
education review

Education Without Failure



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contents

volume 22 • number 1

Preface	1	Consumer kids – the influence of the commercial world on our children	54
<i>Christine Blower, General Secretary, NUT</i>		<i>Agnes Nairn, Research Fellow, University of Bath</i>	
“Education without failure: is it an impossible – even undesirable – dream?”	5	Trusting the judgement of teachers: changing assessment policies in Wales	61
<i>Sir Tim Brighouse, Former London Schools Commissioner</i>		<i>Richard Daugherty, Honorary Professor, School of Social Sciences, University of Cardiff</i>	
Class acts – breaking the achievement barrier	11	The reliability of the statutory end of Key Stage 2 assessments and their use in England	69
<i>Denis Mongon and Christopher Chapman, University of Manchester</i>		<i>Christine Merrell, CEM, Durham University</i>	
Successfully failing to be sheep	21	Still the best job in the world?: trusting teachers; valuing education	75
<i>Peter Flack, Assistant Secretary, Leicester NUT</i>		<i>Janet Theakston, National Union of Teachers</i>	
Attainment gaps between deprived and advantaged schools	30	Delivering the 14-19 entitlement within North Hertfordshire	83
<i>Dr Lee Elliot Major, Director of Research, Sutton Trust</i>		<i>Matthew Glew, Co-ordinator, North Hertfordshire Strategic Area Partnership Group</i>	
“If you can teach Jason to read I’ll eat my hat...”	36	Book Reviews	88
<i>Jean Gross, Director, Every Child a Chance Trust</i>			
Helping the hardest to help	44		
<i>Graham Robb, Youth Justice Board</i>			



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

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

“I came to teaching because I believed it had helped me to lift my eyes from the immediate world around me to the wider horizons. I had been encouraged to be an active participant in the world around me. Education without failure does this.”

These words, from a teacher who attended the NUT’s 2009 National Education Conference, sum up the reasons why teachers do what they do. We all want an education system that produces success for all pupils. How to achieve it is the challenge facing everyone involved in education – teachers, school leaders, parents, young people and politicians. And as we move towards an election year the political parties will each be trying to convince the electorate that they have the policies that will raise levels of achievement and banish the prospect of educational failure once and for all.

Educational under-achievement is a real and devastating reality for too many young people. Young people who perceive themselves as failures within the education system suffer low self esteem that they can carry with them, often throughout life. This can affect their jobs, relationships, life chances and parenting skills.

Those of us involved in education know that in reality there is no magic solution. The causes of underachievement are real and deep rooted. Class, race, gender, sexuality and their complex interface are all potential barriers to achievement. Helping young people overcome this is the challenge teachers face every day of their working lives.

Teachers have the capacity to inspire and nurture young people to achieve personal excellence despite what may be the most adverse circumstances. And this must be the goal for all of us. The NUT always has and always will aspire to the highest standards of achievement for every young person.

How to achieve this goal is the challenge that we all face and which the NUT sees as being at the heart of everything that we do as Britain’s leading teachers’ union. But the Union and its members cannot achieve this goal alone. “Education without Failure” requires all stakeholders to be willing to engage with a shared vision of what this means in practise.

As the Union points out in its key statement on education, *Bringing Down The Barriers*:

“Education in England needs all the different stakeholders to appreciate and live up to their responsibilities. This includes teachers, parents and indeed students. For too long our education service has been undermined by short term thinking. Too

often education has been used to make narrow party political points and petty point scoring. Education should reflect the confidence and credibility that flows from a broad participation and a sense of ownership by key stakeholders nationally and locally.”

This edition of *Education Review* seeks to facilitate that broad participation by promoting the debate about the scale of the problem and the urgent necessity of working towards a solution if “Education without Failure” is to become more than a slogan.

In his keynote article, Professor Tim Brighouse, the former London Schools Commissioner and originator of the phrase “Education without Failure” examines the concept of educational failure and its long-term impact on individuals and society. He argues that the current assessment regime is contributing to a system where pupils “learn to fail”. He identifies a number of things that can be done in schools to reduce the likelihood of pupils “learning to fail” and argues that underpinning these must be significant investment in staff Continuing Professional Development (CPD), a belief which the NUT has long embraced and put into practice through its own, much-respected CPD programme.

The Union has been working in partnership with the National College for School Leadership on a project run by Denis Mongon and Christopher Chapman, of the University of Manchester, to examine strategies for promoting the achievement of white working class pupils. Identifying the significance of social class in relation to educational achievement, they point out that “after more than a century of free compulsory education and 60 years after the founding of the welfare state, family income and status continue to be by far the most significant correlates of success in the school system”.

Denis Mongon and Chris Chapman researched the features of school leadership associated with successful outcomes for white working class pupils. In this article they outline the key findings of their research. They identified five basic strategies adopted by Headteachers, three characteristic intelligences and a number of consistent personality traits that were common among the school leaders they studied.

The new school year brought with it a new batch of Academy schools bringing the total to 200. The NUT continues to oppose the establishment of Academies, which fly in the face of our belief in state comprehensive education, and will continue to argue for “A Good Local School for all Children”. Nowhere have the arguments against academies been more strongly and more coherently voiced than in Leicester, where the NUT has played a leading role in developing an alternative strategy for school improvement which relies on a partnership approach to raising standards of achievement with schools sharing a common responsibility for the city’s

children and their achievements. In this edition of Education Review, Peter Flack, Assistant Secretary of Leicester NUT, outlines the campaign against Academies in Leicester and the convincing case that the union has put forward for a city-wide solution to “Education without Failure” which stands in stark contrast to the Government’s obsession with Academies.

“Education without Failure” is the key objective of The Sutton Trust, a charity that seeks to improve social mobility through education. In an article that looks at attainment gaps between deprived and advantaged schools, Lee Elliot Major, the Trusts’ Director of Research, argues that there are two obvious policy responses to raising social mobility: targeting greater resources towards deprived schools; and creating more balanced pupil intakes. However both are fraught with difficulties and need to be implemented through a more radical approach to improving social mobility.

Jean Gross is the Director of the Every Child a Chance Trust, a charity which aims to unlock the educational potential of socially disadvantaged children through the development and promotion of evidence-based, early intervention programmes. In an article which will resonate with all teachers, she addresses the needs of those children who cannot read, write or do basic maths. She makes clear that such failure is not inevitable and argues that with the right support schemes, it is possible for almost every child to succeed with basic literacy and numeracy by the age of seven. She describes the success of two such schemes – *Every Child a Reader* and *Every Child Counts* and examines their potential as a strategy for achieving success for all.

In an article which examines how to help the children hardest to reach, Graham Robb, a former Headteacher and currently a Board member of the Youth Justice Board, identifies the variety of risks faced by young people and the role that schools play in minimising these risks. He goes on to describe the Safety and Cohesion Award Programme that was piloted in a number of London Schools last year and which is now being adapted for use in different parts of the country.

Agnes Nairn is a leading academic and writer on the ethics of marketing to children. In her article she explores how the commercial world has become an integral part of young people’s everyday lives. The commercialisation of childhood, she argues, sits uneasily with an agenda for “Education without Failure” as those without the financial means to keep up with the trends are disadvantaged. She argues that we need to find ways to ensure that our children are not being educated as consumers at the expense of being educated as citizens.

Assessment and testing regimes are high on the educational agenda currently, and the NUT has been leading the campaign against SATs, which have for too long narrowed and distorted the curriculum and undermined

the achievements of children, their teachers and their schools with demeaning and misleading league tables. This edition of *Education Review* includes two highly topical articles on assessment which will contribute significantly to the current debate about testing.

Richard Daugherty, Honorary Professor in the School of Social Sciences at Cardiff University explains how and why Wales has adopted a framework that places the main responsibility for assessing pupils' progress on the people who are best equipped to make those judgments – their teachers. And Christine Merrell, of Durham University, and an expert in assessment practices, discusses just how reliable KS2 SATS are.

The NUT recently said goodbye to a long-standing member of staff, Janet Theakston, the former editor of *Education Review*. I am delighted that this edition contains an article by Janet in which she surveyed the views of NUT members on "Education without Failure". Teachers' commitment to the education and welfare of their pupils shines through, despite their serious concerns about many aspects of teaching today. Their clear message to policy makers is that they should listen to, and trust teachers.

The 14-19 diplomas are an exciting new development at secondary level. But how are they being delivered in practise? Matthew Glew, Co-ordinator of the North Hertfordshire Strategic Area Partnership Group, describes the development and delivery of the 14-19 reforms within North Hertfordshire and how the SAPG has established itself as a major player in collaborative working, especially in relation to the new Diplomas.

This edition of *Education Review* also contains a selection of reviews of new books. Rob Long, who tutors on the NUT's CPD programme, reviews *Motivating Every Learner* by psychologist Alan McLean. The *Really Useful Creativity Book* by Dominic Wise and Pam Dowson, reviewed by Headteacher Nye Goodwin, offers the primary practitioner some great ideas. *The Coaching Toolkit*, by Shaun Allison and Matthew Harbour is reviewed by Senior Inspector in Southampton, Nigel Ash. The new edition of a popular book for student teachers, *Learning to Teach in the Secondary School*, edited by Susan Capel et al is reviewed by Helen Scott from the University of Cumbria. *33 Ways to Help With Numeracy*, by Brian Sharp is reviewed by Claire Johnson, a primary teacher and president of Leeds NUT. And Gabrielle Ivinson, a senior lecturer at Cardiff University, reviews Sue Palmer's new book on *21st Century Boys*.



“Education without failure: is it an impossible – even undesirable – dream?”

***Abstract:** In this article Sir Tim Brighouse, former Commissioner for London Schools, examines the concept of educational failure and its long-term impact on individuals and society. He argues that the current assessment regime, with its emphasis on a restricted range of education success indicators, is contributing to a system where pupils “learn to fail”. He states that school success should be assessed through a wide range of measures beyond the academic to include the social, cultural and moral purposes of education.*

What would you do if asked to write a serious 4,000 word article for the Smith Institute by the day after tomorrow? Well, even for someone like me who is bad at saying no, the answer was easy. No, I couldn't, not least because a chapter for a book was long overdue. But the topic, I was assured, would appeal to me “Education without failure”? Yes you've guessed: I couldn't resist, not least because by writing it I would discover what I really thought about the topic. That was 18 months ago. Of course I wrote it but it's been downhill ever since as I have accepted requests to refine my arguments on the topic and written pieces for the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA) journal and a leadership magazine.

Writing this article for the NUT is an attempt to develop my thoughts a

Tim Brighouse

Sir Tim Brighouse has spent his entire career working in education. Most recently he has served as Commissioner for London Schools, working to improve education in the Capital. Before that his career started in the classroom and has taken in the role of Professor of Education at Keele University, as well as Chief Education Officer in both Oxfordshire and Birmingham Local Authorities.

bit further and perhaps put it to bed.

What follows is divided into three sections: the first explores the nature of failure and seeks to identify the sort of failure we could do without; the second briefly analyses policy weaknesses in the education system which arguably induce the sort of failure we should seek to eliminate; and the third examines in-school practices which affect the likelihood of failure.

What sort of failure do we want to reduce?

As a preliminary, let's be clear about two sorts of misconceptions and, in the process, clarify the type of failure which we could and should seek to eliminate. I am not talking about that sort of failure which comes when an individual fails to learn a particular skill or understand a concept or remember some piece of information. That's part of learning and in the hands of a good teacher the opportunity and springboard for further and deeper learning. It is at the heart of formative assessment, or "assessment for learning" as it is now called. Carried out well this sort of assessment allows the learner to see exactly what he/she has to do to overcome the difficulty and embark with a clear map of the next few steps on the journey of learning. It involves the pupil, like a successful athlete, always trying to improve on their previous best.

But what of the pupil who never "gets it" or succeeds in anything that the school overtly values? This last point reaches the heart of the matter. Repeated failure can become so embedded that it convinces the individual or the group that it is impossible ever to be successful. Researchers say that it is very apparent in young children aged seven or eight when some of them perceive they are falling further and further behind their contemporaries in learning to read – a capability they see as clearly very highly valued by their teachers, their parents and the more successful members of their peer group. They start to see themselves as "failures" in every other sphere of highly valued activity and perform accordingly. Secondary schools soon recognise them and know that unless they quickly crack the issue they will be the youngsters who leave school doomed to a life of self-fulfilling failure. They are highly represented among what we now call the "NEET" group. (Those 17 and 18 year olds who are "Not in Employment, Education or Training")

As we know from a recent study in northern England, NEETS have significantly shorter and more unpleasant lives (*Times Educational Supplement*, 07 August 2009). Moreover there are alarming correlations among those who are excluded from school, pupils who are (by my definition) failures at school, young people experiencing homelessness in the age –group 16-23 and those in prison.

Repeated embedded failure is also a *collective* phenomenon. It can be seen every week in the performances of consistently unsuccessful sports teams

as their “heads go down” and their self-confidence becomes so low that they lack the psychological strength to break the habit of losing. Failing schools are like this.

It is this sort of failure that the educational system could do without among the pupils and their schools. How the system behaves and impacts on the schools will affect both the schools’, and their individual pupils’, chances of success.

I believe there are a few steps which could be taken to reduce if not eliminate this sort of “unnecessary failure” at the levels of the individual pupil, the school and the system respectively.

The second frequently expressed misconception requires us to address those who say “But we must have failure otherwise we couldn’t recognise success”. People who say this usually have two points in mind, first they are concerned about striving for the best and secondly, they claim that both in the adult world there are winners and losers and children might as well, get used to it. I have some sympathy with both these points of view.

On the first point, of course there will always be someone who will be pre-eminent in a particular field, for example in running the 100 metres dash or in writing or dancing or scientific research – indeed in most fields of measurable human endeavour. Nobody wants to circumscribe the possibilities of “what might be” or to prejudge what constitutes “excellence” in the future. Indeed I want the lure of future new standards of excellence so much that I rail against those who at present talk about “closing the gap” or suggest that all children should make the same number of “levels” progress over a given period. Such talk misunderstands the need both never to put an upper limit on what a child of a given age might achieve and always to recognise that cognitive development and progress is individually different and rarely proceeds in a smooth straight upward line. Children have “growth spurts” physically and so they do mentally and in their attitude towards the relevance of learning.

On the second point – that in the real world there are winners and losers and children have to get used to that – I am less convinced. First the essence of teaching is to treat children as they might become rather than as they are. The extent to which children should be put in the “recognising-there-are-winners-and-losers” position will vary according to both age generally and individual need particularly. For example as adults we are not forced to put ourselves in a position of competing in unequal circumstances. We know that to do so would be unpleasant and make ourselves look foolish. As I once said to an education committee debating the relative merits of streaming, setting and mixed ability, “You wouldn’t take too kindly to my bringing in a high jump and organising a competition to see who can jump the highest and then asking you all to sit in a different order according to your performance in the test and repeating

it each meeting. And you are adults. How much more dangerous can it be to *some* children to be put in such an environment? That's why we must leave with teachers the great responsibility of deciding when and how to use normative and comparative assessment in their organisation of children's learning."

Thus, in the matter of introducing children progressively to the world of normative and comparative measures of their progress, we need to be on our guard neither to reinforce complacency nor to induce such a sense of despair that children start to believe they are failures.

In short "failing to learn" is fine and an essential part of the process of improving on previous best, "learning to fail" is not.

Before turning to how we might adjust system-wide influences and in-school practices to reduce the numbers of those "learning to fail" one more point deserves notice. *The more narrowly and normatively pupil and school academic success is drawn the more likely it is that there will be embedded failure for some schools and individual pupils.*

What desirable changes in the system would reduce unnecessary embedded failure?

Present system-wide practices unfortunately emphasise a restricted range of educational success indicators. The emphasis on academic attainment as the main means of establishing an individual pupil's or a school's success is well noted but also widely contested as being at the expense of other sorts of achievement. Certainly OFSTED inspections and the publication of exam league tables, for example, encourage schools to focus on a few key assessments such as levels 4 and 5 in English and Maths in SATs at Key Stage 2 and five or more higher GCSE grades including English and Maths at Key Stage 4, with the probable result that the school gives disproportionate attention to those pupils at the borderline of this measure at the expense of others who are unlikely to achieve that level. And these "expendable" pupils include of course the very ones most at risk of the sort of embedded failure we want to reduce.

Therefore the way we measure school success is important if we intend to be serious in eliminating self-fulfilling failure. Included in a more desirable and wider definition of schools' success, might be the way schools and their pupils can demonstrate improvements in:-

- participation and average performance rates in various sports;
- annual "health fitness" measures;
- participation in a wide range of arts' activities (e.g music);
- participation in a wide range of other defined pupil activities and experiences (e.g. day visits and residentials as well as extended curriculum studies);
- staff professional development activities;

- Staff and pupil absence rates
- defined student leadership and management opportunities;
- pupil voluntary contribution to the well-being of the local community; and
- encouragement of opportunities for family learning.

To these would be added evidence of other school success measures such as continuing improvements and developments in school organisational practices together with belonging to a learning partnership with other schools so that the resources of more than one school can assist those pupils, whose needs any one school cannot meet. One final piece of evidence a society and school serious about reducing unnecessary failure would consider, is:-

- the regular collection of the views of pupils, staff and parents through the use of attitudinal surveys.

This last point would enable us to assess progress against a wider definition of educational success which would go beyond the academic to include the social, cultural and moral purposes of education which schools recognise but which are given insufficient emphasis at the level of the system as a whole.

Finally schools would need to demonstrate the progress they make with those pupils who arrive with the lowest levels of prior achievement.

Such changes would need to be reflected in the proposed “school scorecard”, in Ofsted inspection practices and in a discontinuation of the publication of exam results, which would be subsumed in the “scorecard”.

There are other desirable system-wide changes. For example some researchers argue that schools with high proportions of low prior attaining pupils have less chance of bringing their pupils success. If that’s the case, then admission arrangements would need to be changed to secure a more balanced entry of pupils to schools especially in urban areas with high density populations.

Funding through local formulae would be geared to put higher premiums on those pupils deemed to be at risk of “learning to fail”. There would be a strong case for introducing a “primary graduation certificate” which celebrated children’s success selected from a wide range of criteria not just the academic. Finally, I would advocate a nationally prescribed start to the school year in July so that the well-documented summer holiday “loss of learning” among children from poorer families might at least be mitigated. Such a change would also address, in part, the present weaknesses, in primary/secondary transfer arrangements. There are many more system-wide changes which could reduce the sort of failure we would like to eliminate including of course expanding further pre-school provision for children from poorer and more challenged communities.

What can be done in school to reduce the likelihood of pupils “learning to fail”?

Whatever we achieve in change at the system level to reduce unnecessary and embedded failure, there is much that can be done *within* school. Let’s remind ourselves again of the pupils most at risk of embedded failure. They come predominantly from homes where they face apathy or even violence from parents or carers who have lost hope and are simply not “good enough”. These children are surrounded by what we might call “negative or at best neutral aspirational role models”. As teenagers they are frequently in a culture beyond the school and home where they spend time in a community characterised by sporadic violence, crime and drugs and where it is especially difficult to grow the resilience to avoid becoming ensnared.

In school – a particularly precious time for children from disadvantaged backgrounds – organisational practices, such as vertical or year group teaching; setting or streaming; formative or normative assessment and marking; behaviour policies and practices that achieve a positive weighting on the rewards and sanctions spectrum; the use of language; the experiences offered by the school – all have a positive or negative impact on individual pupils.

A school may be successful for many, some or few pupils. Existing evidence is that schools are less successful with children from apparently disadvantaged backgrounds but that a few schools buck that trend. I think one of the reasons they do is because they have looked at their organisational practices and changed those they think are more likely to lead to some youngsters feeling failures. What therefore are those practices? Consider one example. Most would agree that is desirable for Year 7 pupils to encounter seven or eight teachers at most. Yet the same schools have adopted fortnightly timetables causing Year 7 pupils to meet 15/16 – in one case I met 23 – teachers in a fortnight.

If pushed to select just four bankers I would argue for:

- “vertical” as well as “horizontal” pupil groupings for teaching and other purposes;
- more team and less individual activity, assessment and tasks;
- guaranteed residential experiences; and
- maintaining an annually reviewed list of pupils “at risk of embedded failure” and agreeing interventions for the next year which increase their “resilience”.

To underpin these we need to invest as never before in staff continuing professional development, part of which could be a school by school debate about how, in their particular circumstances, action could be taken to reduce unnecessary failure.

