks of the profession still in practice. There should be no assumption that members of the Royal College would be withdrawn from the classroom. Their qualification would, like the consultant and surgeon in medicine, be based on excellence and learning in practice, marking in the public mind the status of teaching as a practical activity.

It goes without saying that although the General Teaching Council was created with the best of intentions, these have not been realised. Our report proposes merging the GTC with the Teacher Development Agency and the National College of School Leadership, to create a body of, by, and for the profession. This organisation would have overall responsibility for initial training, the licence to practice, continuing professional development, and any necessary disciplinary action.

The creation of this organisation, along with the Royal College of Teaching, would command the respect of both teachers and the general public, and would, I believe, help to ensure that the teachers of the future enjoyed a status equal in the public perception to that of, for example, doctors or lawyers. Most importantly, it would begin to attract the best graduates into the profession, and raise morale and standards of all teachers.

We are fortunate as a nation to enjoy a teaching force with high standards of training and a level of commitment to their task and to the children and young people in their care which parallels or surpasses the professional commitment of the teachers of any other advanced country, and which is every bit as worthy of the trust of the political and national community as the professions of medicine, law, or the clergy. A future in which this was recognised, and the ensuing trust offered to every teacher, is the hope which I espouse.

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# What have we have learned from TLRP?

## Mary James

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## Andrew Pollard

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**Abstract:** *Mary James and Andrew Pollard present the findings of the TLRP, the UK's largest programme of educational research. They argue that a debate on the aims of education is important and that current testing and assessments as indicators of learning and teaching progress ignore the fact that students should be prepared for life beyond the examination hall. The programme has identified ten key principles which should be employed to ensure effective teaching and learning, which James and Pollard discuss in detail in the article.*

In his evidence to the Children, Schools and Families Select Committee on 17 December 2007, Dr Ken Boston, the Chief Executive of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority in England, expressed optimism about the future. He said:

*"There seems to be a willingness across Government, the teaching profession and the broader public to engage in genuine discussion about the future of testing and assessment and to come out of the trenches to some extent. There seems also to be a real recognition of the importance of three things – personalised learning, formative assessment, and professional development for teachers – which are the essential keys to raising performance standards..."* (House of Commons; Children, Schools and Families Committee, 2008)

Ken Boston's choice of personalised learning, formative assessment and professional development may be indicative of an important shift in the attention of policymakers – from an obsession with school structures and organisation to an interest in the processes and relationships that

characterise teaching and learning activity. If this represents a genuine shift in public debate, it is to be welcomed. In a Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP) Commentary written in response to the Schools White Paper (now the Education and Inspections Act 2006), we wrote,

*“No amount of organisational reform, such as the creation of different categories of schools or within-school setting and streaming, will obviate the need for serious and sustained attention to the nature and quality of relationships and teaching and learning processes. A key, we believe, is support for imaginative new forms of professional development for all those who work in schools, based on evidence-informed educational principles.” (2006)*

Since 2002 we have been involved in co-ordinating the largest programme of educational research on teaching and learning that the UK has ever seen. Involving around 700 plus researchers in some 90 project and thematic investments spread over about ten years, the Economic and Social Research Council’s Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP) has investigated ways to improve outcomes for learners at all ages and stages in all sectors and contexts of education and training. Research on teaching and learning processes and the implications for teachers’ professional learning have been at the heart of this.

Twenty TLRP projects, and two ‘associate’ projects funded directly by the then DfES, have focused particularly on work in schools. Early in 2008 all of these will have completed their investigations and be reporting their results. Many finished earlier and, by early 2006, the TLRP Directors’ Team was beginning to look across the projects to see if there were any general insights emerging about effective pedagogy. This posed two prior questions: What does ‘effectiveness’ mean? What does ‘pedagogy’ mean?

## **Effectiveness**

We resisted the idea that effectiveness should be reduced solely to measures of the extent to which performance targets have been met. Existing tests and examination results are important indicators of attainment in relation to aspects of the school curriculum. And they can be useful predictors of future outcomes. But TLRP has taken the view that teaching and learning should aspire to prepare students for life beyond the examination hall. In looking across the work of projects, we detected a range of educational aims being pursued. Attainments as measured by national tests and qualifications were by no means ignored but there was interest in other ‘outcomes’, such as engagement, participation, learning how to learn, thinking skills and the development of learning identities. This range offered possibilities for a mutually productive synergy among

educational aims linked to economic productivity, to the promotion of social cohesion and inclusion, and to personal development, fulfilment and expression. In a developed society all of these are important.