Class acts – breaking the achievement barrier

Abstract: *This article summarises the findings of a project researching the features of school leadership associated with very successful outcomes for white working class pupils. The research was commissioned jointly by the National Union of Teachers (NUT) and the National College for School Leadership (NCSL). The authors report that the key strategies adopted by these leaders are similar to those already associated with success in challenging circumstances. They conclude that these leaders show particular characteristics and personality traits which are needed to apply the strategies successfully.*

“**W**e’ve taken the values off the estate and turned them to our advantage” said the deputy headteacher of Redbridge School in Southampton half way through the interview. That would be the estate outside the office window, with its high level of dependency on state benefits, few positive, especially male, role models, the local ward amongst the top ten per cent of the most deprived in the country and the top five per cent for child poverty and the highest levels of crime in the city. It had not looked any prettier through the car windows so what was she talking about? “Don’t you think Denis,” she continued, “that these parents are like you and me? Don’t you think they want their children to be happy, to be well behaved and to be successful? Of course they do. They want to be proud of them and hope they ‘do well’ when they grow up. But they don’t know how to do that..... and we do..... They think we’re quite impressive and

Denis Mongon

Denis Mongon has held appointments at the Universities of London, Cambridge and Manchester, where he is now a Senior Research Fellow.

Christopher Chapman

Christopher Chapman has held academic positions at the Universities of Warwick, Nottingham and Manchester, where he is now Reader in Educational Leadership and School Improvement. His most recent books include *Radical Reforms* (with Helen Gunther) and *Leading School-based Networks* (with Mark Hadfield), both published by Routledge 2009.

respect us for that but all we do really is apply those universal values.”

It's the four short words “all we really do...” that disguises the tremendous work and remarkable achievements of the staff at Redbridge and the other ten schools (see Appendix I for a list of participating schools) that we visited during our research into leadership of schools which bucked the national trend and produced high achievements for pupils from “white working class backgrounds”.

The problem(s)

Our research and reporting began with a literature review which confirmed that after more than a century of free, compulsory education and sixty years of the welfare state, family income and status continue to be by far the most significant correlates of success in the school system. We did not want to be bogged down in a debate about definitions of “white” and “working class” so we took as a simple rule of thumb that our focus was children and young people who might be described as “White British” and who came from relatively poor socio-economic backgrounds usually evidenced by free school meals entitlement.

Using sources mainly from the UK, we reminded ourselves of the catalogue of work stretching back five decades and more reporting the comparatively low attainment levels and under-achievement of “working class” students. Seminal work from the 1950s (Floud, *et. al*, 1956) had pointed directly at the problem which is still reflected in current research. “If you want to know how well a child will do at school, ask how much its parents earn. The fact remains, after more than 50 years of the welfare state and several decades of comprehensive education, that family wealth is the single biggest predictor of success in the school system.” (Hatcher, 2006)

There was some marginal differentiation between the girls and boys in our focus but, in broad terms, “White British” boys entitled to free school meals were overall the male group with lowest attainment and “White British” girls entitled to free school meals were overall the female group with lowest attainment (Department for Education and Skills, 2007). Although gender is also an independent and significant factor, the social class attainment gap at Key Stage 4 is three times as wide as the gender gap (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007).

Explanations for this phenomenon seemed to have appeared in three waves. The first rolled through the 1950s and 60s and described the experiences, practices and culture of working class families as pathological in comparison with the given and healthy features of schools and schooling.

A second wave, emerging in the 1970s, focussed on the culture of public education as problematic, on schools as places where inequality was not only played out but nurtured and sponsored. Both these analyses

embraced the effects of poverty, culture, social capital, parental perceptions, pupil perceptions, professional expectations, school place allocations, in-school differentiation, curriculum and pedagogy.

A third wave then diverted attention away from home-school engagement and towards school effectiveness and school improvement. Perhaps, we thought, if we can understand how the best schools worked and transfer those practices across the system, then every school will be successful.

Of course, insights from each of these “waves” have led to improvements in the processes and outcomes of schooling but nothing has prevented the persistence of a long tail of underachievement associated with deprivation. In particular we do not understand the contrast that

After more than a century of free, compulsory education and 60 years of the welfare state, family income and status continue to be by far the most significant correlates of success in the school system.

while in some areas of inner-city social housing, pupils often do much better at GCSE than would be anticipated on the basis of the multiple deprivation of their home neighbourhoods, some of the neighbourhood types with the very worst GCSE performance are characterised by predominantly white pupils living on very large overspill estates in England’s larger provincial cities (Webber and Butler, 2007). An explanation to be tested is that there may be a trend for the former areas to be populated by poor but aspiring immigrant families, a proposal which points to massive challenges in the latter localities.

Some responses

For anyone concerned with creating a fair education system for young people, our literature review is not a generally happy read but nor is it a counsel of despair. We were able to identify tactics which are undermining some of the other inequities in the system, not least for young women and some minority ethnic groups. We also summarise the body of evidence about schools which are successful in challenging circumstances. Our question was, could we find schools that were being successful with those pupils who are overall, the least successful in our system?

Suggestions for suitable schools were canvassed from colleagues at NUT, NCSL, Manchester University and more widely across our personal networks. Leadership was a key part of our brief so we only considered schools where recent Ofsted reports described leadership as good or better. We used the descriptions at the front of Ofsted reports as an additional

confirmation that the schools served low-income, predominantly white communities. We looked for headteachers who had been in post for at least two full academic years so the most recent (then 2007) results could be influenced by their leadership.

Pupils from low income, white British backgrounds were significantly more successful at the end of Key Stage 2 and 4 in the schools chosen for the study than their comparable peers in schools on average. Two of the five primary schools selected were in the middle 20 per cent of schools nationally by KS1-2 contextual value added (CVA) score, one was in the top 25 per cent and two in the top five per cent.

One of the seven secondary schools was in the top 40 per cent of schools nationally by Key Stage 2-4 CVA, four were in the top 25 per cent and two

The daily direct and devastating effects of social and economic inequality in Britain are not just on the pages of the research reports – they are in front of us daily.

were in the top five per cent. One of the secondary schools was below the government's floor target of 30 per cent 5A*-C GCSEs including English and Maths but was retained because of a CVA in the top 25 per cent and a pass rate of 56 per cent 5A*-C overall. At each of the schools we conducted interviews with the headteacher, other leaders and staff. At

almost all of the schools we also interviewed pupils. At many of the schools we interviewed school governors and local authority staff.

Reflecting on what we discovered, we used three broad areas to organise our conclusions:

- the five strategies used by these school leaders;
- the three characteristics of their work; and
- the four key aspects of their personalities.

Strategies

These Headteachers appeared to follow the basic formula, or very close variations, adopted in most successful schools. Our framework for their five basic strategies therefore builds on other summaries (National College for School Leadership, 2006) and will look familiar to most school leaders:

Building vision and setting directions

One Classroom Assistant described to us how this had permeated the school from the new Head's very first day:

“Right from the first meeting, she was coming in with all these ideas and at the beginning I thought, oh bloody hell, you are having a laugh love. I thought, she is not going to last five minutes and it won't be long before I'm out the door, I've just about had enough. But eight years down the line I'm still here and I've no plans to

leave. . . [The Head] gives us a belief in this is how it is going to be, but making sure this is how it is going to be and then you believe it.” (Classroom Assistant)

Staff and students at these schools knew where they were travelling and what was expected of them. There was a strong, shared sense of purpose, goals were specific and well understood, expectations were high for staff and students alike.

Understanding and developing people

Staff and students were provided with intellectual and emotional stimulation (including purposeful professional development for the adults) in which personalised support rather than criticism was predominant. In one school the Director of Teaching and Learning observes every teacher each year. *“In advance,”* he says, *“I share the Ofsted criteria for good to outstanding and use those in my observation and feedback. We don’t want to talk about the weaknesses in a lesson, we want to celebrate the best bits and, if needs be, how to improve the rest.”* Staff recruitment was a high priority often ingeniously pursued, *“whatever it takes: because these youngsters deserve the best teachers”*.

Designing the organisation

The structure and culture of the organisations had been engineered to match their purpose. Lines of authority, responsibility, accountability and autonomy were clear for adults and students, whatever their age or status. *“Consistency means a lot to our students and their families. Everyone knows where they are year in and out, the students and their parents know what to expect.”*

Close attention was paid to the appearance of the built environment, of classrooms and corridors and of the people in them. The schools created strong connections with parents, were appreciated by their local communities and were confident of their role in local and national contexts.

Managing and supporting the teaching and learning programme

The leaders were relentless in their application to the highest standards of teaching and learning. *“It’s an attitude,”* said one, *“We simply don’t accept the estate as an excuse for second best; we have high expectations, everyday, everybody.”* Success was never taken for granted and invariably celebrated. Difficulties were never ignored and staff and students, always treated respectfully. Support and development were always the first response to any problem or obstacle. Mistakes were acceptable, persistent underperformance was not. The protection of teaching staff from distractions did not stop the schools pursuing other outcomes and benefitting from community engagement.

Collecting, monitoring, analysing and using information

Attention to detail was a remarkable feature of these schools, not least in the compilation and use of information about what was happening. Both student progress and teaching standards were regularly, frequently and closely observed, recorded and analysed. The very large part of this was rooted in regular methodical performance measurement and review.

Some part depended on the leaders' personal observation of activity and relationships around the school. The analyses were then used to inform planning and the deployment of effort resources, including precious time. Pupils and staff reported that this approach was comfortable and liberating rather than irritating or oppressive. *"One of the key elements of our success is the fine detail tracking of the progress of individual pupils. You know, we sit around in groups on a regular basis and we demand data from heads of departments about progress of the pupils - that data comes to us, we collate it, we attach mentors, we attach extra work, extra lessons, whatever it happens to be..."*

So was there a formula to apply or a silver bullet to load which would then guarantee success? Far from it. Behind the consistent application of the

We simply don't accept the estate as an excuse for second best; we have high expectations, everyday, everybody.

five strategies lay a very wide range of contextually determined tactics. Some schools, for example, interpreted a

care for student appearance into a blazer and tie uniform, others into T-shirts and sweat shirts; some leaders were described as "always calm" in their contact with difficult students and families, others were described as "robust" or "prepared to fight fire with fire"; some leaders argued for more of their pupils to be designated as having special educational needs, others believed that was not appropriate; some leaders translated their contextual intelligence into a profound engagement with the local community, others marked clear boundaries between the internal order and the external disorder. Some secondary headteachers interpreted their focus on quality teaching into a banding system, others were committed to mixed ability groups; some asserted the non-negotiables of student behaviour with quiet, almost understated determination, others with vigorous, often public assertiveness.

Characteristics

Because it seemed to us that the "how" of what these leaders did was at least if not more important than the "what", we grouped what we believe we could discern into what appeared to be three *characteristics* which, for lack of a better phrase, we labelled as "intelligences". These are listed below but probably better captured in this single quote from a primary

headteacher:

“We don’t think ‘come in here and we’ll do English and maths’, we’re committed to the whole child, which has to take in its family and community. The point is to help our families believe that they can control their lives because they get into a spiral where they lose control, they lose control of their homes, their children, their eating, their tempers and their relationships. We try to show how parents can help their children’s education and to raise the parents’ aspirations”

Contextual intelligence

These leaders showed a profound respect for the context they are working in without ever patronising it. They had deliberately chosen to work in these places. *“When we’re working hard we know there’s hard work and hard work, I don’t have to go down a coal mine – and so we don’t complain about things and we don’t kind of just step back and say ‘oh well our role is not to get our hands dirty’.*

Professional intelligence

These leaders are very good at their core business: leadership and management to nurture the teamwork on which the school’s excellent standards of teaching and learning are dependent. They know what is happening in the school – or who on the leadership team will know. Collegiate knowledge is continuously harvested and consumed, creating energy for action. One teacher described the senior team’s approach. *“We’ve come through a lot to get way where we are . . . it’s not always been like this, loyalty is an important word . . . The way that challenge is done here is designed to produce the best solution, not just to show power or intellect. It is the argument that wins the day, not the person’s position.”*

Social intelligence

These leaders appear to be sensitive to the emotional state of their pupils and colleagues and to use that to guide their own thoughts and actions. In turn, they are deeply admired across their staff and student body. One primary pupil summed this up for us. *“He is strict, not very strict, strict enough . . . You can have a laugh with him but if you’ve done something wrong, he let’s you know who is boss . . .”* While a secondary pupil added a streetwise gloss, respect: *“Why is this a good school? It’s respect that we hold the teachers and the teachers give back to us.”*

Personality traits

Finally, we concluded that behind the strategies and the characteristics shown by these leaders we were encountering some consistent personality traits which we labelled:

Self-efficacy

These leaders had a quiet belief in their own capabilities and confidence of a kind that made them more likely to tackle a task and to persist in the face of initial failure. It was striking how long many of them had been at the same school, *"I don't know how,"* said one, *"you turn a school round in two years. It's taken me nine to get to this position."*

Internal focus of control

They were prone to take personal responsibility for their behaviour and its consequences, a tendency to attribute events in their life to their own control and not to blame anyone else. They would prefer the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), the local authority, the local community and their staff to behave differently some times but that is never an excuse. *"When we were told to raise reading levels we didn't do the national literacy hour. We did our analysis [to check what was needed] and then designed our own approach..."*

Conscientiousness

Conscientious individuals tend towards being self-disciplined, organised, careful and striving. They are generally hard working and reliable, sometimes even perfectionist. *"She sets high expectations herself and certainly demands them from staff"* said one secondary teacher of her Head.

Rapport

Rapport requires a deep interest in other people with a tendency to be empathetic and helpful and to nurture a sense of team and community. It is associated with trust, openness, acceptance and shared understanding recognised by the teaching assistant who told us, *"It is just such a good atmosphere in this school and a very caring one. Everyone – the teachers, the governors and the staff – they all care."*

Implications

The poor performance of so many young people is a sadness for them individually and for the education service collegiately. It may well be a social time bomb, to detonate eventually through the public services and our communities. Our full report draws a number of implications for national organisations, local authorities and schools. A co-ordination of priorities and effort will be needed if the best school leaders are to be drawn to the most challenging localities, if social stereotypes are to be consistently challenged, if collaboration rather than competition is to permeate school organisation and curricular provision and if governance and accountability are to properly reflect shared contextual responsibilities.

Appendix I

The participating schools were:

Bartley Green Technology and Sport College, Birmingham
Bishopsgarth Mathematics and Computing College, Stockton on Tees.
Cardinal Hume RC Mathematics and Computing College, Gateshead
Castilion Primary School, Bexley
Edward Sheerien Secondary School, Barnsley
Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Language College, Islington
Greenside Primary School, Tameside
Guildford Grove Primary School, Surrey
Harrow Gate Primary School, Stockton
Redbridge Community School, Southampton
Robert Clack Science College, Barking and Dagenham
St Mary's Primary School, Workington, Cumbria

The full reports, the accompanying literature review and vignettes of each school are listed in the reference section of this article.

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Successfully failing to be sheep

Abstract: *The Government is good at pointing the finger at supposed "failure" in education. It also has its recipes for tackling this "failure", largely based on varying forms of privatisation such as "outsourcing" and Academies. This article looks at what happens when teachers and a Local Authority embark on a different path using an alternative vision for education that is based on collaboration between schools.*

For a long time I assumed that the set reading in Government education circles was *Animal Farm* by George Orwell. I could picture the sign in the entrance to Sanctuary Buildings, home of the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), that admonished all, "Privatisation Good, Community Comprehensive Education Bad". The staffing model for our schools would be tired, carthorse teachers dragging their way through the National Curriculum and SATS test preparations muttering, "I will work harder" while being beaten over their heads with competency procedures.

As it happens I was wrong. The seminal texts for our ministerial leaders are the Alice books of Lewis Carroll. In a sense this should be obvious. One only has to look at the OFSTED regime, replete with concepts like "Special Measures", to know that the Queen of Hearts and her "Off with their Heads" was the prevailing mind set. Government policy is not about challenging failure but about creating failure, and as much of it as possible. That way, the Government can show how committed to educational improvement it is by turning everything upside down on a weekly basis. Cue the requisite stage directions: Enter "failing" schools, "failing" Local Authorities, "failing" teachers, stage left, pursued by Secretary of State Ed Balls.

Of course, to enable this to function with appropriate solemnity it has been necessary to redefine certain well known words. So, for example, "satisfactory" now means...well, not satisfactory at all, actually. Furthermore, lest any complacency might creep in after a school gains a "good" from OFSTED, in the DCSF's parallel universe it may yet mean that

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the school requires urgent intervention under National Challenge for being “not good”. There, now that should make perfect sense! Furthermore it is all splendidly in the spirit of Humpty Dumpty’s aphorism in “Alice Through the Looking Glass”, “When I use a word it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less.” So the language of redefinition is free to run amok.

One classic example of this is the word “radical”. It used to have fine traditions that spoke of heretical thinking challenging the boring complacency of the status quo. It was the opposite of reactionary. Not any

Even now in the 21st Century, social class is the best predictor of educational outcomes.

more! Now, it has been suborned into use as the Government house adjective to refer to whatever right wing policy is currently being imposed on the hapless citizenry. So “radical” change is ...privately run Academies; “radical” transformation is ...outsourcing to private companies. How convenient! Best of all, this approach requires no intellectual rigour, no evaluation of effectiveness, no objective comparisons with a Local Authority run comparator. It just is.

The same can be said for the word “success”. It used to refer to some worthwhile achievement. Now it is a reflexive term to describe Government policy. This applies regardless of the merit or otherwise of the particular initiative in question, a splendid statement of limited ambition! So Academies are “a success” or sometimes even a “considerable success” and this mantra prevails despite the fact that over the past year a number of Academies have lapsed into total chaos, had mini riots or that many of the first to open Academies saw results fall in 2008! The Annual Report on the Academies programme, prepared for the Government by KPMG, confessed that there is “insufficient evidence” about whether Academies work as a school improvement strategy, even now after five years. That is “success” for you.

Defending local education

Over the last two years teachers and the wider education community in Leicester have faced all of this mumbo jumbo. It began in October 2007 when Lord Adonis and his apparatchiks concluded that Leicester schools were “under-performing” at KS2 and GCSE. They did so on the basis of their mammoth data base, known as “the Bridge”. The fact that their conclusion was derived from raw score data linked to comparisons with completely different schools in other cities with different demographics and different needs we will leave to one side. We will also have to leave to one side the fact that even now, in the 21st century, social class is the best predictor of educational outcomes.

The DCSF solution to this “under-performance” was to threaten to

impose “outsourcing”, by handing the running of Leicester’s schools to a private contractor. The rationale for this remained unexplained. A Leicester delegation to the DCSF was told simply that if results did not improve radically – that word again – then outsourcing would be the consequence.

Of course, initially no one in the local authority (LA) wanted to share this information with the various key stakeholders in education-trade unions, for example. There was no statement to headteachers and staff. Plans for the response would be developed by the LA behind closed doors. Fortunately, within the small group who had met with the DCSF there were those who believed this ought properly to be public knowledge.

Once made aware of this threat to the LA and schools in Leicester, the NUT organised a public meeting in early November 2007 to discuss how to respond. It was attended by teachers, non-teaching staff, headteachers, governors, politicians and the media. While the mood of the meeting was sombre, there was also a real enthusiasm for challenging, not just the government’s decisions with regard to education in Leicester, but also the government’s thinking about educational issues.

If the Government was committed to the fragmentation and marketisation of public services and to competition, then those at the meeting stood for a collectivist response. Rather than addressing schools in isolation we wanted to see them in the context of communities and a coherent, local public service. There was also a desire to go beyond the “No No No” oppositional refrain that tends to accompany demonstrators with placards who stand on the sidelines. We wanted to look at alternative ways forward.

This desire to confront the Government intellectually was largely a consequence of the establishment in 2006 of a Leicester Education Forum (LEF). A spin off from the local Social Forum, it was premised on the World Social Forum assertion that “Another World is Possible”. The LEF brought together teachers, academics, FE staff and parents to talk about educational issues. In May 2007 it had published a People’s Charter for Education in Leicester which uniquely set out basic principles of what public education should be about. Now, in the face of the Government threats, there was an opportunity to test the charter in practice.

The NUT public meeting made five key decisions:

- to establish a Support Our Schools Campaign (NOT, you will notice, “Save” our Schools) to oppose privatisation and support community schools;
- to seek an open, public dialogue on education with the Local Authority;
- to seek to widen the drive for improvement to include intervention work in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 7 as the key building blocks in later learning;
- to organise a “We are Proud of our School” Art competition; and

- to seek maximum publicity for the achievements of local schools in the press.

The slogan of the campaign was “Leicester Schools are OUR schools. Let’s keep it that way.”