In the last 20 years this fundamental discussion about educational aims has been somewhat lost in the headlong rush to meet targets defined by tests, with the unfortunate consequence that the tests have often come to define the aims. Valuable progress has been made on many of the issues that the Education Reform Act 1988, and subsequent legislation, was designed to address, and this needs to be recognised. However, as progress, as measured by tests on a limited curriculum, seems to have stalled, it is now an appropriate time to open up the debate again. Few professionals will want to turn back the clock but there is now a distinct need to move on to broader horizons whilst continuing to work on those existing concerns that need further attention.

### **Pedagogy**

So, what has 'pedagogy' to do with this? In recent years the word has been shunned, either because it is regarded as jargon or because, literally speaking, it only refers to the learning of children and not adults. However, this is changing and politicians as well as education professionals are becoming more comfortable with the term applied to learning and teaching at all ages. This is important because what 'pedagogy' does is recognise the fundamental interactions between teaching and learning in formal settings. They are not separate processes but are contingent upon each other: learning follows teaching, and teaching follows learning. In 1981, Brian Simon explained what he saw effective pedagogy to mean:

*"To develop effective pedagogy means starting from what children have in common as members of the human species; to establish the general principles of teaching and, in the light of these, to determine what modifications of practice are necessary to meet specific individual needs."* (Simon, 1981)

At a time when so much is claimed for the power of 'personalised learning', Simon's starting point with what learners share in common is crucial, lest we come to believe that everyone is so different that we cannot make any general assumptions about effective practice. But more than this, the concept of 'pedagogy' recognises that there are some basic and fundamental understandings (or principles) about learning and teaching that can be 'known', and that this knowledge base can provide teachers with practical ideas that they can apply, test, adapt and develop according to the demands of the contexts in which they work. In so doing, teachers create new knowledge of 'principles in practice' and potentially contribute to the practical knowledge base themselves. This demands that teachers

reflect in, and on, action, and critique and share their understandings. It offers them opportunities for an enhanced professionalism that can be far more rewarding, for all concerned, than simply ‘delivering’ under-theorised prescribed practices.

### Ten principles

The position of TLRP is that a great deal is known about effective pedagogy, both in the UK and internationally, but the synthesis, communication, implementation and embedding of such knowledge is far weaker than it should be. This was one of the reasons why, in attempting to draw together some of the key findings of schools’ projects, we chose to present them in the form of ten principles for effective teaching and learning. We published them first in a Commentary then refined them in a Guide for teachers (2007). Using these vehicles we invited practitioners and policymakers to consider how a limited number of key principles, derived from well-founded research evidence and scholarship, might engage professionals and support them in making contextualised judgements, whilst, at the same time, progressively generating understanding and a language for use in a renewed public debate about the why, what and how of future education policy.

The first of TLRP’s 10 principles relates to the educational values and purposes discussed above:

*“Learning should aim to help people to develop the intellectual, personal and social resources that will enable them to participate as active citizens and workers and to flourish as individuals in a diverse and changing society. This implies a broad view of learning outcomes and that equity and social justice are taken seriously.”*

Although this was drawn from evidence of the range of purposes pursued explicitly or implicitly by TLRP projects, it also drew on theoretical deliberations carried out by across-programme thematic groups: for example, work conducted in association with the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain. (Bridges, 2008)

The other nine principles cluster under three headings:

1. Curriculum, pedagogy and assessment;
2. Personal and social processes; and
3. Teachers and policies.

### Curriculum, pedagogy and assessment

Principle 2 drew particularly on projects with a close focus on learning within specific school subjects. (Nunes, Byrant, and Hurry, 2004; Millar, Leach, Osborne, and Ratcliffe, 2003; Howe, Nunes, Byrant, 2005) These demonstrated that carefully designed teaching sequences, incorporating

diagnostic questioning, based on the best evidence of how pupils learn certain concepts or skills, can enhance performance. However, these projects also raised fundamental questions about what it is that children should be learning, i.e. about the nature of the curriculum. TLRP concluded from this that:

*“Teaching and learning should engage with the big ideas, facts, processes, language and narratives of subjects so that learners understand what constitutes quality and standards in particular disciplines.”*

Principles 3 and 4 are strongly linked and have theoretical and empirical underpinnings, derived from Piaget, Vygotsky, Bruner and others:

*“Teaching should take account of what learners already know in order to plan their next steps. This means building on prior learning as well as taking account of the personal and cultural experiences of different groups.*

*“Teachers should provide activities which support learners as they move forward, not just intellectually, but also socially and emotionally, so that once these supports are removed, the learning is secure.”*

The importance of taking account of prior learning, in cognitive terms, has been shown to be important in teaching subjects such as mathematics and science where early misconceptions create serious barriers to new learning and need to be tackled. TLRP projects in these subjects made this a particular focus, although the insight applies to all school subjects to some extent and in different ways. But there are possibilities as well as challenges associated with the influence of prior learning. A number of TLRP projects, especially those working with young children and/or investigating computer use (Hughes, Pollard, Claxton, Johnson and Winter, 2004), found benefits in teachers making more deliberate and positive use of the informal knowledge and understanding that children and young people acquire in their homes and local communities.