Within a week the campaign had secured the support of the other teaching unions. Within a fortnight the support of the non-teaching unions, three branches of UCU and the Trades Council had been added. So the Support our Schools (SOS) campaign now had impressive headed paper with nine logos printed in a row. Thus equipped, it wrote to the council seeking a joint public meeting. It also wrote to the Secretary of State expressing concern at the DCSF’s negative approach to the educational challenges facing Leicester’s schools. Our reward was a place on the “Transforming Leicester’s Learning (TLL) Overview Board”, which brought together DCSF officials, local politicians, senior officers and Headteacher representatives. Our ideas now had a foot in the door. The Overview board agreed that the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 were central to any sustainable long-term drive to raise “standards” and so should be part of the TLL plan.

Developing an alternative model

In January 2008 the first four-page SOS bulletin was produced. It carried articles on school improvement by a Headteacher, a repudiation of privatisation by two Union Secretaries, and the thoughts of a School Improvement Adviser. It also had details of the art competition. This was to be judged by the newly acquired patron of the campaign Sir Peter Soulsby, the MP for Leicester South. Alongside this ordinary campaign work, SOS also worked on developing ideas for raising performance in schools. If the Government had abandoned the battle against social deprivation, then we would not. A regime which left those schools serving areas of high social deprivation as victims of OFSTED and Government bullying for “failing” to match the standards set in middle class schools was unacceptable. Out of these deliberations emerged the Leicester Collaborative model for school improvement.

In place of competition between schools we introduced the notion of mutual cross city responsibility for all the children of Leicester. Successful, high performing schools would work with and support schools facing challenging circumstances. In place of fragmentation through Academies and Trusts we would promote city-wide partnership and collaboration, including the sharing of expertise and good practice across the whole Local Authority. A key component of this was the assertion that the experts on education in Leicester were in our schools, not in Whitehall or working for private consultancies. That meant that schools and teachers had “ownership” of what was happening. All of this was communicated to the

LA in a series of documents and at meetings.

Key outcomes in terms of embedding collaboration in practice were the development of a “Hub and Spoke” model for sharing good practice and continuing professional development (CPD) in Science, Maths and English across secondary schools and the establishment of an Education Improvement Partnership, which brought together all the secondary schools to work on jointly funded projects. This latter has now been replicated for Primary schools. Finally, a coherent city wide Foundation Stage intervention programme was created tackling oracy and early communication skills.

In April we finally got our joint Public Meeting, which was held at Regent College and chaired by the Principal, Eddie Playfair. Speakers included the Chief Executive of the Council, Rob Briscoe from the Schools division of the DCSF, David Kershaw, the lead officer for Transforming Leicester’s Learning and myself on behalf of the SOS campaign. Local Radio, TV and the Leicester Mercury all attended, along with 200 people.

This was an important landmark in the campaign. All the speakers referred to the virtues of collaborative working. Rob Briscoe of the DCSF acknowledged the remarkable levels of cohesion and cooperation between stakeholders he had encountered in Leicester. In a number of ways the philosophical battle had been won. There was widespread recognition that city-wide collaboration could – and indeed already was – raising levels of pupil attainment. As a result, the immediate threat of “outsourcing” was lifted. In the summer of 2008, when the results were published, Leicester’s KS2 and GCSE results were more improved than virtually any other LA.

The Anti Academies campaign

Of course, nothing is ever simple. In May 2008 the Government announced the launch of its National Challenge. All secondary schools below the arbitrary benchmark of 30 per cent of students with five Grades A*-C including Maths and English were required to reach that benchmark by 2011. Local Authorities were instructed to consider whether the best way of achieving this was by such schools becoming Academies or Trusts. Leicester had five such schools, most at just over the 20 per cent mark. The LA wobbled. Academies would offer a safe and secure way of keeping the DCSF off its back. The council began to “consider” Academies as a way forward.

As a consequence, once it was clear that the LA was seriously looking at Academies the unions regretfully withdrew their support from the TLL Overview Board on the grounds that the council was abandoning its commitment to a collaborative model. The SOS Campaign became an Anti-Academies Campaign. However, it campaigned not simply on the principle of opposing privatisation but also from the standpoint of offering a clear

set of alternatives based on the already established collaborative model. The question pressed time and time again was, "What can Academies offer that cannot be better achieved by collaboration?" This was reinforced with data about Academies performance and by reiterating the simple but often ignored point that creating an Academy produces a change in who runs the school. It does not change the challenges facing the school. You still need a school improvement and learning strategy.

In November 2008 the council finally confirmed that it had decided to opt for making three of the National Challenge schools into Academies. Another Public meeting was held, this time organised solely by the

Government policy is not about challenging failure but about creating failure.

campaign. It was a debate on the virtues or otherwise of Academy schools and was chaired by Sir Peter Soulsby MP. Speaking in support of the Academies option was the Council Cabinet spokesperson for Children and Young People's Services, Vi Dempster, and David Kershaw. Speaking against Academies were Hank Roberts from Brent, Matt Follett, a local Green Councillor, and myself, Peter Flack, from SOS.

It would be fair to say that the meeting was a rout. Not one member of the audience of teachers, Headteachers, governors, parents and educational professionals spoke in favour of Academies. Not one person clapped when the Cabinet Spokesperson, Vi Dempster, finished her contribution. Speaker after speaker berated the council for its cowardice in the face of Government pressure. It was clear that the collaborative model for school improvement had a huge amount of support.

Throughout the spring and summer of 2009 the unions and the SOS campaign continued to press the case for the collaborative model, both in schools and in writing. Indeed, after serious problems in one National Challenge school in February 2009, the unions helped to apply the model directly to supporting that school. The results of this have been universally positive. Based on extensive partnership working with another local school and with the Education Improvement Partnership, which helped broker staffing support, it has transformed staff morale, stabilised student behaviour and refocused attention on learning.

This opportunity for the council to see the collaborative model working in the real world, to see its huge potential for generating lasting change and to encounter the enthusiasm across schools for this way of working has had an enormous impact on council thinking. At the same time the unions submitted a new document questioning the business case for Academies and laying out a comparison of the opportunities offered by continued collaborative working with the disruption, uncertainty and fragmentation that Academies would inevitably bring in their wake. In mid June 2009, after considering all of the available options, the LA finally

advised the DCSF that it no longer believed that Academies were necessary or appropriate in Leicester. Like a medieval saga this could run on.

In Parliament on Tuesday 30 June 2009 Ed Balls, Secretary of State, announced, while introducing the new White Paper on 21st Century Schools, that he was appointing Sir Mike Tomlinson, the former Chief Inspector of Schools, to investigate progress in National Challenge schools in Leicester. On the basis of Tomlinson's report, the Government would decide whether it wished to intervene. In reply to a question from Sir Peter Soulsby MP in the Commons, Mr Balls said, "*The Local Authority has a range of choices; it can consider Academies or National Challenge Trusts.*" This narrow, "Hobson's choice" contradicted the government's own guidance on National Challenge which also offers the options of Executive Headteachers and Hard Federations, both of which would fit with the Leicester model.

To its credit the council has responded to this clear bullying in a firm and consistent way, reiterating its commitment to securing improved standards through schools working together. All four political groups have made clear that they are totally opposed to the outsourcing of education in Leicester or imposed Academies. For its part, the DCSF and its officials have been shown to be less interested in successful learning than in fostering privately run Academy schools and the break up of Community Comprehensive education. That is a depressingly arid legacy from a Labour government.

At the time of writing it is impossible to predict the final outcome. The education community in Leicester is very clear what it wants to do and how it wants to do it. Government Ministers and the DCSF will need to ask themselves whether they wish to alienate an entire city which currently has three Labour MPs on the basis of a doctrinaire desire for Academies.

A footnote about learning

Lest anyone concludes that much of this was about a mechanical, instrumental push for improved KS2 and GCSE results – the government's prime objective – it is worth noting that the SOS campaign consistently stressed the importance of learning and of educating the whole child. This included promoting new curriculum initiatives to make learning more stimulating. It also meant tackling what, for many schools, was a key issue: literacy.

Large numbers of local children in Leicester reached secondary schools unable to read effectively. This meant they could not access the curriculum, became disengaged and potentially disruptive. It also deprived them of a fundamental human right. In February 2008 the SOS campaign bulletin proposed that as part of the collaborative drive to enhance education in the

city there should be a literacy crusade to ensure every child in every school was given the help and support necessary to enable them to learn to read.

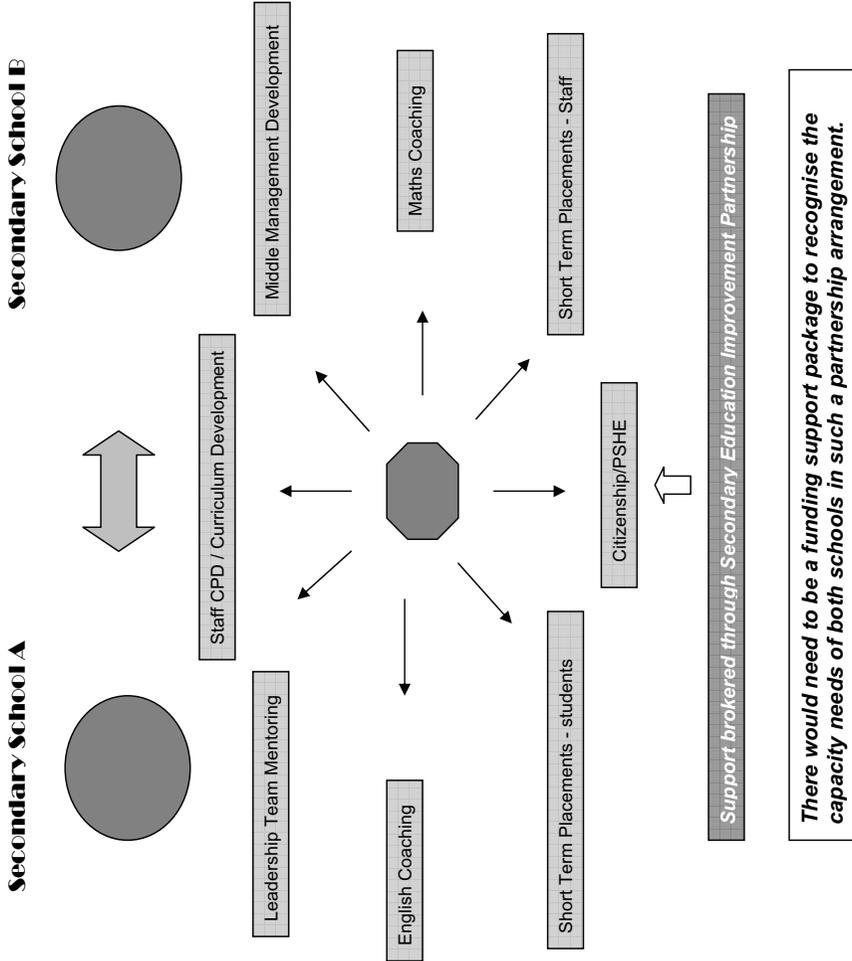
In early June 2009 the City council announced that, in partnership with the trade unions and local voluntary organisations, it was launching a unique pledge that every child leaving primary school would be able to read. The campaign, entitled, "Whatever it takes", will encourage schools to identify children at risk of failing to become literate and offer the schools a range of intervention strategies to support those children. This will range from Reading Recovery, Success for All and Ruth Miskin Literacy to "reading buddies" and reading clubs. Schools will choose what is appropriate to the needs of their children and their own circumstances. Each of these will be funded by the LA.

This has generated considerable support within the wider community and served to further strengthen the bonds between the LA and schools. For many Leicester teachers it is now possible to conceive of a future where our local schools are part of a much wider partnership that brings together a range of professionals with parents and the community in a shared enterprise aimed at maximising real learning for children and young people. That is an exciting prospect but one tinged with nostalgia because in practice that is what education should always have been about.

In fact it is almost like the "Caucus Race" in Alice in Wonderland, where everyone wins.....and everyone must have a prize.

Figure 1

Secondary Learning Partnership



Advantages:

- Partnership between a high performing school with a stable staff and a school facing challenging circumstances.
- Staff at school in challenging circumstances will feel supported rather than threatened by such a link.
- Such an arrangement matches the National Challenge options for improving schools which specifically recommends such partnerships.
- Offers a variety of new career opportunities for staff at both schools through inter-school curriculum and joint working arrangements including short-term staff placements.
- Partnership arrangements encourages cross-city sharing of responsibility for school improvement.
- They also reflect the city commitment to sharing best practice and drawing on local expertise.
- Can be over-seen by EIP who can act as facilitator for CPD, Middle management development and short term placement arrangements.
- Short term student placements offer an effective way of boosting performance.

Attainment gaps between deprived and advantaged schools

Lee Elliot Major

Dr Lee Elliot Major is Director of Research at the Sutton Trust, a charity that aims to improve social mobility through education. He has served on a number of advisory groups, most recently serving on the Academic Reference Group for the Government's White Paper on social mobility, and representing the Trust on the National Council for Educational Excellence.

Abstract: *Lee Elliot Major considers the reasons why the UK continues to have low levels of social mobility. He draws on research commissioned by the Sutton Trust to argue that there are two obvious policy responses to raising social mobility: one, targeting greater resources towards deprived schools, and two, creating more balanced intakes of pupils. In both cases possible reforms are fraught with difficulties and need to be implemented through a more radical approach to improving social mobility.*

One of the defining characteristics of countries such as the UK with low levels of social mobility are stark, persistent gaps in the school results between children from deprived backgrounds and their more advantaged counterparts. Far from acting as the great social leveller, the education system can perpetuate inequalities, and enable the privileged in society to consolidate their already substantial advantages for future generations.

Some might argue it was always thus. A century ago, Oscar Wilde memorably put it: "In England, education produces no effect whatsoever. If it did, it would prove a serious danger to the upper classes".

In modern-day Britain, however, it is now (almost) universally accepted that the educational divide damages us all. For those children on the wrong side of the divide, the price of unfulfilled potential is a lifetime of missed opportunity – a loss not only for the individual but the country as a whole. As the Secretary of State for Children, Schools, and Families, Ed Balls, recently said, the attainment gap is "the devil in our education system".

Attainment gaps

Attainment gaps can be expressed in different ways. Across England as a whole, for example, 40 per cent of children eligible for free school meals, the standard measure of pupil deprivation, obtained five or more GCSE examination passes at grades A* to C in 2008, compared with 67 per cent of those not eligible for Free School Meals. A recent Government analysis argues that average attainment gaps between the most and least deprived schools have been narrowing slightly in recent years. Gaps between pupils within schools however remain stark.

The Sutton Trust commissioned academics at the London School of Economics (LSE) to ask a different but equally important question: what is the achievement of a pupil in a highly deprived school compared with a similar child in a less deprived school?

It is of course this question that is close to the heart of parents themselves. In a school system that is highly socially segregated, and that encourages “choice” between schools, we would all like to know whether our son or daughter will progress at the same pace given the overall social make-up of other pupils at the school.

The analysis by the LSE focuses on the 550,000 pupils in England who completed their GCSEs in 2006 and are tracked on the Government’s National Pupil Database.

Attainment gap between deprived and advantaged schools

The findings of the research are unequivocal, and make for uncomfortable reading for parents, teachers and policy makers alike. Whether expressed in terms of “raw” gaps, in which the individual characteristics of pupils are ignored, or conditional gaps (which take account of the social background, ethnicity and prior attainment of pupils), the attainment of otherwise similar pupils in deprived schools lags significantly behind those in the more advantaged schools. This is as much the case for pupils from deprived backgrounds as it is for the most highly academically able pupils.

Pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) at some point in their schooling in the most deprived ten per cent of schools on average achieve two grades less in their best eight GCSEs than FSM pupils in the most advantaged ten per cent of schools, after individual factors (ethnicity, social background, prior attainment) are taken into account.

Highly academically able pupils (the ten per cent highest attainers at age 11) in the most deprived ten per cent of schools on average achieve half a grade less per GCSE examination than highly able pupils in the most advantaged ten per cent of schools, after individual factors are taken into account.

Academic and vocational options at GCSE

The researchers also found that highly able pupils were more likely to have taken a vocational qualification at age 16 at the most deprived schools than highly able pupils at the least deprived schools – indeed they were ten times more likely to have taken a General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ).

These results are a particular concern to the Trust. We believe that every child should be able to choose between vocational and academic qualifications, and one educational route should not be seen as an inferior option than the other; but a pupil should be no more likely to opt for a vocational course in a disadvantaged school than in an advantaged one. Personal choice and aspiration should be the driving force for such decisions, not the preferences of schools, preoccupied with maximizing their position in published league tables.

The “hidden poor”

The report also reveals that there exists a “hidden poor” among pupils in our schools who have at some point in their schooling been eligible for a Free School Meal, but who are not eligible for a Free School Meal in their current year (in this case their GCSE year). In 2006, 13.6 per cent of secondary school pupils in England were eligible for a Free School Meal in their GCSE year (roughly 75,000 pupils). But an additional 7.7 per cent of pupils were eligible for a Free School Meal earlier during their secondary school career (roughly 42,000 pupils). These pupils are in many ways indistinguishable from “FSM” pupils – facing the same levels of educational disadvantage. And yet they are ignored in the calculation of official attainment gaps.

Policy implications

Targeting resources and diversifying intakes

What are the reasons for the attainment gaps between deprived and advantaged schools? The researchers suggest that the differences could be due to a number of factors associated with advantaged schools, from better pupil behaviour to more effective teaching.

The analysis also provides direct evidence of a “peer effect” in schools, which was found to account for at least half of the attainment gaps observed. This suggests that pupils attending more advantaged schools derive additional educational benefits from being educated with pupils with higher levels of prior attainment, and lower levels of deprivation.

The findings point to two obvious possible policy responses: targeting greater resources towards deprived schools, and creating more balanced intakes of pupils. But in both cases, possible reforms are fraught with difficulties.

The Trust has long advocated a much more radical redistribution of funds to deprived schools – in particular paying higher salaries to teachers shown to improve results in challenging schools. But given current education budget constraints (or even cuts), this would be a controversial move.

Another solution to such stark educational inequalities would be to ensure that there is a more even spread of pupil intakes into state schools, in terms of ability and disadvantage.

Encouraging greater use of area wide banding, in which pupils of a range of abilities are enrolled at all local schools, would be a relatively low cost means of reducing this source of educational inequality. The intakes of all schools in the area would be genuinely comprehensive, and so the potential benefits and penalties of being with certain peer groups would be evenly spread.

In reality however the prospect of coordinated admissions between schools seems increasingly unlikely as greater numbers of schools are given autonomy over their admissions. In many ways the question for

The attainment of otherwise similar pupils in deprived schools lags significantly behind those in the more advantaged schools. This is as much the case for pupils from deprived backgrounds as it is for the most highly academically able pupils.

policy makers is now a more general one: how to safeguard the needs of disadvantaged children in an increasingly market based school system.

The inclusion of random allocation as a factor in admissions processes for over-subscribed schools is another option. Where a school has more applicants than places, which pupils get in is decided by random allocation which lessens the likelihood of “social selection”. But this approach has proved controversial with parents and politicians alike.

Highly able pupils

The research raises particular concerns that relate to the gap in achievement for highly able pupils between the most and least deprived schools. Government moves to monitor school achievement in a more systematic way, not just considering average attainment (the “report card”), may help raise awareness of the needs for this particular group of “gifted and talented” pupils if they are explicitly recognised. But questions remain over whether the Government’s current gifted and talented programme is operating effectively in all schools, particularly those with the most deprived intakes.

Advice and guidance

The findings raise questions about the extent to which pupils attending the most disadvantaged schools are entered for examinations other than full academic GCSEs.

It is possible that this simply reflects the different preferences of pupils and parents from schools with different levels of deprivation – pupils in deprived schools may be more likely to choose vocational courses. However, this tendency was also found to be true among the highest ability pupils who might be expected to opt for more academically-focused courses. This suggests that it is perhaps the schools that are encouraging the up-take of vocational courses, rather than being driven by individual pupils' choices.

This may be of particular concern for high attaining pupils attending these schools where they may be entered for examinations which serve to improve schools' "league table" positions but may not be in the best long-term interests of the pupils concerned. The implications for university prospects cannot be overstated; this is particularly important as some universities, particularly highly-selective institutions, would expect to see certain key academic GCSEs. Vocational qualifications would not have the same weight in the admission process.

This relates to the key area of the advice and guidance offered to pupils when choosing qualifications. The Trust has argued for a root and branch reorganisation of advice and guidance in state schools, with lead teachers coordinating advice for pupils during each Key Stage during school. We believe it is important that pupils and parents receive sufficient objective information and guidance, especially at disadvantaged schools. Schools need to give pupils honest advice about where certain choices are likely to lead them in terms of further and higher education and employment options.