TLRP research projects on the use of computers and other ICTs in classrooms (Plowman and Stephen, 2006; Sutherland, Robertson, and John, 2004; Bevan, 2006; Kennewell, Thomas, Thorpe, Beauchamp, Tanner, Jones and Norman, 2007) helped to clarify the nature of teaching and learning as purposeful ‘tool mediated activity’. In other words, encounters between teachers and learners involve the use of tools such as textbooks, computers and other materials, and signs and symbols such as language and grading systems. Thus the relationship is triangular with interactions involving teacher, learner and tools. Such tools, including language tools, are crucial in scaffolding learning but need to be chosen and used appropriately. As

the saying ‘rubbish in; rubbish out’ implies, tools such as interactive whiteboards are not intrinsically valuable. Their worth depends on how they are used. As TLRP projects found, the usefulness of new technologies was associated with the ways in which they were incorporated into the flow of learning activity and classroom dialogue.

Ken Boston’s comments, quoted above, were made during a House of Commons inquiry into assessment and testing, two decades after the introduction of the national assessment system in England. The system is now creaking at the seams. In a sense it has become obese and, as Ken Boston noted, is expected to serve at least 14 different assessment purposes. The importance he attached to formative assessment indicates the recognised value of assessment to support and improve learning – not just to measure it. This resonates with TLRP’s fifth Principle:

*“Assessment should help to advance learning as well as to determine whether learning has taken place. It should be designed and carried out so that it measures learning outcomes in a dependable way and also provides feedback for future learning.”*

In this regard, TLRP projects (Kennewell, 2006) and a thematic seminar series (Daugherty, Black, Ecclestone, James and Newton, 2007) identified validity problems with conventional, short, externally marked tests which tend to focus on factual recall and therefore narrow the scope of the performance being assessed. For example, tests in science often overestimate students’ understanding of key concepts because such things can rarely be measured by a single question. Complex learning outcomes almost always require observation over time and across different contexts. This is an argument for considering ways of enhancing the role of teachers in assessment, albeit with due regard to their professional development needs if their judgements are to instil confidence.

### **Personal and social processes**

TLRP Principles 6, 7 and 8 shift the focus from external conditions, contexts and systems to the nature of learning itself. They recognise that learning has both personal and social aspects and involves the development of knowledge, dispositions, and practices – it has cognitive, affective and behavioural dimensions:

*“A chief goal of teaching should be the promotion of learners’ independence and autonomy. This involves acquiring a repertoire of learning strategies and practices, developing a positive attitude towards learning, and confidence in oneself as a good learner.*

*“Learning is a social activity. Learners should be encouraged to work with*

*others, to share ideas and to build knowledge together. Consulting learners and giving them a voice is both an expectation and a right.*

*“Informal learning, such as learning out of school, should be recognised as being at least as significant as formal learning and should be valued and used appropriately in formal education.”*

Learning understood in this way holds many challenges for teachers. For example, one TLRP project (James, McCormick and Marshall, 2005) found that, whilst teachers want to promote learning autonomy in their pupils, they find it difficult because of constraints. Those who were most successful were those who took responsibility for what happened in their classrooms – they were not inclined to blame pupils or the Government for what went wrong – and they adopted an enquiry approach to their own learning, individually and in collaboration with others.

Similarly, projects focusing on the promotion of group work (Christie, Topping, Livingstone and Howe, 2004; Blatchford, Glaton, and Kutnick,

2004) showed benefits in terms of significant academic gains, which were seen across schools in different social contexts. However, this required teachers to make deliberate efforts to improve the

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quality of group work and children’s mastery of cooperation and collaboration.

A TLRP project on pupil consultation also found evidence of enhanced self esteem, agency and improved learning opportunities. However, some pupils had more ‘communications competence’ or were ‘heard’ more than others, which indicates that teachers need to be especially alert to social class, language and gender differences.

Likewise, at least two TLRP projects (Hughes, Pollard, Claxton, Johnson and Winter, 2004; Sutherland, Robertson and John, 2004) found that young people draw on school experience, and develop it at home, and bring home experience into school, and that such knowledge exchange can impact positively on outcomes. But, again, this impact is mediated by social class, gender and other factors so needs to be handled with sensitivity to avoid negative consequences.