Vocational qualifications have an important role to play, but a young person should be no more likely to take or not take them in a disadvantaged school than in an advantaged one. Personal choice and aspiration should be the driving force, not school preference or league table positioning.

Redefining pupil attainment gaps and targeting resources

The "hidden poor" represents a significant number of pupils that are not taken into account when currently computing attainment gaps between disadvantaged and advantaged pupils. The creation of an "ever FSM" category, composed of all pupils that at some point in their secondary schooling have been eligible for FSM, would increase the numbers of pupils classified as disadvantaged by over 50 per cent and potentially has important implications for the allocation of resources and for measuring

progress in schools.

We believe that the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) should consider using “ever FSM” as its indicator of poverty rather than FSM eligibility in a single year for example in the important Public Sector Agreement (PSA) target which aims to close the attainment gap. The effect of using the simple FSM measure in one school year as the indicator of whether a pupil comes from a “lower income and disadvantaged background” is to underestimate the attainment gap. The “hidden poor” are counted in the non-FSM group even though, as this analysis shows, they have levels of attainment very similar to FSM pupils. This has the effect of reducing the level of attainment reported for the non-FSM group and so disguising the extent of the attainment gap.

On the same basis the DCSF should also consider incorporating an “ever FSM” indicator into its Contextual Value Added modelling for schools as it is likely that this would improve the fit of the model.

Most significantly the extra resources the Government and local authorities devote to FSM pupils needs should also be devoted to schools with high levels of pupils who have been eligible for FSM at some point in their school careers. The challenges this latter group face are similar to their FSM peers, yet their needs are not currently recognised when allocating school budgets.

If we are to improve the social mobility prospects of future generations of pupils, we will need to think more radically of ways to narrow the stark attainment divide that still persists between deprived and advantaged schools, and take into consideration the entirety of pupils that face genuine disadvantage outside school.

“If you can teach Jason to read I’ll eat my hat ...”

Jean Gross

Jean Gross is the Director of the Every Child a Chance Trust, a charity which aims to unlock the educational potential of socially disadvantaged children through the development and promotion of evidence based, early intervention programmes. www.everychildachancetrust.org

Abstract: *As Sir Michael Barber, first head of the former Prime Minister, Tony Blair’s, Delivery Unit, recently observed: “The system in England has become much more effective at dealing with school failure over the last decade; in the next phase, supporting individual students who fall behind will be crucial”. This article describes the success of two such individual support schemes - Every Child a Reader and Every Child Counts – and examines their potential as a strategy for achieving success for all.*

Almost all teachers teach children who cannot read, write or do basic maths. Such difficulties are common. Every year, eight in every 100 children leave primary school and move on to secondary school with literacy and/or numeracy skills at or below the level of the average seven year old.

These figures have changed little since the introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. Like the poor, it seems, these children have always been with us.

But do they have to be? Is some degree of literacy or numeracy failure inevitable? In this article we will examine evidence to the contrary, and argue that it is possible for almost every child to learn to read, write and understand basic mathematics by the time they are seven.

The benefits

Achieving near-universal literacy and numeracy by the end of Key Stage 1 would be of enormous benefit, not only to the life chances of the children concerned, or to primary school teachers, but to secondary school staff as well. It is no coincidence that very many secondary schools that lurch from one hit list to another have a quarter of their intake with a reading level at or below that of the average seven year old, and similar figures for maths.

This pattern is repeated all over the country in schools serving large estates. It is asking too much of these schools to turn around an intake of

this nature. By the time they arrive, these young people have long ago decided that school is not for them. The profound damage to self-worth engendered by early school failure takes an inevitable toll on attendance and behaviour. If a quarter or more of each year group cannot access the curriculum at all, the climate for learning for all will be stormy.

Remedial action at 11 is too late. Remedial action even at eight, nine and ten is too late, given Government figures which show a 46 per cent chance of getting five good GCSEs including English and Maths if a child achieves level 2+ at the age of seven in all three of Reading, Writing and Maths, dropping to around a ten per cent chance if the child achieved level 2+ in one area, and almost zero if in none of them.

The children

We know quite a lot about the profile of children with severe and persistent literacy and numeracy difficulties. Some have problems in both areas; four per cent of eleven year olds achieve below Level 3 in both English and Maths. About half the children, however, have difficulty in one area but not the other. Those with literacy difficulties are predominantly boys (two thirds); in those with numeracy difficulties the split between boys and girls is more even. These very low achievers are predominantly poor, with free school meal eligibility levels more than twice the national level. A proportion have severe and complex special needs but the great majority are simply children who find learning a bit difficult, have had disrupted educational experiences, have little support from home, or have the phonological difficulties associated with dyslexia.

What can we do to prevent literacy and numeracy failure?

Every Child a Reader and *Every Child Counts* are initiatives aimed at providing a solution to severe literacy and numeracy difficulties. Initially a three-year, £10 million initiative, funded by the business sector and charitable trusts in partnership with government, *Every Child a Reader* is now rolling out nationally over the period 2008-11, reaching 30,000 children a year by 2011.

The scheme part-funds highly-skilled Reading Recovery teachers to provide intensive one-to-one help to six year olds who have made no progress in reading after a year in school. Children are taught individually for 30 minutes each day for an average of 12-20 weeks. The teachers also contribute to raising whole-school standards, helping class teachers assess children's precise learning needs and adapt their teaching accordingly, and providing training and support to teaching assistants using a range of less intensive literacy interventions in Key Stage 1 and 2.

Every Child Counts provides a similar one-to-one programme for numeracy. It targets the lowest achieving Year 2 children with a new

intervention called Numbers Count, delivered by specialists who also work with class teachers and teaching assistants to improve outcomes at whole-school level.

What both schemes have in common is catching children early, before the problems of anxiety and low self esteem set in and make remediation much more difficult. They also share a belief, backed by evidence (Ehri *et al.*, 2007, Wasik and Slavin, 1993) that the very hardest-to-teach children should have help from the most qualified and skilled adults in our schools, rather than the least. Both schemes are putting new, earmarked money into the system to help schools fund an increasingly rare commodity – specialist **teachers**. This is not to say that help from teaching assistants does not play a valued part in the schemes. But it is about using resources wisely, deploying a more costly teacher where the child needs that level of expertise, and a teaching assistant for the larger group of children whose needs are not so severe. It is also about supporting the work of teaching assistants through the presence in the school of a specialist who can provide on-site training, monitoring, advice and coaching.

Reading Recovery

The key to the successful implementation of the Reading Recovery intervention that forms the backbone of *Every Child a Reader* is the model of training. Three levels of professional staffing provide a stable training structure: university trainers who train and support “Teacher Leaders”; “Teacher Leaders” working at local authority level who train and support teachers; and school-based teachers who work with the hardest-to-teach children.

Initial training for Reading Recovery teachers is a part-time course, for one academic year, during which they work with low attaining children in their schools. Following the initial year of training, teachers continue to participate in ongoing professional development sessions. They continue to teach children in front of their colleagues and to discuss their teaching.

Every Reading Recovery lesson is meticulously planned in advance by the teacher, according to the individual child’s particular pattern of strengths and weaknesses. The lesson begins with the child re-reading two or three familiar texts, so as to develop fluency and provide practice in applying independent reading strategies. The teacher will explicitly identify and feed back to the child the strategies they used successfully:

“I like the way you went back to check that, well done . . .”

The teacher also encourages the child to identify their own independent reading strategies:

“Can you find a page where you got stuck and then found a way of sorting things out? What was it you did that helped you? How did you know it said ‘brothers’ not ‘kids’? Why isn’t it ‘box’?”

Next the child will re-read yesterday’s new book, while their reading is carefully recorded and then analysed by the teacher to inform teaching decisions. Then there will be work with magnetic letters on a whiteboard, to develop phonic skills. The child will compose and write their own sentence or story, analysing the sounds in words in order to write them. Sometimes the teacher will ask the child to listen to each sound in a word and write the sounds in separate boxes, before writing it into their sentence. The teacher might also ask the child to “take a word to fluency”, practising a common word over and over, tracing it in sand or with multi-coloured pens. Then the sentence the child has written is cut up into separate words or phrases and the child reassembles them into the right order. Finally the child is introduced to a new book, carefully matched to their reading level. The teacher might set a target for the child to use an independent reading strategy:

“What I’m looking for when you read this book is that you...”

Every lesson has homework; the child takes home several short familiar books to read with a family member at home, together with the cut-up sentence or story to re-make. Parents/carers regularly sit in on teaching sessions, so as to develop that all-important belief that their child can achieve.

Impact

Every Child a Reader has proved its worth. At whole-school level, schools with experienced Reading Recovery teachers made on average a four percentage point gain in Key Stage 1 Reading outcomes, when the national picture was static (*Every Child a Reader*, 2008). Individual children receiving Reading Recovery made over four times the normal rate of progress – an average 21 months progress in reading age after four to five months (just 40 hours) of daily one-to-one teaching. Eight out of ten caught up completely with their peers and the remainder made twice the normal rate of progress. Children in a comparison group of schools without the programme, who received the kind of help normally provided in Year 1, fell further behind. They made only seven months’ progress on average over a whole school year (Burroughs-Lange and Douëttil, 2007).

The effects of Reading Recovery don’t wear off. A study by the Institute of Education (Burroughs-Lange, 2008) found that 86 per cent of the children involved went on to achieve level 2+ in Reading at the end of Key

Stage 1, two percentage points ahead of the national average for all children. 77 per cent achieved level 2B, compared to 71 per cent of all children nationally. In Writing, too, the children outperformed national results. A 2004 study (Douëtil, 2004) found that over half of children who had had Reading Recovery five years earlier at the age of six – none of whom would normally be expected to achieve nationally expected levels – achieved level 4 or above at age eleven. Recent evidence from schools suggests that today this proportion would be even higher.

Numbers Count

Numbers Count is an intervention developed by Edge Hill University for Every Child Counts. It draws on best practice in a number of pre-existing, evidence-based schemes such as Maths Recovery, Hackney's Numeracy Recovery, and a multisensory programme developed in Leeds (Williams, 2008).

Typically, children are taught daily for 12 weeks. Sessions start with the child making a choice from favourite activities, designed to reinforce existing skills and strengths. In every lesson, the child will undertake some sort of counting activity. There are then further activities with objectives directly linked to an initial, diagnostic assessment. Learning opportunities are active and multisensory, ranging from jumping along number lines and hundred squares marked on the playground, to constructing number stories in "small world" settings with miniature play-people.

Children are constantly asked to articulate their thinking, for example by explaining to a puppet how to solve a problem. Teachers link learning to "real-life" applications, asking the child perhaps to sort out fruit orders for classes: "Class 1 needs 14 tangerines – how can we do that?" when the tangerines are bagged in tens. There is a very strong emphasis on sharing the learning objectives for the lesson and on children self-assessing their progress using traffic-lighting or smiley/not so smiley faces on the computer. At least once a week, the child leaves with an activity to do with someone at home, often a board game to play, or a traditional game like jacks or dominoes.

Results are now available for the first 1,600 children taught, and already the programme is showing it can catch children up after just a few weeks of daily one-to-one specialist teaching. The children have made over four times the normal rate of progress: 14 months progress in "Number Age" over just 20 hours of one-to-one teaching over a three month period. They have made an average gain of 15 standardised score points on a standardised test of numeracy skills. They also showed a 22 per cent improvement in confidence and attitudes to learning. Follow up three months after the end of the one-to-one teaching shows that the children

taught made an average five month gain in Number Age; in other words, they continued to make an above average rate of progress when back in class.

A full external evaluation of the impact of Numbers Count has been commissioned from York University. Children will be randomly allocated to receive Numbers Count in either the autumn, spring or summer terms of Year 2 and the progress of children taught compared with that of those waiting to receive the intervention. Long-term follow up is also planned. As with *Every Child a Reader*, national roll-out is on the cards, with plans in place to reach 30,000 children a year by 2011.

Conclusion

As Robert Coe of Durham University (Berliner, 2008) has said of schools that fall into the Government's "challenge" category, "to achieve the kind of improvement envisaged ... would mean systemic improvements of a kind unprecedented anywhere in the world. The problem of how to get pupils from challenging backgrounds up to a basic educational level is something every country is wrestling with". In this country we do have some embryonic answers, but they require a radical shift in thinking. They rely on early intervention in the core skills, tackling the problems faced by these pupils before they become intransigent.

Such intervention does not come cheap. Long term, it will pay for itself; costs to the public purse over the lifetime of each child who is not literate or numerate by seven have been estimated at up to £63,000 in unemployment benefits, lost taxes, prison costs, the costs of treating depression and so on (Every Child a Reader, 2008; Every Child a Chance Trust, 2009). Special needs, behaviour and truancy support alone for each child leaving Key Stage 1 below level 2 in reading or maths come to an average £2,200 per child in Key Stage 2 and £3,500 in the secondary years.

Nevertheless, the initial one-off costs of £2,600 per child for Reading Recovery or Numbers Count appear high. For a school, implementing both Every Child a Reader and Every Child Counts would cost in the order of £40,000 per year. Schools receive around half of this from Government or our charity, which brings the cost to the school of each specialist teacher down to that of a teaching assistant. This still leaves the school with difficult staffing choices to make, and other hurdles to face – the effect on their contextual value added results if children do much better in Key Stage 1, for example. Some headteachers also have to deal with the staffroom dynamics that convey that one-to-one support is a luxury, best foregone in favour of extra classroom support for overworked class teachers. Colleagues may express scepticism ("If you can teach Jason to read I'll eat my hat", as one teacher said before seeing Jason reach level 2B at the end of Year 2, after his Reading Recovery lessons).

For some headteachers, these pressures prove too much. Not all feel that it is worth their while investing resources in the very lowest attainers, when there are children who can be tipped into achieving nationally expected levels with less effort and expense.

There is also the risk of *Every Child a Reader* and *Every Child Counts* becoming political footballs in the future, with successive governments rejecting initiatives introduced by their predecessors. As with many effective innovations, the programmes have a degree of inherent fragility in the face of political change.

It may take the strong collective voice of teachers to ensure they become a permanent part of the education scene. But to make this a reality seems essential if we are to achieve that most elusive ambition for our education system – success for all.

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Helping the hardest to help

Abstract: *The variety of risks faced by children and young people at schools seems to grow each year. So how can schools use a manageable process to both support and challenge their own practice and pupils, families, communities and other agencies. This article shows how a description of 'excellence' mapped against the OFSTED self evaluation form (SEF) can be a tool of real partnership working to support the hardest to help.*

A school story

"Our pupils cannot leave their problems at the door – we can only help them succeed in learning if we understand and help them deal with the problems. All this inclusion work is in the end about improving attainment" (Headteacher)

This is a headteacher at a large London comprehensive school talking about her inclusive philosophy which has built a multi agency support team for young people and simple regular monitoring systems which identify those in need of additional support or challenge. The school's Head then went on to describe their approach to tension between two local communities of young people – getting the groups together with support from partner agencies, undertaking a joint community filming programme and discussion process to help each group understand the other, and then producing a school-based celebration of what brings them all together.

The result? Community tension reduced (as recorded by local agencies and residents), school community leadership and sensitivity acknowledged and valued and local partnerships for personal support strengthened. And for the young people – an increased sense of safety, recognition of valued personal skills, and no exclusions resulting from the tensions.

This example of dealing with some of the community tensions raises the question about how this relates to all the other risks which impact on young people in schools – as individuals or as groups. As any teacher and school knows, the nature, scale and threat level of these risks change over time, some linked to particular individuals and families, some linked to local population changes in the area served by the school, sometimes as

Graham Robb

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new technology emerges, and sometimes as a result of local, national or international events.

What risks?

At times it seems that the list of risks facing young people grows endlessly – and with it the role of schools in supporting and challenging young people. These risks include:

- threats to personal well being under the broad heading of safeguarding issues;
- bullying in all its forms, especially when prejudice-based bullying harms children and their opportunities;
- technology-based threats including cyberbullying;
- the risks of young people becoming engaged in crime and anti-social behaviour;
- the threat of young people being drawn into violent extremism (from whatever source);
- the impact of gang /group offending and availability of weapons – and not just in the well publicised areas;
- exploitation, including labour and sexual exploitation; and
- the personal experiences of some young people for example:
 - those with uncertain immigration status;
 - recent arrivals from conflict areas;
 - family movements including for political and economic reasons; and
 - young people undertaking longer journeys to and from school and, with the 14-19 curriculum, the likelihood of more young people undertaking multi centre studies and travelling further.

There is now extensive knowledge about the role which schools play in minimising the risks to young people and promoting the factors which protect them from risk. For example the risk factors of being involved in youth crime were mapped by the Youth Justice Board (fig1) and mapped against these are some sample school actions identified by pilot work in London.

So how are schools to manage this dynamic complexity – what values, structures and systems will produce the positive outcomes we all want for young people? It seems clear that a core element must be in enabling schools and partner services to work together effectively to describe and understand issues and agree common approaches to support and challenge for individuals and groups at risk of harm.

From both the school perspective and the youth justice perspective the Every Child Matters agenda in England has built much more commonality

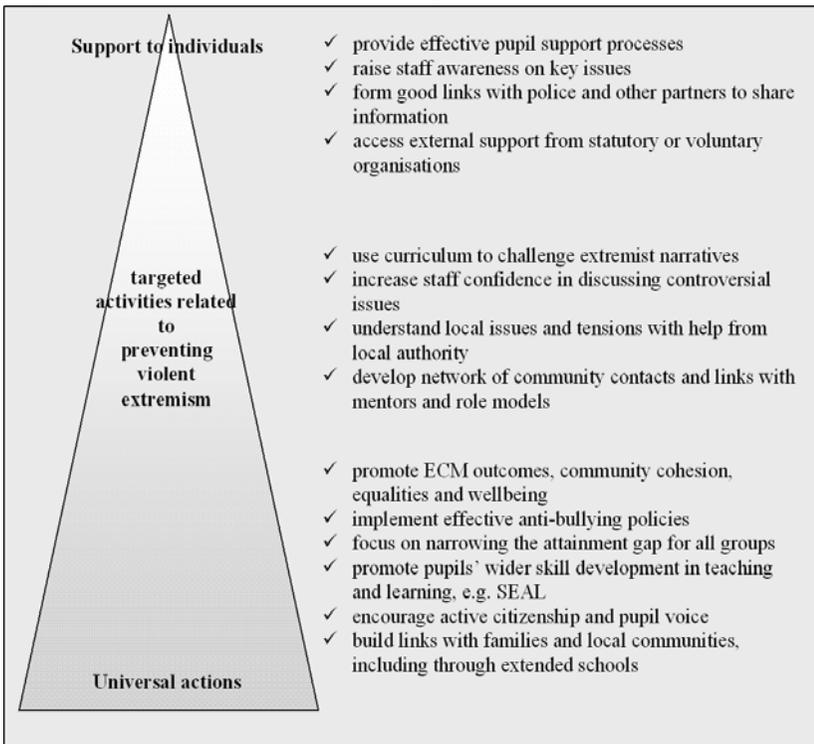
Fig. 1

Risk Factors and sample schools actions for young people engaged in Youth Crime		
What are the risk factors? Source YJB 2005	How prevalent in young offenders is this risk factor?	What might schools do?
Aggressive Behaviour (including Bullying)	25%	1' Safe to learn' - Anti bullying programme development
Low achievement starting in primary school	24%	2 Achievement tracking for most at risk - and intervention programmes
Family history of behaviour problems	22%	3 Multi agency liaison and strategy for specific families
Alienation and lack of social commitment	22%	4 Promote inclusion in school ethos and positive citizenship
Peer attitudes condoning problem behaviour	21%	5 Challenge and support strategies within strong positive behaviour ethos
Family conflict	21%	6 Home-family engagement
Lack of commitment to school (inc persistent absence)	21%	7 Robust engagement with persistent absentees and families
Friends involved in problem behaviour	21%	8 Multi agency partnership strategy for example Safer School Partnerships
Availability of drugs	19%	9 School liaison with local anti drugs strategy - and for individuals including with Police
Early involvement in problem behaviour	18%	10 Behaviour recording and intervention identifies those most at risk
Community disorganisation	18%	11 School seen as positive influence engaged in community
Poor parental supervision and discipline	18%	12 Home school liaison supported by parenting interventions as needed
School disorganisation (e.g. poor registration system to track attendance)	17%	13 Resilient school systems to monitor lesson attendance, behaviour, progress and individual problems.
Source	http://www.yjb.gov.uk/Publications/Resources/Downloads/Risk%20Factors%20Summary%20fv.pdf	

of language across services such as schools, police and children's social care about needs and responses to those needs. The language of universal, targeted and specialist provision provides a framework for cooperation between agencies. For example the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) toolkit "Learning Together to be Safe" on the role of schools in preventing violent extremism sets out a framework for thinking about such partnership roles (see fig 2) as well as being clear about the specific contribution which schools make – for example providing the safe place for debate on controversial issues which is a key protective factor.

But pulling all this together still requires a manageable process. This article describes a programme developed in London but now being adapted for use by local partners in different parts of the country. Schools and partners in some cases are planning to use a full locally validated Award programme, while in other cases are customising it for local needs. The ideas and process are shared here to promote wider analysis of what schools do, and who can help them achieve their goals. Although the detail here describes schools and partners in England, the same principles can be applied elsewhere.

Fig 2 Framework for Partnership actions



Learning together to be safe, DCSF 2008

<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/violentextremism/>

Safety and Cohesion Award Programme

The London Youth Crime Prevention Board (LYCPB) was an 18 month programme in 2007–2009 chaired by Lord Victor Adebowale. It was set up by the Home Secretary to develop some simple steps to reducing youth crime. The role of schools was quickly identified as a key factor by all the partners from children's services through police and youth offending teams to voluntary sector groups and politicians.

In discussion with Heads in pupil referral units (PRUs), primary and secondary schools it became clear that the work of the LYCPB could help schools develop solutions but that these must give answers to dealing with risks beyond just the issue of youth crime.

What the Heads and school staff wanted was:

- a process which did not add to accountability or governance burdens;
- a process to build partnership working and access specialist support when needed, as well as build in school capacity; and
- a way to celebrate what the school was already doing and support development.

So in partnership with The National Strategies (London), Youth Justice Board, Government Office London and the Metropolitan Police the Safety and Cohesion Award Programme was developed and then piloted in a range of schools in London in 2008 – primary, secondary, PRU and special schools in inner and outer areas of the city.

The Safety and Cohesion Award Programme has three goals:

1. To help all pupils keep safe (including on the way to and from school) because:
 - young people who feel unsafe cannot focus on their studies and are more likely to be persistent absentees;
 - schools are overwhelmingly seen by pupils as safe places but there is always more that can be done to deal with issues such as bullying;
 - peak risk times for young people are the times and travel routes after school; and
 - the collective professional knowledge and commitment to safeguarding pupils is now supported by the duty to promote pupil well being and promote community cohesion.
2. To help keep those most at risk out of trouble because:
 - the risk and protective factors for young people becoming involved in youth crime are well established and schools have a vital role in minimising the risks and maximising the protective factors;

- challenging bullying behaviours under the 'Safe to Learn' strategy promotes physical and emotional health and helps all involved focus on improving attainment;
- there is now more knowledge about the role which schools can play in preventing young people being drawn into violent extremism; and
- prevention of risk to young people is now a priority of local authority services, including Youth Offending Teams, Police and Targeted Youth Support services.

3. To recognise the positive contribution of young people in their communities because:

- a positive school ethos should be built on an achievable shared vision of community cohesion;
- young people must be central to finding solutions to the risks facing them;
- building community confidence, including the confidence of young people, is now a policing priority – and so commitment to this principle is now part of the Safer Schools Partnership work of police forces; and
- the negative portrayal of young people in the media is best countered at local level by practical evidence of their contribution.

The Safety and Cohesion Programme process then developed to meet the design requirements set out by the pilot Heads and staff.

- The programme used the OfSTED self evaluation form (SEF) format as a framework for the whole process. The pilot schools demonstrated what 'excellence' would look like in achieving the goals. These then became the descriptors against the various SEF categories. Finally these were mapped against the known risks for youth crime, violent extremism and also safeguarding standards which help give prompts for the sort of work schools undertake or might develop.

A sample section of the framework based on the 2008-09 SEF is shown at fig 3. Note that this is now being updated to the SEF for 2009. As well as the descriptions of excellence there are prompts about specific risks to help partners think about the sort of actions which they might take as a result of the action planning.

- The programme requires a partnership approach where school staff work with key partners to assess current practice and engage future support. The key partners are:

Fig. 3: Sample from safety and cohesion framework

OFSTED categories * NB New Framework from Sept 09	Indicators of effective work by the school in partnership.	Quality Judgements: Outstanding , Good, Satisfactory, Unsatisfactory	For 'at risk' Pupils	Partners	Evidence	Prompts to address RISKS to PUPILS	Preventing Violent Extremism	Safeguarding
SEF Section.	Descriptors	School Staff views	For 'at risk' Pupils	Partners		Youth Crime factors		
2 Views of learners, parents, stakeholders - including YOT, LA , Police, community sector		School staff including leaders and support	Those at risk of harm and of causing harm	LA team, Police, YOT, Community		These are supported by reference exemplars		
2a	2.1 The school celebrates good news stories promoting positive perceptions of pupils and of community					4 Promote inclusion and positive citizenship	1 Promote Rights Equalities and Freedom	
2a	2.2 School seeks to work positively with voluntary, community and faith organisations which reflect the diversity of the community to support and challenge 'at risk' pupils.					8 Multi agency and community partnership	9 using external programmes and groups	
2d	2.3 The school actively engages all pupils in developing school practice to keep safe and avoid crime					4 Positive engagement	10 Understanding local issues and watching for signs	
2d	2.4 The school actively engages pupils at risk in developing school practice to keep safe and avoid crime					7 Engage Absentees 12 Home school liaison	12 using targeted and specialist support	

- Safer School Partnership / Safer Neighbourhood Team;
- locality children's services including Youth Offending Teams; and
- voluntary and community groups and parents.

But pilot schools showed how much local variation there was in the partnerships which schools form. The London pilot had engaged full support from London Council leaders, Police Commanders at local authority (LA) level, and Youth Offending team leads, so their staff supported this partnership assessment work.

- The programme requires that schools should make particular efforts to engage the hardest to help pupils in assessing what can be done to achieve the Safety and Cohesion programme goals. This process is not easy but one pilot school, for example, held a small focus group discussion with those pupils already in contact with the Youth Offending Teams. In other cases issues of local community tension gave an opportunity for staff to get together pupils from different groups in conflict and understand their views. In each case a selection of the SEF descriptors gave a focus for the discussions – and helped gather evidence for the assessment.

The Safety and Cohesion Programme process

The starting point is to understand the Programme, the link with the SEF and to identify the key local partners who should be engaged in the process. These need to be a mix of operational partners, such as SSP officers, but also engaging the strategic partners to make sure there is support for what the school is trying to achieve.

The partners then undertake a joint review meeting using the SEF and identify evidence and data to illustrate judgements about school and partner performance. This process takes about two hours. The partners then agree to meet after a month or so by which time further data gathering (including from the hardest to help pupils) can be completed. At this second meeting the partners agree judgements against the 'excellence' descriptors and then prioritise three or so development goals for the subsequent year. From pilot experience these are mainly joint partnership activities although some are school specific.

Finally the partners agree a shared action plan and agree to review progress after a set time – usually six months. This part of the process also takes about two hours

The pilot schools in London have submitted their action plans and evidence for validation by a central steering group. In due course they will receive an Award certificate recognising their achievement. This Award can

be a public acknowledgement of the commitment of the school to safety and cohesion, while in other cases schools want to use this mainly as a school improvement and SEF focused activity. Meanwhile the agency partners can also use the outcome to illustrate their contributions for example to Local Authority Indicators, or community cohesion and community confidence measures.

Outcomes

So what sort of outcomes came from the work of the pilot schools? A key message was that the very act of undertaking a partnership activity like this had strengthened working relationships between school staff and

There is now extensive knowledge about the role which schools play in minimising the risks to young people and promoting the factors which protect them from risk.

partners very positively. It is apparent that active engagement from key partners is essential if the programme is to impact on practice. The pilots highlighted that whilst these relationship were already in place, with most schools this programme helped to cement

and progress these relationships. The process clearly helped define developmental priorities and responsibilities through the action planning process.

So what specific outcomes were there from the pilot schools?

- the programme highlighted how police can plan patrols and routines to respond to the concerns of pupils about their safety. One of the pilot school partnerships has already used the framework to map youth crime data on transport routes after school hours working with Safer Neighbourhood Police teams;
- one pilot school focussed on the role of the Safer Schools Partnership Officer in their sports programme, which has been invaluable in building open relationships with at risk pupils;
- a pilot school partnership is developing a credit system for mentoring and promoting positive role models to support a high risk group;
- the Schools Help and Reporting Page (SHARP) programme for confidential reporting and discussions about crime is being implemented as a result of some of the analysis in the pilot schools;
- ten key information sharing priorities were identified by a pilot school with local partners on vulnerable young people;
- a primary pilot identified a key issue as support for vulnerable pupils returning home alone at the end of school. A police Community Support Officer was engaged to support such pupils;
- after school patrols were re-designed based on pupils' views and police data on key threat or crime hotspots;

- transitional arrangements for pupils receiving their education in neighbouring boroughs were identified by two London Boroughs where post code related gang activity was identified as a concern. This involved close work with Transport for London and visible after school patrols at high risk transport hubs;
- closer information sharing protocols were identified for pupils known to Youth Offending Teams via local prevention programmes. The aim is to ensure schools are involved and supporting young people who are on the verge of offending; and
- information sharing protocols were revisited between the police, YOT and schools, specifically in relation to young people arrested out of school hours and over weekends. Protocols were addressed to ensure schools receive this information and have a process in place to support any pupils that are arrested.

Current developments

The programme is still in a developmental phase in London. In 2009 Pupil Referral Units in the capital will take part in the programme. The next step is in supporting school Behaviour and Attendance Partnerships to develop this work in undertaking locality based analysis and development. Meanwhile the focus on safeguarding is leading to more mapping work against the new OfSTED SEF to prompt thinking about school and partner safeguarding processes.

Meanwhile the new guidance on Safer School Partnerships (DCSF and Home Office) points to local needs analysis and planning processes which parallel the Safety and Cohesion Award Programme.

In other parts of England, partners at Government office, Local Authority or police level are thinking about ways in which the Safety and Cohesion process can be used in their areas to support schools.

Conclusion

The work of schools in supporting and challenging children and young people who are potential victims of the range of risks is a very important, but complex one. We know so much more now about the nature of risks, but new issues constantly develop in a rapidly changing society. The Safety and Cohesion Award Programme shows how schools can both celebrate what they already achieve and work with partners to develop new provision.

Consumer kids - the influence of the commercial world on our children

Agnes Nairn

Agnes Nairn is Professor of Marketing at two of Europe's leading Business Schools and Research Fellow at the University of Bath. She writes, researches, speaks and consults on the ethics of marketing to children, is co-author of "Consumer Kids" and was part of the DCSF panel commissioned to write a review of The Impact of the Commercial World on Children's Wellbeing which will be published in autumn 2009.

Abstract: *Marketing to children is big business and the commercial world has become an integral part of young people's everyday lives. This has raised concerns around the world, particularly by teachers who are faced with reconciling the values of profit-motivated consumption with those of socially-motivated education. This article considers some of the key issues and proposes an agenda for a robust, inclusive public debate.*

Background

There is no doubt that this generation of children are consumers, but the sheer scale of consumption may come as a shock. Globally the children's market is worth \$1.33 trillion – the equivalent of the entire GDP of India. In the UK alone we spend £100bn annually on our children (Liverpool Victoria, 2009). Regular pocket money and week-end jobs give our young people £12bn of their own disposable income but as family units become more flexible and complex, fewer children receive fixed amounts of weekly pocket money and more get ad-hoc handouts as and when they need or want something. In the UK, £2.1bn was doled out like this last year, much of it by grandparents (ChildWise, 2008). And of course this does not include the family items over which children have increasing influence. Teenagers often do the research and choose the model of TV, DVD, mobile phone or computer – after all, in many homes, they are the only ones who can programme these devices!

It is not surprising, then, that corporations are vying for a share of this rather lucrative pie. One marketing conference alerts potential attendees that "there's £5bn out there burning a hole in UK teenagers' pocket" whilst a leading research company promises advertisers that their database of youth behaviour statistics "helps users to target parental expenditure by focusing

on the key markets where kids pester the most” .

Commercialisation of childhood?

What has been referred to as the “commercialisation of childhood” is causing concern across the globe (Schor, 2004; Palmer, 2006; Mayo and Nairn, 2009) and in 2008 the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) invited an interdisciplinary team of ten academics led by David Buckingham of the Institute of Education to undertake a year-long review of the Impact of the Commercial World on Children’s Wellbeing. I was privileged to be part of this team and our report is due to be published in autumn 2009. When the findings are made public it is to be hoped that a robust public debate will ensue.

Teachers have been amongst the most concerned groups because they have witnessed first-hand pupils turning into consumers. Research in 2008 by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers concluded that their survey *“confirms the huge pressure on young people to fit in with their friends and peer groups. It is incredibly sad to hear how many youngsters are bullied or isolated for not having the same clothes or accessories as their classmates. Advertising and marketing have made our society increasingly image-conscious and our children are suffering the consequences.”*

Teachers are right to be concerned, particularly as children now spend twice as much time in front of a screen (TV, computer, phone, or games console) as they do in the classroom – time which exposes them to media and material which is almost entirely funded by commercial advertising and marketing of one sort or another (Fielder *et al.* 2007).

Yet adults, whether teachers, politicians, NGOs or parents, find it hard to put their finger on exactly what the concern is and why we are so worried. There is often the risk of “golden ageism” – of wishing for some idyllic commercial-free childhood from days gone-by which almost certainly never existed. Advertising, after all, is hardly new. But today in the USA there are schools which are sponsored by Pepsico and where drinking a Coca-Cola on school premises would merit a suspension. There is Channel One which broadcasts educational programmes in schools but only if children sit through a compulsory series of adverts first and school buses funded by marketing messages for soft drinks and confectionary pumped through the sound system. Most in the UK would agree that the use of educational space for such commercial targeting of young people is undesirable.

But what about the current UK practice of Disney providing High School Musical material for the dance curriculum in primary schools? On the positive side it makes it easy for the teacher and fun for the children. On the negative side it can encourage pupils to pester their parents for the multitude of merchandise which so far has earned Disney over 100 times

their investment in the film. “*The great thing about having a hit like this*” enthused one investment analyst recently, “*is that there are many different ways of monetising that hit over and over.*” (Fixmer and Hoffmann, 2007). Is it OK to sell space on the walls of the school corridor to advertisers (as happens in UK schools) to fund extra resources? And is it, for example, just as acceptable to advertise youth brands as helpline information? There are guidelines for marketing activity in schools, but they are very flabby and, most importantly, there has been no debate either within the education community or with the wider public about what commercial activity is and is not tolerable within our schools, or even how to go about making these decisions.

Perhaps, very fundamentally, the idea of children being trained in profit-motivated consumption practices sits uneasily with the idea of

Although buying things to express your identity, group membership or even love has its place it will always be tinged by the uncomfortable juxtaposition of the success of the “haves” with the failure of the “have-nots”. Its place in an “education without failure” has limits which deserve exploration.

educating our young people for socially-motivated citizenship practices. The goal of the former is private financial gain whilst the goal of the latter is the public good. The former has a whiff of greed whilst the latter involves some generosity. Stephen Ball and Deborah Youdell (2009) have talked of the “hidden privatisation” of public education which has introduced a new vocabulary of

“competition”, “local economies of student worth” and “value” as distinct from “values”.

Marketing to children has also introduced a new vocabulary which tells young people that having the latest brands or sporting the latest hairstyle is their “right” because “they’re worth it” and encourages a culture that “you are what you own”. This, in turn sits uneasily with an agenda for “education without failure”, for those without the financial means to keep up with the trends are disadvantaged. In many ways marketing depends on failure. After all, you only need the product on offer if you are persuaded that something in your life is missing.

What do our pupils think?

But does the commercial world inculcate values of greed and failure wholesale into our young people? If we take the words of best selling song, “The Fear” by youth icon Lily Allen then we might well think so. “*I want to be rich and I want lots of money. I don’t care about clever, I don’t care about funny. I want lots of clothes and **** loads of diamonds. I’ve heard people die when they’re*

trying to find them...I am a weapon of massive consumption. It's not my fault it's how I'm programmed to function." Are our young people now programmed to want, get, have and acquire?

In a recent book (Mayo and Nairn, 2009), we approach this question from the child's point of view. The research thus draws from surveys, interviews and conversations with over 3,000 children of all ages and backgrounds. We discovered that things look rather different from this vantage point. Whilst for adults the commercial world and the non-commercial world are separable entities, this is simply not the case for children. Since birth this generation has lived in a seamless universe where toys, clothes and even food are licensed "properties" of global corporations. Sports such as football are giant businesses. The internet which has been so rapidly embraced by young people is funded almost entirely by marketing and advertising of one sort or another. And it is increasingly hard, in the virtual world, for children to know what is designed to entertain and what is designed to persuade. Indeed, during the DCSF review, the children we talked to had great difficulty understanding exactly what "the commercial world" is. It is simply the air they breathe.

This does not, however, mean they are "programmed to function" as unthinking consumption machines. In many ways children are very sophisticated. Some Year 6's we talked to displayed astute knowledge of

Whilst for adults the commercial world and the non-commercial world are separable entities, this is simply not the case for children.

business practice including appreciation of commercial pricing strategies and a precocious understanding of the laws of supply and demand. One boy, talking about Beyblades – the little spinning tops – told us *"...so they made them extremely expensive 'cause they (marketers) knew it'd go out of fashion soon so if they could quickly sell them now for lots of money then they would get loads."*

Other children talked about stashing their Lego and train sets in the attic because they knew they would have a rarity value in the future and some even talked about the relative merits of leaving their dolls in the boxes (rather than playing with them) to maintain the resale price. Some of the young people we talked to were inspired to become entrepreneurs and one now runs a highly successful software business which designs products to track online paedophiles. Others were simply scathing of marketing tactics to the extent that only about 30 per cent of children believing anything the adverts tell them.

But this doesn't mean that today's children are quite as "media savvy" as some marketing gurus would have us believe. Very many children are caught out every day by scams such as Jamster where children think they

have bought one ringtone on their mobile phone just to find they have signed up to a subscription service which wipes out their credit every time they top up. Others are disappointed by advertising promise. One seven year old boy told us about buying an Action Man. *"... when they advertised them they showed them really, like in places that suited them, but when you actually got them, you didn't actually get the setting... it was just your bedroom."* Beyond this are the new immersive online marketing techniques which work implicitly in such a way that it is hard for children and particularly teenagers to mount any sort of resistance (Nairn and Fine, 2009).

Conclusion and steps forward

The commercial world is not a separable influence on our children that we can remove at will – it is an inextricable part of their everyday lives. But the commercialisation of childhood has happened quickly and rather covertly and we now need open public debate and discussion on how our society should manage the relationship between institutions for public good, such as our schools, and institutions for private profit, such as the corporations behind the brands our kids love to buy. We need to find ways to ensure that our children are not being educated as consumers at the expense of being educated as citizens. Although buying things to express your identity, group membership or even love has its place it will always be tinged by the uncomfortable juxtaposition of the success of the “haves” with the failure of the “have-nots”. Its place in an “education without failure” has limits which deserve exploration.

The debate over the commercialisation of childhood has so far been an extremely polarised one. Moral panic over the corruption of vulnerable youth faces down the celebration of the strong, emancipated child consumer. We need to move to a more inclusive approach. This is probably best done through coalitions of teachers, advertisers, parents, businesses, regulators, academics, NGOs and government. Such groupings are unusual but are forming already, for example the International Business Leaders Forum (www.iblg.org). And such gatherings should not forget representation from young people themselves. The National Children's Bureau, for example, already has an active Youth Panel – as does the DSCF. For, in the face of commercial pressures, children are neither the helpless victims some groups see nor media savvy experts the brand managers like to imagine. They, like adults, are feeling their way and making their own decisions about what they think is and is not acceptable practice in their world.

In writing our book we asked children to tell us how they believe marketers should behave towards them. They asked three things of the commercial world:

- please be honest and upfront with us about products and services;

- please treat us with respect and treat us seriously; and
- please protect us from inappropriate marketing and control advertising for products which are bad for us.