All of these findings about learning have profound consequences for teachers and teaching and the policies of agencies that support and regulate the work of schools.

## Teachers and policies

The remaining two TLRP Principles, 9 and 10, are concerned with the implications of the others for teachers' own learning and for policy frameworks:

*“The importance of teachers learning continuously in order to develop their knowledge and skill, and adapt and develop their roles, especially through classroom inquiry, should be recognised and supported.*

*“Policies at national, local and institutional levels need to recognise the fundamental importance of teaching and learning. They should be designed to make sure everyone has access to learning environments in which they can thrive.”*

## Teachers' professional development

Without exception, all TLRP projects had a great deal to say about teachers' professional development because, even with access to new programmes and technologies, improvements in pupils' learning and achievement depend on teachers' learning. Teachers need opportunities to develop their own knowledge, beliefs and values, alongside their practices. A strong message from the evidence is that simply being told what to do, mindlessly, will not secure sustained change. It might serve in the short term for short term gains, but practices become ritualised and ineffective if they are not underpinned by the beliefs and understanding that will enable teachers to adapt practices, or create new ones, as contexts change.

Targeted professional development and teaching materials, developed from research evidence 'translated' into practical advice, are valued. But TLRP evidence also suggests that a crucial strategy is for schools to support and make space for teachers' critical enquiry into practice in classrooms. Ideally this should involve teachers working with colleagues. These may be from within their own school or department, although visits from teachers in other schools can be invaluable for questioning assumptions. This is challenging, of course, and teachers' levels of commitment and resilience are important. Schools with traditions of distributed leadership, staff participation, cultures of inquiry and professional networks support such change best. TLRP projects observed that when senior management supports innovation it becomes sustainable. However, head teachers also revealed their concerns about leading learning in their schools within the context of prescriptive Government policy. There was sometimes a perception that progress was being made despite Government policy rather than because of it.

All of these principles have implications for the future of the teaching profession and particularly the way teachers construe their roles and the kind of professional development needed to support change. Few people would deny a role for teachers in imparting knowledge, explaining ideas,

and coaching skills, but if effective pedagogy is also about finding out where pupils are in their learning, diagnosing strengths and weaknesses based on best evidence of commonalities, differences and trajectories in learning, scaffolding new learning, modelling and encouraging learning dispositions, fostering dialogue, collaboration and peer and self-evaluation, and so on, then the programme for professional development is potentially very large. It certainly cannot be encompassed in initial teacher education, but requires a coherent spiral curriculum from initial teaching education, through induction and CPD to leadership training. Opportunities for Masters Degree level courses may be a start in this direction but the content as well as the structures needs to be thought through.

Professional development at all levels also needs to be rebalanced so that training in techniques is put alongside the development of beliefs about learning, derived both from empirical evidence and more

## **Teachers need opportunities to develop their own knowledge, beliefs and values, alongside their practices.**

philosophical and ethical deliberation. Doing 'what works' is only as valuable as what it works for! Such critical enquiry needs to take

place in the school, as well as outside of it, so that the key focus can be pedagogic practice in classrooms. But, in so far as it is difficult for individual teachers to stand apart from their familiar practice, opportunities for collaboration are crucial – to challenge assumptions, to co-construct explanations and solutions, to create new knowledge of effective practice in particular circumstances.

But this has major implications for school leadership and policy too. If teachers are to learn together in these ways it will take time and money. Leaders will need to (re)define their own roles as leaders of learning and view one of their main tasks as supporting the professional development of all their staff. One important activity will be to find out about (audit) the expertise within the school, and support the networking both within the school and across schools that will enable this expertise to be shared and further developed. TLRP evidence (James, McCormick and Marshall, 2005) suggests that this does not have to be too costly. It may need only a little bit of money to give teachers time to visit, meet, hear, observe, discuss, create or share, but this would reap benefits in terms of teachers' commitment, skills and ideas, and pupils' experience and outcomes.

TLRP welcomes the renewed focus of educational debate on the key processes of teaching and learning, whilst recognising that innovations in pedagogy have implications beyond the classroom especially for teachers' professionalism, school leadership and policy frameworks. Guided by our principal aim to work 'to improve outcomes for learners of all ages', TLRP

schools' projects have investigated the learning of teachers and organisations as well as the learning of pupils. As Brian Simon stressed, learning in many contexts has commonalities; the learning of teachers shares much with the learning of their students. All require a sense of purpose, a developed capacity for reflection and strategic thinking informed by evidence, motivation and a sense of their own agency to bring about improvements in outcomes. No one denies the need for intelligent accountability but the time has come for teachers to reject passivity in the face of constraints and to accept their responsibility, ability and power to make a crucial difference.