This is a pretty good start. There are other fundamental issues which could be added to the agenda for a public debate led by a co-operative of diverse stakeholders:

- *The internet.* Perhaps for the first time in history children know much more about a life-changing technology than adults. Teachers, parents and politicians must educate themselves about how the internet functions and how it is commercialised if they are to stay ahead of the game. It cannot be adequately regulated until concerned adults truly understand it.
- *Children's privacy.* The ways in which data is collected from children (by phone, by computer, in shops) is becoming ever more sophisticated. There are serious issues relating to the collection of children's data for marketing purposes which are currently under the public radar.
- *Children exposed to adult media.* Children spend a lot of time on websites which are meant for a general audience – which means the adverts served up to them are often of an inappropriate nature. In the same way, with the advent of the Personal Video Recorder and other recording devices the 9 o'clock watershed has become an anachronism. Regulating what children see and where has become a serious challenge.
- *Brand bullying.* Some food and drink corporations have taken on some responsibility for giving out healthy eating messages to children (e.g. signatories to the EU Pledge). Partnerships between schools and owners of desirable brands could lead to similar initiatives.
- *Permissible commercial activity in schools.* Finally and perhaps most importantly for schools, we need to decide what criteria should be used to decide when it is acceptable for businesses to be involved in education and when it is not. The current guidelines are not adequate.

There is much to be debated and much to be decided: so let the discussions commence!

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Trusting the judgement of teachers: changing assessment policies in Wales

Abstract: *This article discusses how current changes to national policies on assessment in Wales are a reflection of a distinctive social, cultural and political context. The rationale for main policy developments, each of which has the judgement of teachers as central to it, is explained.*

Assessment policies for schools in Wales have evolved in recent years to such an extent that, when fully in place, the new policy framework that has emerged since 2002 will be unrecognisable from that which was legislated for in the 1988 Education Act. For a decade Wales followed broadly the pattern of national testing at the end of Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 that was introduced in England. The main differences in detail were in relation to the Welsh language and to the use of test results to “name and shame” schools (Daugherty, 2009). This article explains how and why Wales has now adopted a framework that places the main responsibility for assessing pupils’ progress on the people who are best equipped to make those judgements, their teachers.

The policy context

The 1988 Education Act belongs to an era when most education policies were still developed and implemented on an “England and Wales” basis. The Welsh Office was not a policy-making department but was seen from London as, in effect, a regional office (Daugherty & Elfed-Owens, 2003). It

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had a minor role in a policy process that was “England-based and London-centred” (Fitz, 2000).

The establishment of a National Assembly for Wales in 1999 changed that relationship but it is also “important to remember that devolution did not begin with the creation of a National Assembly” (Rees, 2007). Evidence for that can be found in the aspects of assessment policy that had already begun to diverge in the pre-1999 era of “administrative”, as distinct from “parliamentary”, devolution. For example, the assessment regime for Welsh, a core subject in Welsh-speaking schools, included assessing oral proficiency unlike the regime for the assessment of English which excluded “speaking and listening”. More generally, the Secretary of State for Wales also decided not to publish the primary school performance tables that were to prove so controversial in England. These were early signs of differences in approach to assessment policy that were to emerge more strongly after the National Assembly had been established.

The Learning Country was published in 2001, in effect the Assembly Government’s green paper, setting out a vision for education in Wales. Anyone in any doubt that this marked a parting of the ways from education policies in England should be directed to statements in it such as “avoiding unnecessary competition between schools” and “developing effective, local, non-selective comprehensive schools. They have been successful”. (National Assembly for Wales, 2001). Has such unequivocal advocacy of non-selective secondary education been heard from any Education Minister in England since Anthony Crosland and Circular 10/65?

Provision in the 2002 Education Act for decisions on curriculum and assessment in Wales to be made by the National Assembly made it possible for the Education Minister for Wales, Jane Davidson, to decide that national testing of seven-year-olds would be discontinued from that year. The fact that there was virtually no opposition to that change presumably encouraged the Minister to consider potentially more problematic, and more controversial, changes to the statutory assessment framework at Key Stages 2 and 3.

A different rationale

Recommendations from two parallel reviews, one by a group set up the Minister (Daugherty Assessment Review Group, 2004; see also Daugherty, 2008) and the other by the Government’s own advisory body (Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (ACCAC), 2004), laid the foundations for a new framework. It is significant that the remit of the former review included (p.41) that the group should look at “how assessment should be used to enable the whole child to develop and flourish”. Reviews of assessment and testing in

England have not been noted for concerning themselves with how assessment can best support pupil learning.

One of the curiosities of national assessment in both Wales and England since 1988, had been that no clear rationale had ever been set out to explain and justify the assessment system's requirements. Indeed many commentators have concluded that the system has had multiple purposes without serving any of those purposes well. The Daugherty Assessment Review Group (DARG) noted (p.7) that "the current statutory assessments are not well matched to purpose" and challenged itself to devise a coherent system in which each component had an explicit main purpose.

The assessment regime introduced in Wales since 2004 can best be understood by reference to the main use to which evidence from each component is to be put.

First, ACCAC's case for "priority to be given to the needs of each individual learner" and the DARG recommendation that the "development of assessment for learning practices should be a central feature (of the new system)" has led to the Development of Thinking and Assessment for

Reviews of assessment and testing in England have not been noted for concerning themselves with how assessment can best support pupil learning.

Learning programme that is now, following a successful pilot, being rolled out across all primary and secondary schools in Wales (Welsh Assembly Government, 2007-2008). This is assessment for learning (AfL) as integral to classroom practice and not the target-driven, test-based distortion of AfL favoured by some policy-makers in England who are more interested in narrowly-defined outcomes than in the quality of children's learning.

Second, on assessment at the end of Key Stage 2, both reviews placed less emphasis on aggregated test data as an assumed indicator of the quality of schools and more on the assessment of individual pupils to facilitate their educational progress as they move from primary to secondary school. Hence the replacement of Key Stage 2 tests with a process that relies on teachers making the initial judgement about their pupils' levels of attainment. Consistency is enhanced not only by guidance materials and training for teachers but also, crucially, by primary and secondary teachers working together in cluster groups to moderate those initial judgements. That part of the new arrangements is now being implemented by groups of teachers meeting to review portfolios of children's work in the core subjects and arrive at judgements that secondary schools can have confidence in when pupils start in Year 7.

Also at Key Stage 2, a concern that too much of the focus had been on

pupil performance in whole subject terms led to the recommendation that a skills profile should be drawn up initially in Year 5 and then carried through, updated at intervals, into the secondary school. The first tranche of optional skills assessment materials was sent out in May 2009 to support teaching, learning and assessment in relation to the greater focus on skills that is a feature of the revised National Curriculum in Wales.

For Key Stage 3, the only justification for assessing all pupils towards the end of Year 9 would seem to be to put on record what each pupil has achieved across the full range of National Curriculum subjects. To enhance consistency of judgements by subject teachers, schools are submitting sample portfolios of pupil work in every National Curriculum subject for scrutiny and feedback, backed up by school visits and verifier reports. As at Key Stage 2, but with a different moderation model because the context is different, teacher judgement of attainment levels is being strengthened by procedures designed to increase the confidence, of teachers themselves as well as of “users” of the information, in the quality of those judgements.

Why a different rationale?

However, to discuss the new framework only in terms of ensuring its components are “fit for purpose” would be to interpret these changes in assessment policy as an exercise in rational, culture-free policy-making. In the real world the changes can only be understood fully by reference to the social, cultural and political context in Wales and its influence on the role of schools in Welsh society (Jones & Roderick, 2003).

There was a different “Great Debate” about education in Wales in the period following Prime Minister Callaghan’s Ruskin speech in 1976, the differences reflecting the ways in which “educational reform, cultural politics and political nationalism became closely inter-related” (Phillips & Daugherty, 2001). An example of this can be found in the early days of the National Curriculum when cross-curricular themes were in vogue. While England chose “Citizenship” as a theme Wales opted for “Community Understanding”, the guidance on which included such surprisingly radical sentiments as: “pupils should know how and why wealth and resources are distributed unevenly between individuals, groups, nations and continents” (Curriculum Council for Wales, 1991).

In relation to the organisation of secondary schools, not only has the Welsh Assembly Government claimed that Wales’s non-selective comprehensive system has been “successful” it is also the case that hardly any voices have been heard in favour of a return to selection at 11 since the last grammar school in Wales closed its doors in 1982 (Phillips, 2003). John Major’s short-lived policy of “a grammar school in every town” was not taken seriously in Wales even by the Welsh Conservative Party. For most people in Wales the idea of labelling 11-year-olds as educational failures is

now unacceptable.

Another feature of the school system in Wales that is relevant to the reform of assessment policies has been the lukewarm response to the idea of a “market” in which state-funded schools compete for customers. As in England, managers at all levels of the system in Wales have become accustomed to analysing the aggregate data compiled from the results of Key Stage tests. However, the effect of those analyses has been felt at the local level as LEAs and the inspectorate, Estyn, monitor school performance and parents use the same data to influence their preferences for schools in those urban areas where such a “choice” is possible. What is missing in Wales is England’s annual test results jamboree, when league tables listing individual schools are given a high profile nationally and the London-based media also have a field day publishing misinformation about 25 per cent of 11-year-olds not having reached the average standard (yes, the average standard!) expected of children at that age.

In the broader context of Welsh politics and society these aspects of education policy can be seen as symptomatic of a distinctive culture. Rhodri Morgan, First Minister for most of the first decade of parliamentary devolution has spoken of establishing “clear red water” between the politics of Cardiff and London (Davies & Williams, 2009). One of his advisors, Mark Drakeford, has suggested that social policy in devolved Wales is a reflection of the tradition of “progressive universalism”, a defining principle of which is that “in the design, delivery and improvement of public services, co-operation is better than competition” (Drakeford, 2007). If co-operation rather than competition is to drive improvement in education in Wales, then the role of teachers in helping all their pupils to achieve becomes critical.

Can teachers’ judgements be trusted?

Placing greater reliance on teachers for assessing the attainments of their pupils within a national system has long been contentious in England and Wales. The original GCSE coursework arrangements and the over-ambitious piloting of Key Stage 1 classroom assessments in the early 1990s can be called up in evidence by those who believe only formal, time-limited testing can deliver reliable results.

There is, however, a high price to pay in terms of the educational experience of young people when reliance is placed on necessarily short, written, closed-book tests. It is worth remembering that the rationale for introducing the GCSE, signed up to at the time by politicians, teachers and the wider public, rested on a widely acknowledged need for greater validity in public examinations at 16; young people should be able to show what they “know, understand and can do”. That goal was lost sight of as GCSE coursework became a patchwork quilt of moderation arrangements, the

well-designed, carefully embroidered procedures in some subjects mixed in with the many threadbare patches where weak provision for moderation of teacher judgement did little or nothing to ensure consistency of outcome.

How then to ensure that the mistakes made in the planning and implementation of the GCSE and of National Curriculum assessment are not repeated as the new arrangements in Wales for teacher-based judgement of pupils' attainments are rolled out?

First, it is essential that those arrangements are designed so that they are appropriate to the use to which the information about pupil performance will be put. One example of procedures that focus on a specific purpose, to facilitate pupil transfer, is the cluster group moderation model at the end of Key Stage 2 which aims to increase the

For most people in Wales the idea of labelling 11-year-olds as educational failures is now unacceptable.

confidence that secondary schools can have in the judgements made about individual pupils as they approach the age of transfer. For the same data to be aggregated and used as a high stakes indicator of school performance would not only distort the

main purpose but it would also be using assessment data for a purpose for which a locally-oriented, consensus model of moderation is not fit. School performance is closely monitored in Wales but in a way that differs from the parallel process in England; the main responsibility rests with local authorities which draw upon a range of evidence including statutory assessments.

Second, it has to be recognised that a large-scale system that relies on teacher judgement needs a sophisticated supporting infrastructure if it is to be effective. That infrastructure needs to take account of the fact that teachers are routinely faced with meeting diverse demands for information about their pupils' attainments, for example from parents and from senior management teams. Any additional requirements, including reporting on pupils to meet statutory requirements, must be both demonstrably manageable and clearly justified in terms of contributing to the pupils' educational progress.

The supporting infrastructure to which I am referring here involves, for example, clarity in criteria and standards, provision of ongoing support and training, and at least as much emphasis on quality assurance as on quality control of the assessments. Getting all these things right is just as important as it is with the equivalent processes involved in maximising the validity and reliability of test outcomes. There are echoes here of the eight links in the validity chain proposed by Crooks (1996); even if only one link in the chain is weak, validity is compromised. We should be thinking in similar terms about dependability in systems of summative

teacher assessment, with the effective planning and implementation of each link being essential for the outcomes to be dependable.

Conclusion

The main argument here is that assessment policies in Wales are evolving in ways that reflect the dominant values in Welsh society. As The Learning Country put it in 2001 (National Assembly for Wales, 2001):

“The informed professional judgement of teachers, lecturers and trainers must be celebrated without prejudice to the disciplines of public accountability; and with proper regard to clearing the way to unleash the capacity and expertise of practitioners.”

Those of us who have played a part in shaping the system will also claim that the new assessment policies are better suited to the goal of helping every child to achieve in the broadest sense. But with those policies not fully implemented until 2012 it is too early to judge the impact they have had alongside the other reforms such as the new Foundation Phase and the revised National Curriculum in Wales with its emphasis on skills development. Only in the years to come will it be possible to judge how these policy changes have influenced the quality of educational outcomes in Wales.

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The reliability of the statutory end of Key Stage 2 assessments and their use in England

***Abstract:** Great importance is placed on the results of England's end of Key Stage 2 statutory assessments. They are used to monitor the progress of individual pupils, to judge the effectiveness of teachers, schools, and local authorities, and, at a national level, to monitor the standard of education over time. This article discusses the reliability of these assessments and whether they are appropriate measures for high-stakes use.*

The reliability of assessments

What is eight times seven? This was the question asked of Stephen Byers on a Radio Five Live show in 1997 when he was the Education Minister. He gave the incorrect answer of 54, which was seized upon by journalists who took delight in questioning whether or not he was an appropriate person to hold the position of Education Minister. However, an answer to a single question does not necessarily provide a reliable indication of a person's ability. If a child takes a test several times, s/he will not get the same score each time. Careless mistakes will be made. A child can have an "off day" when something has happened, perhaps at home or during the previous break, which has caused upset or distraction. If a question is too difficult

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and a child makes a guess, sometimes this will result in a correct answer and sometimes not.

The type of assessment which requires a judgement to be made, for example the quality of a written essay, is prone to greater uncertainties than the type which uses questions that simply require a yes/no or multiple-choice response. Assessments based on observations of behaviours, for example the methods recommended for the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile, are subject to even larger errors as they include the errors in judgement or inconsistent judgements made by the assessors, and the possibility that pupils do not choose to show what they know and can do within the opportunities provided and the time allowed.

Increasing the length of an assessment improves its reliability. A maths

Students felt overwhelmed by the scale of global poverty and struggled to see how they could make a positive difference.

test which includes 30 items will give a more reliable indication of an individual's ability in the area of interest than a test which contains just four or five items. This has to be traded against the amount of time

that is available for an assessment and the length of time that someone, particularly a young child, can concentrate for. Increasing the reliability of assessments which require complex judgements, or which are based on observations, is much more difficult.

The reliability of end of Key Stage 2 statutory assessments

Cronbach's alpha (α) is a statistical method for measuring how well a group of test items assesses a particular construct such as mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2. It gives an indication of the reliability of a test. Reasons that lead to a test having a low Cronbach's alpha value will include factors such as the items measuring more than one construct, for example if a maths item contains a large amount of text it is also measuring reading, or if pupils are answering the items erratically. Educational tests of attainment are considered to be of acceptable quality if they have Cronbach's alpha values of 0.8 or higher. The highest possible value is 1, which would indicate a perfectly reliable test with no measurement error. The Cronbach's alpha values for the 2007 end of KS2 statutory tests are shown below:

Reading test	$\alpha = 0.89$
Spelling test	$\alpha = 0.89$
Maths test	$\alpha = 0.92$
Mental mathematics test	$\alpha = 0.89$
Science test	$\alpha = 0.84$

(National Foundation for Educational Research, 2008)

The reliabilities of the tests themselves are acceptable but the way that the results are reported can be misleading at three levels: pupil, school and national.

Pupil data

A child's true score on a test lies within a certain range. This range is influenced by the internal reliability of the test (as measured by Cronbach's alpha) and the kinds of environmental factors described earlier. On a different day a child is likely to achieve a slightly different result, and the reliability of the test indicates how likely. When the results are presented as scores on a highly differentiated scale, for example a percentage scale, a difference of one or two per cent in the scores of a test taken on two separate occasions is interpreted by most people as a small difference and can be understood as not being significantly different. Likewise, a difference of one or two per cent between the scores of two individuals is also usually considered to be small.

But the scores from the end of KS2 tests are converted to National Curriculum levels and the difference between a level is perceived as being qualitatively larger than a difference of one or two per cent. And yet the difference of just one mark on a KS2 test, which would be expected if a

Assessments based on observations of behaviours, for example the methods recommended for the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile, are subject to even larger errors.

child re-took the test, can mean that s/he is assigned a different National Curriculum level and those levels are crucial indicators of a pupil's and a school's success. Wiliam (2001) estimated what proportion of children would be misclassified at the end of KS2. That is the proportion of pupils whose range of possible scores overlapped with the cut-off points for National Curriculum levels and so with a slightly different score on a different day would be assigned a different National Curriculum level.

For a test with a reliability of 0.85, which is close to the science test in 2007, Wiliam estimated that 27 per cent of pupils were misclassified. As the reliability of a test improves, the proportion of misclassified pupils decreases but only slightly, and for a reliability of 0.9, which is similar to the reading, spelling and mental mathematics tests, the proportion of pupils misclassified still remains at an estimated 23 per cent; almost a quarter of pupils.

School data

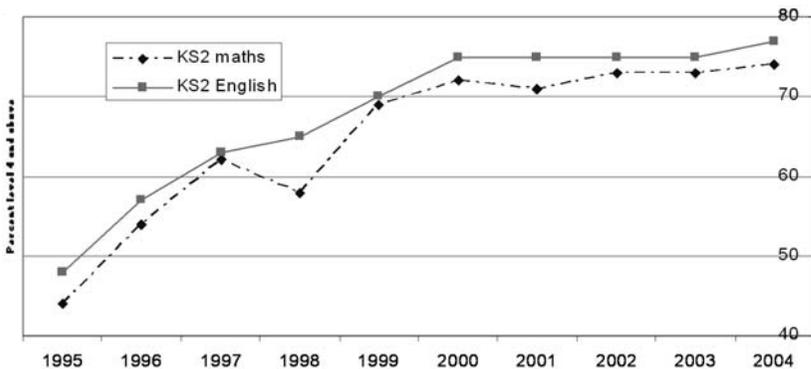
To what extent do the end of KS2 statutory assessments produce reliable

measures of schools? The proportion of pupils achieving a National Curriculum Level 4 or higher is reported for every school but how much confidence can we have in that figure? This can be estimated statistically and reported as a confidence interval. A 95 per cent confidence interval is commonly used and this indicates the range in which we are 95 per cent confident a true score lies. The 95 per cent confidence interval will include a wider range of scores for a small school than for a large one. If there are only ten pupils in Year 6 and two of them have “off days” and don’t perform to their full potential, this has a more significant impact on the percentage of pupils achieving a Level 4 or higher in the school than if two pupils out of a cohort of 100 pupils have an “off day”.

To illustrate this further, take a school which has reported 70 per cent of its Year 6 pupils as achieving a Level 4 or higher. If that school only has 11 pupils in Year 6, the 95 per cent confidence interval ranges from about 34 per cent to 86 per cent. That means, we can be 95 per cent confident that the true percentage lies anywhere between 34 and 86 per cent. For a cohort of 100 pupils, the range is somewhat narrower but still significant at between approximately 67 per cent and 73 per cent. This issue has been recognised to an extent by government and the results of schools with ten pupils or fewer in Year 6 are not published, however results of schools with 11 pupils in Year 6 are published without the 95 per cent confidence intervals.

National data

The end of KS2 statutory assessment results at national level have been available since 1995 and have been used to monitor standards over time. The data showed a remarkable rise in standards between the years of 1995 and 2000 as illustrated in the following chart taken from the paper by Tymms (2004) which challenged that rise.



Tymms made several points about the trends illustrated in the chart. Firstly, there was a noticeable dip in maths results in 1998 which he

attributed to the introduction of a mental maths test. Secondly, except for that result, the percentage of children achieving a Level 4 or higher in maths was very similar to the percentage for English. Would that be likely when separate efforts were being put into raising literacy and numeracy with quite different interventions? It would be unexpected for different interventions to have a similar level of impact in two different subject areas.

A third point to note is the steep rise in results from 1995 – 2000 and then an abrupt levelling off. If the literacy and numeracy strategies were having such a beneficial effect on pupils' achievements, why did that effect suddenly stop leading to any further improvements beyond the year 2000? Tymms analysed data from independent studies of pupil achievement that had been taking place over the same period. These independent studies did

If the literacy and numeracy strategies were having such a beneficial effect on pupils' achievements, why did that effect suddenly stop leading to any further improvements beyond the year 2000?

not mirror the trends shown in the end of KS2 test results. In fact they showed a small increase in mathematics attainment and virtually no difference in reading over time. New end of Key Stage tests are produced each year and it is difficult to ensure the equivalence of these from one year to the next.

Cut-scores are used to define National Curriculum levels and these have to be decided each year for the new tests. A difference of just one mark in a cut-score makes a difference to the proportion of pupils achieving a particular level. Tymms estimated that setting the cut-score just one mark too low corresponded to 1.4 per cent more pupils achieving a Level 4. This sounds like a small proportion but across a national cohort, year on year, it can give a false impression of a significant rise in standards. In his explanation of the factors that could contribute to the apparent sharp increase in reading and mathematics attainment shown in the chart, Tymms suggested that the statistical methods used by QCA to equate the standards of the new tests from one year to the next were faulty. These flaws were recognised and corrected, which is reflected in the change in the trend and a levelling off of the percentage of pupils achieving Level 4 or higher from 2000 onwards.

Discussion and conclusions

This article has described how the end of Key Stage 2 tests have good internal reliability. However the way that the test scores are rescaled and

reported can be problematic and misleading. Converting the test scores to levels for each pupil means that almost a quarter of pupils are estimated to be misclassified. Pupils and parents alike place importance in these results. Pupils spend many hours preparing for the tests, sometimes at the expense of other curricular experiences and are under pressure to achieve the highest possible results.

Aggregating the pupils' levels to provide a figure for the percentage of pupils in a school who achieved a Level 4 or higher introduces more statistical uncertainty. In small schools, the 95 per cent confidence intervals, which demonstrate the range within which we can be reasonably confident the true percentage lies, are enormous. Yet the results are still published for schools with as few as 11 pupils and they are widely used: Some parents take them into account when selecting a school for their children; they contribute to teachers' and schools' reputations within the local community and the authority; local authorities use them in the target setting process; and they are one element of the information used by Ofsted during the inspection process. At the national level, flawed statistical procedures used to equate the tests from one year to the next meant that results on standards over a period of five years were incorrectly portrayed.

Tymms (2004) recommended that statutory test data should not be used to monitor standards over time and that an independent body should be formed to administer tests for this purpose similar to the past Assessment Performance Unit in England and other such bodies across the world. To monitor the progress of individual pupils in order to plan their learning and to identify special educational needs, schools need to be able to use a system that is confidential to themselves in order to gain an accurate measure of each pupil's strengths and weaknesses, a system which uses a fine-grained scale and not a crude measure of broad levels, and not a system that is subject to public scrutiny and to the corruption which can result from that.

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Still the best job in the world?: trusting teachers; valuing education

Abstract: *The views of a random, but wide ranging group of NUT members on the theme of this edition of Education Review produced a rich evidence base for this article. Several common themes emerged, particularly on the curriculum, assessment, teachers' workload, initiative overload and the lack of trust in the teaching profession. Teachers' commitment to the education and welfare of their pupils shines through, despite their serious concerns about many aspects of teaching today.*

The National Union of Teachers traditionally holds its annual National Education Conference (NEC) over a weekend in July at Stoke Rochford Hall, the Union's training centre in Lincolnshire. It is attended by approximately 175 NUT members working in all phases of education, together with members of staff from the Education, Equality and Professional Development Department.

The NEC has a high reputation among Union members as it gives them the opportunity to listen to, and debate, with keynote speakers who are "movers and shakers" in the education world. They also share their professional views with colleagues in working group sessions on current educational topics. It enables participants, at the end of the school year, to reflect on their own professional challenges and review the general political landscape of education.

The survey

At the 2009 NEC, participants were invited to contribute to the current

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edition of *Education Review* by completing a short survey on the theme of “education without failure” which would be used as the basis of an article. Twenty participants took part in the survey; some chose to remain anonymous; others described themselves in terms of their teaching experience and some gave their names, which are listed at the end of the article.

Seven respondents identified themselves as female; six as male. Five said they worked in the primary sector; eight in secondary, two in special and one in higher education. A head teacher, a head of department and two subject co-ordinators also identified themselves. In terms of teaching experience, three were in the first five years of their teaching careers; six had been teaching between five and ten years; three had taught between 11 and 30 years and a further three had over 30 years’ teaching experience. Geographically there was a good spread, including both urban and rural schools, with London and Yorkshire strongly represented.

While the survey cannot claim to be a representative sample of teachers in general or even of NUT members, the figures above show that it does provide a good cross-section of views from male and female teachers, working in a variety of sectors in schools from all over England, with a

The clear message is that policy makers should listen to and trust teachers.

range of teaching experience. The fact that respondents attended the Union’s NEC and completed the survey showed their interest in education policy issues and their commitment to the Union and its education, equality and professional development work. This is borne out by their responses which have provided a rich evidence base for this article.

Under the general theme of “education without failure”, participants were asked what they thought were the key education issues facing the education service currently – for pupils; for teachers and for policy makers.

Pupils

In terms of pupils, reservations about assessment and the curriculum dominated the responses, with several references to the impact of SATs, “relentless testing”, pupils being required to “jump through hoops” and having “too many numbers in their heads”. Respondents emphasised that teachers had to teach to the test and that testing dominated the curriculum, which was described as “arid” and having a lack of provision for non-academic pupils.

“A curriculum focused on countless ‘skills’ which seemingly reserves ‘rigour’ in subjects for the more able rather than allowing every student the chance to achieve at the highest level.” (Secondary teacher in Essex, two years’ teaching experience)

Class size was identified by four respondents under this section and SEN provision, inclusion and pupil behaviour were also mentioned as were social factors such as deprivation and family breakdown.

Several respondents identified pupil motivation as an issue, particularly in a changing world and difficult job market. Pupils needed to be reminded of the value of education as some felt it lacked relevance to their lives. There were references to pupils not having a voice, being “a number not an individual” and needing to see themselves as part of a community. One respondent mentioned that there were too many cover teachers and another said that pupils lacked the time to talk to adults in school.

Teachers

The dominant issue in this section was that of workload – overload, lack of work/life balance, paperwork and bureaucracy. Assessment and reporting requirements contributed to all of these and resulted in teachers feeling alienation from the true purpose of education and from their sense of their own professionalism.

“Of course I assess pupil progress each and every lesson, of course I personalise learning – I just don’t appreciate having to do the paperwork and admin to prove I do!” (Head of Department in Leicestershire, six years’ teaching experience)

“Data tracking analysis is an increasing part of my job and I hate it – I understand it is necessary but I feel it makes the individual child invisible.” (Primary teacher, outer London, 25 years’ teaching experience)

The relentless stream of Government initiatives were cited by five respondents which were described as “change without thought” and distractions from teaching. Several mentioned the erosion of teachers’ professional status and their lack of control over their teaching which demonstrated an absence of faith in the profession, exacerbated by the press and media.

“Owning the education process we are expected to lead – the abiding lack of trust in teachers by government and management, and the assumption that we are ‘deliverers’ of something devised elsewhere rather than creative professionals.” (Secondary teacher in Essex, two years’ teaching experience)

Other issues identified were: league tables, pupil behaviour and abuse from parents, class size, OFSTED, mental health issues, shortage of jobs, use of teaching assistants as “cheap teachers”, fragmentation of education,

Building Schools for the Future and the lack of professional unity.

The following quotation from a head teacher encapsulates both the satisfaction and pressures of teaching today:

“Affecting young people’s lives is still the best job in the world but strangely it can sometimes seem a thankless task and headship even more so.” (Head teacher, small rural primary school, Yorkshire, nine years’ teaching experience)

Policy makers

Many of the above issues were confirmed in the section on the key issues for policy makers, with the clear message that policy makers should listen to teachers and trust teachers. Respondents wanted reviews of the curriculum and assessment to reflect trust in the profession and research evidence, rather than political imperatives and successive quick-fix initiatives. Local circumstances and community input with less central direction were also advocated.

“Taking time to consider if change is really necessary. Policies should consider all stakeholders. It is time we all, from top down, remember the edict – do no harm – if we wish to improve educational opportunity for all.” (SEN specialist teacher, outer London, 16 years’ teaching experience)

“I can only assume it must be increasingly difficult to come up with yet more policy changes!” (Secondary science teacher in Leeds, three years’ teaching experience)

Government action

Respondents were asked which single action by the Government would most improve education. A dozen messages came across loud and clear:

- stop interfering in education;
- stop initiatives;
- listen to teachers and recognise their professionalism;
- abolish SATs and replace with teacher assessment;
- abolish league tables (referred to as “weapons of mass destruction in areas of social deprivation”);
- reduce class sizes;
- stop privatisation and support a fully comprehensive education system;
- remove competition and emphasise co-operation;
- stop performance-related pay;
- abolish OFSTED;
- allow local decision making; and
- give pupils their voice.

Union campaigning

In answer to the question: “What is the most important education issue for the Union to campaign on?” SATs and the wider issue of assessment were cited by 13 respondents while six mentioned workload.

Other issues listed were: league tables, prescription of content in the curriculum, 14-19 education reforms, privatisation, a fully comprehensive education system, class size, equality of opportunity, professional unity and teacher status under threat from higher level teaching assistants.

Union professional development support

Unsurprisingly, given the previous responses, support on assessment in general and Assessing Pupil Progress in particular was most frequently mentioned when respondents were asked what were the main issues on which teachers need professional development support from their Union.

Support on coping with workload, work/life balance, stress and mental health issues as well as teachers’ rights – knowing what was acceptable

Learners should be at the centre of the education system not an afterthought.

and what was not – and the confidence to challenge the demands of senior leadership and teacher bullying were also listed by many respondents.

Others wanted support on career progression and how to take control of their own professional development, particularly as funding for CPD was being eroded.

Further topics mentioned were: pupil behaviour, climate change, tolerance of differences, human development, specific CPD for special schools, the ability to critique, ICT, trusts, teacher governors.

Education without failure

Respondents were asked how they interpreted the phrase “education without failure” and this question produced thoughtful responses which confirmed teachers’ dedication to the education and welfare of their pupils in the broadest terms. Many respondents voiced frustration about the barriers within the current education system that prevented many pupils reaching their full potential. Respondents emphasised that the education system should celebrate the achievements of every pupil, irrespective of the level of attainment, and that happiness and success as future citizens were far more important than Government-prescribed targets. Learners should be at the centre of the education system not an afterthought.

“Engaging all pupils, including the most vulnerable. Education that does not leave anyone behind and caters for the needs of all.” (Secondary teacher of

humanities in Leeds, 11 years' teaching experience)

"Success motivates. Failure demotivates." (Teacher with 30 years' teaching experience.)

"Children all have an opportunity to feel good about themselves and their achievements." (SEN teacher in Cheshire, nine years, teaching experience)

"Not comparing children against children, school against school. Recognising small steps (however small) as success." (Teacher with 19 years' teaching experience in primary middle school)

"Student achievements must be made the focus of education. Their progress, whether academic or not, is their success. Academic attainment is important but achievement in this area alone is not a necessity for all. Without excessive academic targets students will not feel they have failed." (Secondary science teacher in Leeds, three years' teaching experience)

"I came to teaching because I believed it had helped me to lift my eyes from the immediate world around me to the wider horizons. I had been encouraged to be an active participant in the world around me. Education without failure does this."

One respondent felt that no-one would listen if the phrase "education without failure" was used. Others suggested that failure should be seen as "not success yet" or as "education without end".

Making it a reality

Respondents were asked how "education without failure" could be made a reality. Again, the themes of trusting teachers as professionals (by politicians and the media), de-politicising and re-humanising education, fewer initiatives and more joined up thinking, abolishing league tables and high stakes accountability, reviewing the assessment system and curriculum, lowering class size and enabling more one-to-one teaching emerged strongly in answer to this question.

"Less testing, more humour, more rich learning environments for children and teachers."

"Stop measuring and labelling everything and build a culture of lifelong learning for all which does not demonstrate failure but sees it as not having yet succeeded." (Secondary subject leader in inner London, ten years' teaching experience)

One respondent who had 11 years' teaching experience in both primary and secondary schools had a specific proposal:

“Look again at the concept of ‘inclusion’ – often unable to meet needs of every pupil in a mainstream setting. Need to spend more money on establishments, teachers and resources that can deal with complex needs of certain children who need specialist teaching materials outside of the mainstream setting”

Conclusion

The NUT survey on “education without failure” provided a fascinating snapshot of the views of respondents on the key issues facing education in the summer of 2009. While it cannot claim to be a scientific sample of the whole of the teaching profession, those respondents do reflect a broad spectrum in terms of education sector, types of schools, teaching experience and locations. It can be no coincidence that a number of common themes emerged which have important messages both for policy makers and for the NUT itself:

- the need to trust teachers as dedicated professionals and involve them in any necessary changes to the education system, particularly in the curriculum and assessment;
- keep changes to a minimum – no more headline grabbing initiatives;
- politicians need to focus on the long term needs of young learners and value their individual achievements, not measure success in terms of targets and statistics;
- for “education without failure” to be a reality, pupils with special needs or from particularly challenging backgrounds are entitled to well funded education provision from appropriately trained professionals;
- excessive workload is a clear and present danger to the stability and sustainability of the teaching profession and therefore to the achievement of a first class education service in England;
- education and those who work in education need to be highly valued by society. This should encourage and motivate young people to value their own educational achievement which in turn is vital for the future economic success of the country.

In the final school year before a General Election, politicians of all parties would benefit from a genuine and meaningful debate with teachers and their unions on how the issues highlighted in the NUT's survey can be tackled.

Thanks

Thanks are given to those who took the time to complete the NUT survey

Janet Theakston

and gave full and thoughtful responses and quotable quotes which have formed the basis of this article.

Contributors

Elysa Alton, Simon Bissett, John Blake, Matthew Fazey, Louise Fineberg, Jean Laight, Derek McMillan, Saleh Rahman, Ian Staerck, Ed Sweatman, Rachel Williams, Claire Willis, plus eight other NUT members who chose to remain anonymous.

Delivering the 14-19 entitlement within North Hertfordshire

Abstract: *This article describes the background to the development and delivery of the 14-19 reforms within North Hertfordshire. It explores the planning and operational structure created to support the reforms. Finally, it focuses on the detailed strategies involved in the collaborative delivery of the new 14-19 Diplomas.*

Background

The North Hertfordshire Strategic Area Partnership Group (SAPG) was formed as an integral part of the Hertfordshire 14-19 Strategy – “Putting the Learner First” (2005-08). The Strategy envisaged the learner entitlement being delivered through partnership working across seven travel to learn areas. The SAPG area covers the towns of Stevenage, Hitchin, Letchworth, Baldock, Royston and Buntingford. It includes 14 mainstream and four special schools, two educational support centres, the North Hertfordshire College and a local training provider. There are approximately 10,000 Key Stage 4 and Post-16 learners engaged in education and training.

The SAPG constituent towns experience major differences in their socio-economic features. Stevenage, created under the 1947 New Towns Act, has significant pockets of deprivation and an industrial/commercial base that has moved from manufacture through to financial services and on to distribution and some high tech work. Letchworth, which was the first Garden City, together with Hitchin, Baldock and Buntingford, are relatively affluent, and a large proportion of residents work in London or Cambridge. Royston shares some of the features of Stevenage, but also enjoys the benefit of its proximity to Cambridgeshire.

Matthew Glew

Matthew Glew is the Co-ordinator of The North Hertfordshire Strategic Area Partnership Group. Following a period in management with British Rail, he entered teaching and worked at every level in FE. Throughout his career, he has published a range of text books and learning materials. In August 2006, he was seconded from a senior managerial role into his present post. Since then the SAPG has established itself as a major player in collaborative working, especially in relation to the new Diplomas.

The SAPG has a long and successful history of offering joint curriculum provision through shared collaborative arrangements operating within its four local consortia, which cover the Stevenage Partnership, Hitchin Consortia, Letchworth and Baldock Consortium and Royston and Buntingford (linking now with Cambridgeshire).

These arrangements include Pathfinder status for Stevenage under the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) initiative 2003-05; blocked vocational timetables within clusters of schools at KS4; a well established Increased Flexibility Programme (450 learners), which was extended in 2007-08 (30 additional learners) into the special schools; a Young Apprenticeship in Business Administration; a shared matrix and prospectus at KS5; involvement in the National College for School Leadership (NCSL)/Department for Communities, Schools and Families (DCSF) Shared Leadership "Next Practice Field Trial"; and participation in the Institute of Education's Quality Assurance and Improvement Project.

All schools work closely with employers on placements and curriculum development and the College engages with over 1,000 employers across a range of provision. Collaboration has helped to transform the educational culture and enhance opportunities and pathways. This was commended in the 2005 Area Wide Inspection and the 2007 Joint Area Review.

The quality of collaborative working was further recognised when, under Gateway one, the SAPG was approved for the first five Diploma lines of learning for a 2008 start (430 learners) and also for participation in the Functional Skills Pilot for 2007. This placed the SAPG in the top ten partnerships in the country and has led to opportunities at a national level for hosting, on behalf of the National College for School Leadership (NCSL), Focused Learning Visits relating to Diploma development, including curriculum delivery.

The SAPG has also been twinned with the DCSF 14-19 Policy and Local Delivery Division, which allows for the monitoring of emerging good practice and developing of an understanding of how Diploma strategies are created and implemented. The SAPG has been recognised by IDEa as an example of good practice under its Beacon Scheme for 14-19 education and training. QCA has drawn heavily on advice from the SAPG for its emerging good practice guides for Controlled Assessment in relation to new Diplomas.

Under Gateway two, the SAPG was approved for a further three Diploma lines and this was further increased by three additional lines in 2009.

All of the above reflects a model of collaborative delivery, which clearly builds upon the specialisms of partner organisations. Those of the schools have been mapped against the six specialist academies of the North

Hertfordshire College and they in turn are linked through to the faculties at the University. This has created progression opportunities from Entry/Level 1 through to foundation and first degrees offered collaboratively through the Hertfordshire Higher Education Consortium, which comprises the four further education colleges and the University of Hertfordshire. AimHigher has helped to raise opportunities and expectations to increase higher education applications

SAPG Planning and Operational Structure

The SAPG plans, on a two year rolling cycle, to deliver the following four principal Hertfordshire County Council priorities:

- Priority 1 – To ensure vulnerable children and young people achieve as well as others (Children and Young Persons Plan [CYPP] priority 7, Every Child Matters [ECM]: enjoy and achieve)
- Priority 2 – To ensure young people get a wide range of opportunities to learn (CYPP Priority 9, ECM: achieving economic well-being)
- Priority 3 – To ensure young people have access to the Hertfordshire and national Learner Entitlement (ECM: enjoy and achieve and achieving economic well-being)
- Priority 4 – Quality provision to be offered to all learners irrespective of where they are located (ECM enjoy and achieve)

The Full and Executive Groups are made up of Headteachers and the College Principal, who provide the leadership and support for delivery through the local partner institutions. Specialist monitoring is conducted via the Work-Based Learning, Foundation Learning Tier, Institutional First Point of Contact for Diplomas and Local Area Co-ordinator strategic groups. All of these are responsible for ensuring that the entitlement is delivered at an appropriate quality and is accessible to all learners. In many cases, there are a number of sub-groups that deal with detailed aspects of the overall provision.

The Collaborative Delivery of the New 14-19 Diplomas

One of the major catalysts for change within North Hertfordshire has been the new 14-19 Diplomas. These have required major changes to timetabling, transport, delivery, pedagogy, information, advice and guidance, and assessment.

Following its success under Gateway one, the SAPG appointed five Partnership Curriculum Leaders (PCLs), whose brief was to implement the original Gateway application. These posts were offered as secondments for two days per week at Head of Department level. The PCLs worked with a development group drawn from the identified Teaching Centres for the Principal Learning associated with Engineering, Construction and the

Built Environment, Creative and Media, Information Technology, and Society, Health and Development. The development groups worked collaboratively to generate all of the schemes of work, lesson plans and wider teaching materials necessary for delivery. These, in turn, were put together within a published manual and shared with the delivery teams.

Timetablers, drawn from all partner schools, radically altered their timetables around an identified Diploma day at KS4 and Diploma days at Post-16. This meant that planning for the location of provision and access was far simpler in terms of student movements. Transport arrangements were organised by Local Area Consortia and made use of a combination of private coach hire, taxis and school mini buses.