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# Book reviews

## SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES – WORKING TOGETHER TO TRANSFORM CHILDREN’S LIVES

John West-Burnham, Maggie Farrar and George Otero  
*Continuum 2007 £24.99 ISBN13: 978-18553-9233-5*

You know what it is like when you read something that you think has often been verbalised, but which you have never seen written down in one place? Well this book validates everything I think and do as a leader of an inclusive community school. Perhaps I was the wrong person to review it – because I am so committed to the principles and values that come through in every page. I loved this book and really wished I had written it myself!

We are told this book is designed to support a shift from schooling within a single institution to education across a locality, of which a school is one necessary, but not exclusive, component. The book argues for a change of focus on the strategies that are being used at present to maximise the achievement of every child. The long term emphasis on school improvement has, the authors acknowledge, been very successful but they question the sustainability of this improvement. They assert that school improvement is running out of energy as results at a national level are “plateauing” and it remains the case that social factors are disproportionately significant in their impact on children’s academic achievement.

The authors make the point that schools learn at three inter-dependent levels – the classroom, the school and the community. They conclude that schools that only learn from within are “doomed to stagnate”; they have to engage with the wider community. The authors believe that schools need to be successful with their communities, not in spite of them! We are reminded that we need to see the community as a real resource rather than a problem. This is a very important message for all of us working in schools.

The effects of poverty and class on pupil achievement at every level and the connection between standards, well-being and social equity is clearly made and schools have a mandate to “think” and do things differently. The authors conclude that the focus on standards has meant a lesser focus on social justice and well being; and this has exacerbated, not alleviated, the equity gap in standards and has limited the potential for schools to improve. Transformation and improvement requires schools and school

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**Kenny  
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leaders to practice “power with” not “power over” and this requires a re-orientation of the role of schools within a community.

The importance of social capital and learning is well made in Chapter 4. Engaging families and communities is covered in Chapter 5 and is pragmatic and helpful and moves beyond the traditional focus and approach to working with parents. The chapter on leadership in the community (Chapter 8) is excellent and very helpful for those of us who are trying to develop a different model of distributed leadership that is not dependent on one person or on a host of professionals. Similarly, the chapter on monitoring, review and evaluation (Chapter 11) is equally helpful in this climate where measuring impact rather than describing provision is key!

I would recommend this book as essential reading to every head teacher and every aspiring head teacher, for those working in schools and in Children’s Services. I would recommend it to governors and to anybody else working in partnerships. It is easily accessible and a really good read. It avoids jargon and language which excludes those of us who do not have the patience to struggle through pretentious academic texts. Well done to the authors – I will be buying a several copies for our staff library!

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## STATE SCHOOLS SINCE THE 1950s – THE GOOD NEWS

Adrian Elliott

*Trentham Books 2007 £16.99 ISBN: 9781858563725*

The book’s intention to “put the record straight about the true performance of state schools in this country” can only be welcomed. The author’s description of the portrayal of state education by the media, politicians and business leaders as being one of “schools infected with an all pervading left-wing ideology fostered by radical teaching unions” has become so much of a truism that it is hard not to feel some pride in what we appear to have achieved. Unfortunately the reality is very different and much more prosaic. Teachers have, by and large, conformed to the expectations of society and the author’s wide and lengthy experience as a practising teacher, school leader, governor and head teacher trainer (even as an OfSTED Inspector!) have given him an ability to speak with some authority of the record of successful progress made in the education system during his career.

As a consequence, his book is thoroughly researched and evidence-based and stands as a challenge to the misinformed, exaggerated or factually incorrect comment in the media and elsewhere. He is no radical, as he freely admits, and advocates schools having core values of good order and discipline with academic achievement and examination success as vital elements in their *raison d’être*. He even goes so far as to advocate

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### Robert Wilkinson

Robert Wilkinson is NUT National Executive member for Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire.

uniforms, setting and school performance statistics!

Yet this may be the strength of his argument rather than its weakness. Too often we seek to feel the glow surrounding us of those who agree with what we already think. The truth is, however, that the majority of our parents – and even our own Union members perhaps – do not start from where we already are as active trade unionists. This book may draw inevitable comparisons with *Thirty Years On*, the seminal work by Caroline Benn and Clive Chitty, which gave us the security of knowing that, after all, we were right. But that was more than ten years ago and Adrian Elliott seeks to address a different audience of those who would not have the time or inclination to ponder the conclusions of those they would easily dismiss as ‘partisan’ academic researchers and need the security of one of their own in order to be led to reconsider their cherished assumptions.

Adrian Elliott’s methodology may not be as academically rigorous as Benn and Chitty’s and he freely admits that the respondents to his research were skewed towards females and those from former grammar schools. Yet this does not detract from the readability of the book nor invalidate the cumulative evidence of social class division and misogyny rampant in the education system of the 1950s. A few teachers shine through as lifelong inspirations to their pupils and it would be nice to imagine that they were the ones most influenced by the equalities agenda of the NUT!

His assertion that “children achieve infinitely more through encouragement and praise than through punishment and criticism” could just as well be applied to the teaching profession. We should all appreciate that not only are the pupils achieving better results than before, but so are the teachers!

Adrian Elliott’s quotation from a report of HMCI should serve as an epitaph for the deadheads in the media and politics, who will continue no doubt to be resurrected in the countdown to the next General Election: “It’s not like the old days! No, it isn’t: and thank goodness, too.”

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## THE EDUCATION DEBATE

Stephen J Ball

*The Policy Press 2008 £12.99 ISBN: 9781861349200*

Stephen Ball comprehensively charts the relationship between education and the needs of the state and the economy. It is to the author’s credit that he has kept “sociological jargon” to a minimum in this book. The author also warns us that terms used in common education policy usage, such as “globalisation” or “choice” or “modernisation” should be subject to critical examination.

This book deserves to be widely read as it provides a political yardstick to measure New Labour’s education policy with its evangelical spin on

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## Helen Hill

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promoting “brains not brawn” to “truly” build an enterprise economy for the twenty-first century.

The book explores in detail how the global economy has resulted in the Government’s relentless drive to “modernise” education and create an education system that is productivity-led. New Labour’s “rhetoric of reform” is the rhetoric that links economic productivity and competitiveness to the “efforts, talents and qualities of individual people.”

Stephen Ball describes New Labour’s emphasis on the knowledge economy which promotes the idea that “information and knowledge will replace capital and energy as the primary wealth-creating assets.” The marketisation of knowledge is then linked to economic performance, corporatisation and privatisation. Alternatives to direct public provision are then promoted in education provision.

Stephen Ball guides us through the Conservative education policies of the 1970s and 1980s, which introduced a “market” approach to education promoting de-regulation and privatisation. What followed was a private sector model of state education which took the form of city technology colleges and grant maintained schools. Since then, New Labour has heralded a wave of education reforms where schools compete with each other but are, at the same time, encouraged to collaborate. “Reform readiness” could be read as “reform madness”. As he looks to the future, Stephen Ball indicates that the individual and society will become even closer and the fate of individuals decided by the global economy. He warns us against a Utopia where e-learners find themselves isolated in an e-world devoid of community and social responsibility. A book to be kept close as a political reminder of educational cul-de-sacs to be avoided.

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**EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT TEACHING BUT ARE TOO BUSY TO ASK**

Erin Best and Will Thomas

**Continuum 2007 £12.99 ISBN: 978-0-82648-377-5**

The ambitious aim of this book is to provide teachers with briefings on 50 important contemporary issues in education. These range from the familiar and practical, such as Every Child Matters and questioning techniques, to recent developments such as emotional intelligence, learner voice and personalisation. There are also several less mainstream entries, such as “brain breaks” and “hypnosis in education”, which are bound to pique the curiosity of any casual reader.

Each briefing contains a definition of key terms; a bullet point summary of essential information or best practice advice about the topic; questions for personal reflection; suggestions for professional development; and sources of further information. A website

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**Karen Robinson**

Karen Robinson is Principal Officer (Primary) in the Education and Equal Opportunities Department, National Union of Teachers.

([www.creativityforlearning.co.uk](http://www.creativityforlearning.co.uk)) has also been established to ensure the book's contents are regularly updated and to enable its authors to post new briefings – readers are invited to use it to suggest new issues to be covered.

The authors claim that their book is free of political bias or spin and focuses on the most important issues for teachers. There are certainly some strong words in defence of teachers' professional judgement within some of the briefings, particularly about the increased level of prescription in what and how teachers teach. There is, however, an uncritical over-reliance on DCSF, National Strategies and OFSTED publications and research in many of the briefings.

This is particularly apparent in the sections dealing with aspects of the curriculum. Those dealing with literacy and numeracy are limited to the National Strategies. There is no debate, for example, on methods of teaching reading or mathematics other than what is contained in the Strategy frameworks.

This narrowness of view is compounded by a strong secondary school bias in many of the briefings. It is particularly obvious in the curriculum sections, but is also apparent in some of the more generic areas. The transition briefing, for example, is written from the secondary school perspective and suggests that primary schools' contribution is limited to the transfer of data. There is also no consideration of transition between early years settings and primary school.