The Diploma day was viewed as a preparation for employment and there would be a natural break in the morning and afternoon with packed lunches at midday. Students would travel back to their Home Centres between 3.30 – 4.00 pm.

The biggest challenge for the implementation of the new Diplomas was to ensure that the Diploma pedagogy was understood by all delivery teams. This required significant Continuing Professional Development in terms

Central to the new Diploma pedagogy is applied learning. Essentially, this involves learning by doing in a range of environments, contexts and situations. This is then personalised for the student through the opportunity to reflect, review and plan from experience and apply in new contexts.

of broadening the experience of those teachers, who came from a relatively narrow skills background, while also providing closer reference to the world of work for those who had spent most of their career as part of an academic delivery team. For example, arrangements were made with the

Association of Building Engineers to deliver six days of training on the wider built environment for construction skills tutors and design and technology staff in schools.

Central to the new Diploma pedagogy is applied learning. Essentially, this involves learning by doing in a range of environments, contexts and situations. This is then personalised for the student through the opportunity to reflect, review and plan from experience and apply in new contexts. These applied learning situations obviously needed to be supported by close working with local employers.

Responsibility for employer engagement has largely rested with the Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce, which sourced appropriate venues for trips, visits and placements. All of which were directly related to the development of the curriculum. For example, Engineering students' visits

have included the First Capital Connect Hornsey Maintenance Workshop, the Thames Barrier and Astrium satellite manufacturing operation and their experiences of work have included a week's placement with Cable and Wireless maintenance engineers. Creative and Media students have visited the BBC, Watford Theatre and local radio with work experience including a placement on the local Comet newspaper.

The Chamber has also worked alongside the local University of Hertfordshire to provide experiences of work. For example the University's rebuilding programme provided an excellent site visit for Construction and the Built Environment students. The contractors, Wilmott Dixon, provided protective clothing and a complete tour of the building. The site manager was able to point out planning, management and technological aspects, which linked directly to the curriculum.

Integral to the pedagogical issues, are the need for impartial information, advice and guidance. All members of staff in all institutions need to have a clear grasp of the nature of the Diploma and where it sits within the overall offer. In particular, they need to recognise that it is not just another vocational or practical course, but a real applied learning experience, where generic employability skills are developed for employment 2020. This was a highly demanding issue, especially in areas such as Construction and Engineering that had traditionally been seen as alternative "practical routes".

In particular, Construction and the Built Environment is very much concerned with issues such as planning, development and sustainability, which are far broader than the practical skills of plumbing, bricklaying and carpentry. A combination of Governor, Senior Leadership and whole staff Diploma presentations has been made. Local SAPG leaflets have been used alongside the DCSF literature and DVDs. The Diploma Roadshow, work of the Impact Theatre Company, Taster Days and Keeping Warm Events have all helped to spread the message.

The introduction of the new Diploma pedagogy has been accompanied by equally radical changes in the methods of assessment – "internal assessment of Principal Learning must normally be supervised and conducted under controlled conditions to ensure reliability and fairness" (Annex E: Internal Assessment of Principal Learning Units, Edexcel).

In conclusion, the experience of North Hertfordshire SAPG has been that the success of Diploma delivery is dependent upon strong project management of the development phase, a commitment to embedding the new Diploma pedagogy, the highly-creative involvement of employers and ensuring the integrity of the assessment process. All of this will contribute towards the education and development of young people with the generic employability skills necessary for the world of 2020.

Book reviews

33 WAYS TO HELP WITH NUMERACY - SUPPORTING CHILDREN WHO STRUGGLE WITH BASIC SKILLS

Brian Sharp

Routledge 2008 ISBN: 9780415468961

This is a book that really does “what is says on the tin” or should I say – cover. It does support children who struggle with basic numeracy skills and so supports teachers who are planning activities for their numeracy lessons.

I teach a Year Four class and like most classes it's a fascinating mix of pupils and abilities. One of the many things that keeps teaching interesting is the huge variety of ways in which children approach and understand numerical concepts. Ask five different children how they solved a problem and you'll often get five totally contrasting methods. So planning a numeracy unit which will work for every child is a challenge. Finding suitable methods and images can be difficult, frustrating and time consuming but this book should help.

Trying to support that group of children in your class who are struggling with calculations? Use the clear contents section to select one of the eleven appropriate activities which are all clearly and concisely explained. They don't require reams of photocopying and use simple equipment, already available in your classroom.

The book has new and familiar activities but even those familiar ones had an extra dimension. Using the activity “Giving Change” with a small group demonstrated this. It is all about teaching children to subtract by counting on on a number line. A very familiar method in the primary classroom and I have used many of the suggestions before. I have used money because it is “shopkeeper maths”. I have used props to buy and sell but I have not shown the balance of the toy car plus $2p = 10p$. This is what this book is so good at – on a double page spread all these ideas are shown, explained and worked into a simple but comprehensive activity which really helps the children “see” what you are teaching them.

It also makes the most of the equipment you already have. Cuisenaire rods, the classroom staple are already well used to support children's understanding of the value of numbers, complements to 10, etc. However in the activity 'Factor Walls' this same equipment now supports finding factors of numbers. I hadn't thought of this before and it was so effective. Finding a factor of ten becomes an activity that any child can do. “*How many*

Claire Johnson

Claire Johnson is a teacher at a primary school in Leeds. She is an NUT school representative and is currently Leeds NUT President. She is also a local Equalities Officer.

rows can you make which are the same length as this but only use one colour?" What happens when you try some of the 3cm rods? They know straight away because the image is there in front of them.

I really like the clear and simple instructions and they are perfect to hand to a teaching assistant. I am impressed by how practical the activities are. They demand a great deal of speaking and listening which is so crucial but there is always an element of fun which really helps to engage and motivate the children. I will be using this book regularly.

LEARNING TO TEACH IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOL A COMPANION TO SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

Edited by Susan Capel, Marilyn Leask and Tony Turner

5th Edition, Oxon; Routledge 2009 ISBN: 9780415478724

This new edition of a popular book for student teachers sets itself within the contemporary context of the PGCE with Masters (M) level credits, perhaps anticipating the new MTL (Masters in Teaching and Learning); however its content is important and relevant to all those preparing to be a teacher. Suggested further reading, summaries of key points, links to other units, tables providing key theories on a number of issues and related websites create a rich source of knowledge. The editors suggest the book can be approached by "dipping in and out". However, there is benefit from reading it all, as many issues are approached from a range of perspectives in different units, reflecting the complexity of teaching and the links between elements such as classroom management, explaining concepts to pupils effectively and developing respectful relationships.

The book has much to recommend it. The order of early chapters (and the ways in which issues are first raised then developed throughout) addresses the concerns of the typical student teacher at different points in their course and development. For example, early units focus on the broad role of the teacher, which link seamlessly to the specific expectations schools and departments have of student teachers. The nature and level of language is appropriate, clear and engaging. This is much more than a "tips for teachers" book, although there are excellent, practical ideas suggested, for example related to constructing a lesson, and dealing with difficult teaching situations. One of the book's best characteristics is that it provides a good deal *and* requires engagement beyond reading. For example, the student teacher is challenged to fully engage with early observation activity, questioning assumptions and pre-conceived ideas. Learning to be a teacher is presented as complex and far from straightforward and it is explained that (in common with courses/routes into teaching) the content serves as an *introduction* to various issues; ideas and theories presented are not the "whole story".

Helen Scott

Helen Scott is Head of the School of Secondary and Post Compulsory Professional Studies at the University of Cumbria. She has played a central role in the development of the NUT/ University of Cumbria CPD Partnership.

The space and consideration the book gives to certain issues such as classroom management show the authors thoroughly know their intended audience. Theoretical perspectives are presented and explained with sufficient detail and clarity to develop beginning teachers' knowledge, understanding and practice. Other areas addressed very well are the uses of questioning, behaviour for learning, theories of learning and the aims of education. The notion of the reflective practitioner is considered to be vital; readers are urged to see practitioner research as a natural progression in the latter stages of their training and into their careers as a way of developing evidence-based practice and professional learning.

On a less positive note, student teachers might perceive some of the suggested tasks as repeating content from their course; however, others (often the M level activities) would usefully extend and deepen students' existing knowledge and understanding.

Although the book is not aimed at this audience it will be very useful for the experienced secondary teacher who has recently moved into a role as lecturer on a PGCE course. It will remind them of the challenges of becoming a teacher and of the enormous range of knowledge and experience they have gained over the years; it will also assist them in considering how they can prepare teachers of the future for their role.

Nye Goodwin

Nye Goodwin is Head teacher of Stanley Road Primary School in Olham. Nigel has been a headteacher at a number of schools in three different counties and has worked as an adviser, a senior inspector and an independent consultant. Currently he is Senior Inspector in Southampton. Nigel has tutored a number of NUT CPD opportunities and will provide guidance on peer coaching as part of the new 'Internationalising Learning' CPD project. (email: internationalcpd@nut.org.uk)

THE COACHING TOOLKIT

Shaun Allison and Matthew Harbour

Sage Publications Ltd 2009 ISBN 9781412945370

Coaching is "like a virus in that it needs to adapt and evolve depending on the conditions and circumstances of the school". An interesting view expressed by one of the participants from a case study and absolutely right too. Coaching, as the book identifies, is not in itself a panacea for improving schools; however, the enthusiasm with which this book has been written might lead you to think it could be.

The authors Shaun Allison and Matthew Harbour point out that they are not experts in the field of coaching but their combined experiences and dedication to the use of coaching as a tool for improvement picks them out as professional experts with an eye for a successful process.

The book is easy to read in that it can be dipped into or read cover to cover – I tried it both ways and found the whole process informative and thought provoking! Anyone considering using coaching methods in a school could do little better than take up this guide and consider the range of options provided.

The layout of the information is very clear and the content of the chapters usefully identified in the "How to use this book" section right at the beginning.

Some experienced coaches may want to skip around the order of the chapters but that sits comfortably with the design of the book. New practitioners will want to study the guidance on effective questioning and listening as this is crucial to effective coaching.

The range of coaching models will irritate those who are not over keen on the use of acronyms and may deter cynics to the coaching process. However, in terms of describing different approaches to coaching, and the background to each, the book is useful. And after all, as pointed out on a number of occasions within the text, coaching can adapt to the needs of the school – so choices can be made.

The core theme throughout is reflection for improvement. The case studies demonstrate how leaders and teachers have benefited; as have, ultimately, the students receiving the improved practice. Developing coaching is a great professional responsibility for aspiring leaders to get their teeth into and have a positive impact across the school. Allison and Harbour suggest several methods that can be used to track impact in different ways and from different perspectives.

I believe the authors missed a trick by not spending a bit more time providing a handful of primary case studies which would have fully rounded off the whole book and encouraged a wide audience. To be fair, all the principles, advice and guidance regarding coaching remain the same across primary and secondary; it's just that there are still those who get hung up about the differences between phases rather than see the benefits of the similarities.

I, for one, will be making constant reference to the book and will happily and heartily recommend it to those I work with, especially those who have the challenge of improving the quality of teaching and learning in order to improve outcomes – in the widest sense – for pupils. Onwards and upwards – perhaps the second edition could have case studies from primary, early years and special schools!

THE REALLY USEFUL CREATIVITY BOOK

Dominic Wise and Pam Dowson

Routledge 2008 ISBN 978041545696-8

Just as the debate about the primary curriculum has reopened, this book attempts to offer the primary school practitioner some ideas for implementing creativity in the classroom. The book is organised into short sections, which the busy teacher may find attractive. They go well beyond being merely tips for teachers. The authors have clear ideas about the centrality of creativity to effective learning in the primary school and recognise that despite 'Excellence and Enjoyment' it remains hard work to develop the practice of creativity in a curriculum which has been held

Nye Goodwin

Nye Goodwin is Head teacher of Stanley Road Primary School in Olham.

almost vice like by forces beyond the school. One only has to look at the culture of compliance generated by National Strategies, QCA units and an overcrowded National Curriculum, as well as the impact of the Ofsted inspection regime. The authors imply that despite these constraints many opportunities have been missed to seize the territory of creativity.

They attempt to define creativity at the outset and illustrate their ideas with reference to scholarly work on the subject. They are able to chart the journey that creative schools have been on since 'All Our Futures' in 1999. The chapter on organising teaching for creativity revisits the strategies and methods of organisation seen in primary school from Plowden to the early days of the national curriculum. Here we have an exploration of the menu system, the integrated day and the carousel with a clear analysis of their strengths and weaknesses. It may come as a real revelation to newer entrants to the profession that there may be more to teaching than the three-part lesson. The reader is then offered very practical strategies for fostering everyday creativity and using the local environment as well as outdoor learning to engage children. Teachers are given ideas to start on immediately with a range of ideas for planning cross-curricular activities.

The book outlines the importance of creative partnerships by working with "creative agents" to stimulate children's interest and consequently develop their creativity. The authors rather irritatingly use the language of compliance, talking about 'delivering' the curriculum, which renders the learner as a passive recipient rather than an active participant in the process of learning. This is clearly an oversight as the section on thinking skills makes the powerful link between pedagogy and curriculum and places the child at the centre of the process of teaching and learning in what in these times may be described as 'personalisation'. The critique of 'objectives lead teaching' is particularly powerful, as it argues that good teaching is undermined by discouraging personal interpretation, and by seeking to determine in advance the expected outcomes of processes, which are inherently unpredictable if they are to be genuinely creative.

This book finishes with a strong plea for a curriculum model and a pedagogy that reflects learning and teaching throughout life and which places the learner at the centre of that process. It recognises that all is still to play for in the battle for control of the curriculum between the state and education professionals, particularly in the light of the ubiquitous Jim Rose's attempt to fudge the issue. This lively book will help busy teachers have a go at creativity and perhaps be inspired to help shape a new dispensation for learners that can truly meet the challenges of the 21st century.

MOTIVATING EVERY LEARNER

Alan McLean

Sage publications Ltd 2009 ISBN 9781848601826

Research has highlighted the many classroom factors that account for variance in learners' success. Improved achievements seem linked with classroom cohesiveness, satisfaction and goal direction, along with less disorganisation and friction. A related, and obvious factor, is the motivation of the learners.

Why learners behave as they do is essentially a psychological question, and 'Motivating every learner' is written by a psychologist who tackles the questions that school staff most frequently ask. What makes pupils tick? What do pupils do to motivate themselves? What do teachers do? The models developed by McLean are based on self-determination theory.

McLean's own motivation stems from family challenges, familiar to many parents. "You wanted the guitar, I bought you the guitar. So why don't you play it?" Very quickly we learn the core needs of all learners which are identified by McLean as affiliation, the need to belong; autonomy, the need to have some self-determination and agency; and the confidence that you can meet the demands of the task. While all learners have these needs their unique personalities and backgrounds result in them meeting their needs in different, sometimes inappropriate, ways. McLean encourages teachers to explore the different stances that learners take up to meet their basic needs. However, McLean also emphasises that motivation is a two way street. What can teachers do to motivate pupils? Teacher styles of soothing, attuning and pushing are explored along with classroom energisers that can be used to respond to various learner stances.

Of special value is an in-depth account of the six negative stances that are met in classrooms: mutedly engaging, threatening, opposing, exasperating and hiding. Each of these are profiled and questions such as "What works?" and "What makes it worst?" are answered, providing an invaluable resource. For McLean motivation is the new discipline. This book is a positive and refreshing approach to improving classroom behaviour and learning through a comprehensive analysis of how learners and teachers interact. McLean creates a unique motivational matrix relevant to any classroom. The models produced enable new practices and interventions to be explored. These approaches are firmly grounded in a theoretical perspective that is research based. This is more useful than an ad hoc box of tricks which work sometimes or in some situations with some people, but lacks depth of insight and understanding as to why.

For a member of staff responsible for professional development this book is a valuable reference. It would enable staff sessions to be held that work through the many layers of motivation in a way that would refresh all class teachers and provide core skills for newly qualified teachers.

Rob Long

Rob Long is a frequent tutor on NUTCPD Programme. This includes 'behaviour' courses targeted at school leaders, mid-career teachers and primary teachers; and 'Loss and Separation' seminars for all teachers concerned about vulnerable learners.

21ST CENTURY BOYS: HOW MODERN LIFE IS DRIVING THEM OFF THE RAILS AND HOW WE CAN GET THEM BACK ON TRACK.

Sue Palmer

London: Orion 2009 ISBN 978-0-7528-9011-1

Self help manuals for parents are a phenomenon that started in the mid twentieth century usually written by the middle classes for the middle classes. This book is one of the latest in which earlier fears about malnutrition, rickets and disease have morphed into fears about vulnerable masculinity, emotional malnutrition and unruly behaviour. This book is directed at anxious, middle class parents swamped with media stories telling them that boys are “going off the rails”.

The book comprises ten chapters with evocative headings such as “The fragile male”, “Battery reared boys” and “Lost boys”. The first chapter entitled “Meet the boys” presents four fictional boys aged five, eight, 14 and 16 who are meant to represent typical features of contemporary boyhood at key stages. The first gets into fights, the second is clever but anti social, the third is sexist and truants and the fourth is obsessed with computer games. The boys’ lives and imaginary families are revisited from different angles across the book. Chapters explain why the boys behave as they do and provide advice about how mothers, and to a lesser extent fathers, should treat them.

Palmer skilfully intersperses reference to scholarly research with her own moral agenda. The moral rhetoric has three main themes. First it is strongly child centred and therefore positions parents, yet primarily mothers as “the little scientists assistant”. The skill of mothering is apparently to watch the baby and judge carefully when to supply appropriate stimulation. The second recurring theme creates an opposition between nature and technology. Mothers are warned not to get sucked into internet activities and not to place their offspring in front of televisions. Instead the importance of “natural” interaction and eye to eye contact reinforce the link between nature and mothering. The third recurring theme is that there is a crucial stage at which “mollycoddling” has to stop and the boy has to be granted full autonomy.

It is somewhat surprising to find the old fear of technology dusted down and recreated for the modern era as virtual and digital. It is possible to read Palmer’s book as an exposition of contemporary representations of childhood and mothering which reflect deeply conservative and retrospective beliefs. Accordingly, the child centred approach can be seen to encapsulate a deficient model in which a child is imagined to be following a precarious route to some kind of mythical “full development” constantly liable to “derail”.

The notion that only mothers can prevent derailment reworks a patriarchal ideology about mothering which has notoriously constrained

Gabrielle Ivinson

Gabrielle Ivinson is a Senior lecturer at Cardiff University and author with Patricia Murphy of the book, *Rethinking Single-Sex Teaching*.

and limited women's advances in the public realm. In Palmer's account, a mother is reduced to an element of the child's environment thus denying her agency. By reducing the complexity of women's lives in this way it becomes difficult to imagine that women have dynamic roles in constructing, rather than reacting to, the social world. I would go so far as to maintain that this book contributes to the feminist backlash which, followed a brief interlude between the seventies and eighties when we took girls experiences seriously, returns us to the long tradition in which women's destiny is to nurture, care for and educate boys. This is disappointing because nostalgia for a mythical past is no place to look for solutions to the future.



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Preface	1	Consumer kids – the influence of the commercial world on our children	54
<i>Christine Blower, General Secretary, NUT</i>		<i>Agnes Nairn, Research Fellow, University of Bath</i>	
“Education without failure: is it an impossible – even undesirable – dream?”	5	Trusting the judgement of teachers: changing assessment policies in Wales	61
<i>Sirr Tim Brighouse, Former London Schools Commissioner</i>		<i>Richard Daugherty, Honorary Professor, School of Social Sciences, University of Cardiff</i>	
Class acts – breaking the achievement barrier	11	The reliability of the statutory end of Key Stage 2 assessments and their use in England	69
<i>Denis Mongon and Christopher Chapman, University of Manchester</i>		<i>Christine Merrell, CEM, Durham University</i>	
Successfully failing to be sheep	21	Still the best job in the world?: trusting teachers; valuing education	75
<i>Peter Flack, Assistant Secretary, Leicester NUT</i>		<i>Janet Theakston, National Union of Teachers</i>	
Attainment gaps between deprived and advantaged schools	30	Delivering the 14-19 entitlement within North Hertfordshire	83
<i>Dr Lee Elliot Major, Director of Research, Sutton Trust</i>		<i>Matthew Glew, Co-ordinator, North Hertfordshire Strategic Area Partnership Group</i>	
“If you can teach Jason to read I’ll eat my hat...”	36	Book Reviews	88
<i>Jean Gross, Director, Every Child a Chance Trust</i>			
Helping the hardest to help	44		
<i>Graham Robb, Youth Justice Board</i>			

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