How useful the book is would be dependent on the level of experience or knowledge the reader has on any particular area. Much of the briefing on behaviour, for example, would be of limited value to an experienced teacher, who might in fact take issue with some of the comments made by the authors, such as their reassurance that poor pupil behaviour is "never personal". The briefing on managing workload has some good suggestions about creating a more positive attitude to personal work-life balance but neglects the practicalities such as the provisions of the National Workload Agreement or delegating work to support staff.

A particular strength of the book is its focus on professional development. Almost all of the briefings suggested a full range of CPD activities teachers might wish to pursue, from further reading or personal reflection on aspects of everyday classroom practice to providers of CPD courses – including the NUT. These could be useful to teachers at all stages of their career and could help in providing evidence, for example, against the Threshold Standards or for CPD portfolios. This is also supported by the excellent contents table, which maps each of the briefing's topics against the five domains of effective teaching.

This is a book to be dipped into according to professional interests rather than read straight through. It could make a useful addition to the staff reference library and would certainly provide a quick introduction to

some of those buzz words which we are never quite sure about, such as “accelerated learning” or “neuro-linguistic programming”. Above all, it will help signpost CPD opportunities for teachers – I would suggest reading the briefing on “managing upwards” before negotiating your CPD needs with your line manager!

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## PEER SUPPORT WORKS: A STEP BY STEP GUIDE TO LONG TERM SUCCESS

Netta Cartwright

*Continuum 2007 £22.99 ISBN13: 978-18553-9166-6*

Netta Cartwright’s title, *Peer Support Works*, sums up boldly what the content of her book confirms and promotes. Yet “works” is a functional word that perhaps belies an underpinning of human warmth and conviction. The subtitle, *A step by step guide to long term success* is also faithful to the content. Divided into three stages – Understanding peer support; Peer support training and Making peer support work in the long term – the book is user-friendly and easily-readable, yet authoritative. Its 176, A4 pages will be a well-thumbed manual for any professional working with young people who wants to develop peer support programmes.

Without becoming overly academic, Stage 1 nevertheless gives a pertinent, theoretical and historical context from which a reader can evaluate critically the value of peer support. Definitions are followed by reasons why schools need peer support: to improve young people’s ability to listen; to promote personal social skills and knowledge; to facilitate student transition points; for supporting emotional growth and development and providing a mechanism to tackle bullying, racism and other forms of prejudice and discrimination.

The peer support field is wide-ranging but Cartwright effectively describes the main peer support models from “befriending” to “buddy” schemes, circle of friends and peer counselling (also called co-counselling). Succinct, single-paragraph case studies from a range of schools illustrate different models, thereby continually grounding the book in everyday school experience.

Stage 2, “Peer Support Training”, occupies half of the book and this is where the reader is invited to engage with practical implementation. Three types of training are identified: a co-counselling course, focusing on listening and mentoring; conflict resolution, focusing on mediation skills; and circle of friends which involves inclusion strategies. Structured, solid and sensible training programmes are set out. For example, a particularly thorough four-day structure is given for co-counselling. A wealth of training activities with helpful time allocations are listed: circle time, many different types of game, self esteem exercises and ways to practise

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### Delphine Ruston

Delphine Ruston taught English between 1981 and 2004. For the last seven years she has been involved with the National Union of Teachers’ Continuing Professional Development Programme.

empathy, paraphrasing and showing positive regard. Snapshot black and white photographs give an impression of students engaged in activities.

Even though the material and references are presented in a generously neutral and objective way, it is clear that much of the book derives from Cartwright's personal experience gained from over 20 years professional commitment to, and development of, peer support programmes, in her own school in Staffordshire, in other schools and at local authority level. These personal credentials lend authority to the subject matter.

In an educational climate where much of a student's school experience must be measured, accounted for and made evident in an instant, this more deep-seated, long-term investment in a young person's growth, and in the life of a school community, gives much for teachers to reflect on and address in terms of their own beliefs and values. As Cartwright states, there has been much written about how to initiate peer support and less on how to sustain it. So, this book is not about one-off programmes or even those which last a few years, but encourages teachers to think of successive generations of students and how peer support can be sustained even though individual staff might move on.

Stage 3, "Making peer support work in the long term" addresses such issues of sustainability, supervision and child protection, along with brief information on assessment, monitoring, evaluation and accreditation possibilities. Eight concluding case studies show how diverse schools have sustained long-term peer support within fields such as anti-bullying policies, peer support for Asian students, for Year 7 transition, and as part of sex education.

The book accords with time-honoured values and beliefs about respect for the individual and the sustaining, enriching and healing power of human relationships. It also makes explicit reference to the mainstream agenda expressed in *Every Child Matters* and in this sense is a practical response to a current debate.

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## **DISTRIBUTING LEADERSHIP FOR PERSONALISED LEARNING**

Ron Ritchie and Ruth Deakin Crick

Network Continuum 2007 ISBN: 978-1-85539-234-2

Whilst no education professional can seriously question the personalised learning agenda – in fact most of us merely wonder why it has taken so long to arrive – the major unresolved problems surround implementation. This book sets out to map a route through what could well, according to the 2020 Review Group, transform our education landscape over the next few years.

The authors offer educational professionals a whistle stop tour of recent education ideas focussed on recognising individual differences:

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### **Alan**

### **McFadden**

Alan McFadden has been teaching English in comprehensive schools for over 30 years. He is a deputy head teacher and manages the Havering Graduate Teacher Programme.

Gardner's Multiple Intelligences, Emotional Intelligence, Learning to Learn. In addition, the re-write of the Key Stage 3 curriculum and the Government's vision for schools of the future will require teachers to offer a more flexible curriculum. School structures and classroom delivery will have to change. Increasingly, learners will have to take responsibility for their own learning over a lifetime. Personalisation offers hope of an antidote to the distortions inflicted on schools by the Government's testing regime.

The major consequence will be to modify the role of the teacher, a shift of power and a "letting go" of control that in turn will have implications for the school's Leadership Team. The chief contention of the book is that only by distributing leadership will it be possible to respond to these demands. Personalised Learning will not only change the experience of the pupil in the classroom but will also radically alter the school. Traditional hierarchies will be challenged and boundaries will need to be dissolved in order to accommodate both greater autonomy and increased inter-dependence. Leaders will be obliged to recast themselves as learners and all staff will be required to maximise their leadership potential. Change of this magnitude will place great pressures on schools in the immediate future but may well be the only way in which they can survive the social changes to come. An education system forged in an industrial era must be made appropriate for the information age. School leaders will have to balance the tensions created between the preservation of tradition and opening the door to innovation. This book will assist education professionals in establishing a vision and articulating it to others. In times of rapid change, clarity of vision and values are essential to sustaining our schools.

Later chapters deal with the implications for head teachers, middle leaders and teachers, with some valuable case studies representing primary and secondary phases where successful learning communities have been established. For teachers faced with such a huge undertaking the examples are reassuringly everyday and grounded in the daily realities of teaching. The authors focus on the "stories" of the people at the heart of these establishments. Therein lies the strength of the book: it navigates between practical advice for those leading schools whilst providing sufficient theoretical underpinning to ensure that what is simple change is not substituted for what is genuine progress.



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# education review

volume 21 number 1 Summer 2008

<b>Tribute to Steve Sinnott</b>	1	<b>Classroom dialogue and the teacher's professional role</b> <i>Neil Mercer, Professor of Education, Cambridge University Faculty of Education</i>	60
<b>Preface</b> <i>Christine Blower, Acting General Secretary, NUT</i>	8	<b>Never a better time to be a teacher</b> <i>Keith Bartley, Chief Executive, GTCE</i>	66
<b>Stories of hope in an age of foolishness</b> <i>John MacBeath, Professor Emeritus, Cambridge University</i>	10	<b>A Masters level profession</b> <i>John Bangs, Assistant Secretary – Education and Equal Opportunities, NUT</i>	72
<b>Teachers as champions of innovation</b> <i>David Frost, Leading Learning for School Improvement Group, Cambridge University Faculty of Education</i>	13	<b>Primary education: who's in control?</b> <i>Dominic Wyse, Lecturer in Primary and Early Years Education, University of Cambridge Faculty of Education</i>	76
<b>Constructing sites for learning and teaching</b> <i>John MacBeath, Chair of Educational Leadership, University of Cambridge and Director of Leadership for Learning, the Cambridge Network</i>	22	<b>Treating the teacher as a professional</b> <i>Baroness Pauline Perry, Co-chair, Conservative Party Policy Group on Public Services Improvement</i>	84
<b>Building the perfect team: leadership in the twenty-first century</b> <i>Steve Munby, Chief Executive, National College for School Leadership</i>	31	<b>What have we learned from TLRP?</b> <i>Mary James, Deputy Director, Teaching and Learning Research Programme and Andrew Pollard, Director, Teaching and Learning Research Programme</i>	90
<b>Teachers under pressure: the impact of Government policies on teachers' working lives</b> <i>Maurice Galton, Cambridge University Faculty of Education</i>	39	<b>Book Reviews</b>	101
<b>We are the future of the teaching profession</b> <i>Gerald Clark, Kendra Deacon, Lisa Lowe, Geraldine Redhead and Nick Wigmore, NUT Young Teachers Advisory Committee</i>	49		