

CPD Update editorial April 2005

and

a letter to the editor

Commentary

The title I chose for my second editorial might have been written yesterday or, even, tomorrow. I am sure that no matter how far into the future we gaze there will be someone, somewhere, anywhere, in the world using the phrase: ***'What goes around comes around'***.

This is only the second of my editorials that I have re-visited but already I have the urge ('curb' almost rhymes with 'urge' and I need to remember that) to formulate a theory. Dr. Watson was always urging Sherlock Holmes to formulate a theory. Holmes was always curbing the urging of Watson by saying that he needed more facts before he could construct a testable theory. Right now I want to be with Watson, so here goes: tentatively: recklessly.

Our once upon a time Secretary of State Estelle Morris (fellow member of the National Union of Teachers) used to remind us that the agreed education policy of her government and her party was 'standards not structures'. In his book Tony Blair explains why, in contrast to agreed policy, he came to believe in re-structuring, not just for education. You can read my review of his book by clicking below. I felt that he disparaged Estelle Morris for being insufficiently personally ambitious. Possibly you will not need to read any further than the title of my review. I have been told that it says it all.

<http://www.criticalprofessionallearning.co.uk/assets/bookReviewBlair.pdf>

Despite coming to office with the loudly proclaimed and supposedly singular priority of *Education, Education, Education* very little of his book is about education. He is, however, clear that his notion of 'modernisation' as applied to education required it to be drastically re-structured. I believe that his encouragement of faith schools, academies and specialist schools (some schools specialised in so many things it became ridiculous and I seem to remember some idiot suggesting that primary schools should 'specialise' in being general) was part of what elsewhere on this website I refer to as 'social fracking', though I doubt that he saw it like this. Michael Gove (a declared 'lover' of Blair) later increased the scale, pace and intensity of social fracking. It was also part of a process of disengagement from local representative democracy.

For someone who loudly and widely proclaimed (and still proclaims) the need for faiths to tolerate and collaborate with each other it made no sense to differentiate and separate children in terms of the religion their parents gave them (or pretended to give them in order to obtain a place at a preferred

school). And continuing the Thatcher policy of gradually detaching schools from local government (she also did this to Colleges of Further Education, Teacher Training Colleges and Polytechnics) further reduced systemic social coherence and increased the tendency of so-called 'leaders' in the world of education to adopt the values of possessive individualism.

If you are interested in the concept of 'possessive individualism' perhaps you might like to click on the following link.

<http://understandingsociety.blogspot.co.uk/2011/08/possessive-individualism.html>

What I think I was beginning to perceive, too late, too slowly and without sufficient clarity at the time, was the contrast between professionals in education responding positively to any encouragement to collaborate and to think strategically and Tony Blair's wish to construct a world in which aspiration and choice were combined. For Blair it was important that we should have lots of choices available to us. Those choices, however, were about the routes we wished to take to get to 'the top'. He always admired people who wanted to get to the top, particularly those who actually arrived there. It was a 'top' defined by his values and if you doubt me read his book. You might also read the foreword he wrote for the book written by his focus group guru, Philip Gould, just before he died. You can read my review of Gould's book by clicking on the link below.

<http://www.criticalprofessionallearning.co.uk/assets/ErsatzPolitics.pdf>

I believe that within the pool of educators there is always some willingness to work collegially and within the pool of politicians there is always some unwillingness to allow them to do so unless directed by them. The centralising of power over the curriculum and assessment by Kenneth Baker that became most marked from the late 1980s meant that collegial willingness was gradually perverted to working harder and harder to implement policies constructed at and issued from the top. I have written on this theme quite often on my website but most recently and at length in the following essay. I am afraid it is a bit on the long side though you may enjoy some of the endnotes, particularly xxi and somewhere among them my description of those wonderful sociologists Olive and Joe Banks doing a slow foxtrot while all around them during the height of Merseybeat students were thrashing around doing The Shake or The Cavern Stomp.

<http://www.criticalprofessionallearning.co.uk/assets/WebFor%20DH%20Lawrence.pdf>

Looking at the editorial now I think that it was another illustration of a tendency throughout my professional life to believe that it should be possible to seize or ease the reins from the hands of policy makers and to turn the educational horse in a more positive direction. I ought to have listened more to my former boss David Hamilton, to whom I owe so much, when he pointed

out that 'schooling' is what we do to horses. In fact it is the politicians that have schooled the professionals.

Now it seems I have hit upon a catchy name for a testable theory: **'Politicians Tend To School Professionals'**. Perhaps it should be accompanied by another testable theory: **'And Professionals Are Always Too Slow To Realise What Is Happening To Them'**.

In the editorial I mention Ruth Kelly. Before Tony Blair put her in charge of education I wrote the briefing paper for a meeting between her predecessor, Charles Clarke, and the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET). I write about it in the above essay. Winning all the arguments in the discussion with him and his request for lots more meetings like this felt so good but what was really significant was that when she took over Ruth Kelly cancelled all the meetings. It was as though the policy making process was not to be infected by hearing the professional voice.

I mention Ron Dearing who for a while seemed to spend most of his life producing reports on education for government. But it wasn't actually most of his life because while, as boss of the Schools Examinations and Assessment Council (SEAC), he was spending half his week revising the National Curriculum he was spending the other half working, as Chair of the company hoping for the right to run the National Lottery, on the writing of its (winning) bid. A nice chap, he once gave a talk at the University of Liverpool during which he pointed out the contrast in size between his report on the National Curriculum (a slim volume) and the bid to run the National Lottery (vast). It is probably unfair to use the comparative size and weight of the two documents as an indicator of national priorities: unfair but tempting.

Unfortunately, his proposals that the National Curriculum be opened up to allow more professional creativity and assessment by teachers did not survive the beliefs of successive governments that education should be about preparation for measurement.

I also mention Sue Kelly and Fiona Eldridge. Sue provided really useful insight into developing the role of CPD Co-ordinator in a school and Fiona helped us see how mentoring and coaching was beginning to work and have an effect upon professional culture.

Anne's letter is below. You might have guessed that I asked her to write it.

I believe that writing today I could produce something on the same theme with the difference that our world of education is now in a more fractured state and roles and terminology have changed.

Cliff Jones, 6th August 2015

Here is the editorial plus letter.

What goes around comes around

The education business often seems like the fashion industry: if you stay around long enough, all those out-of-date items at the back of the wardrobe will become 'must-have' clobber.

Reading the 14-19 white paper brings to mind pre-national curriculum 1980s initiatives such as 'Low Attaining Pupils projects', 'Records of Achievement', the 'National Record of Vocational Achievement (NROVA)', 'pre-vocational education', the 'Technical Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI)', the 'Sixteen Plus' and the introduction of GCSEs.

It also recalls the second of the Dearing reports in the 1990s when, I seem to remember, the whole business of what was then called 'academic, vocational and occupational education' was to have been sorted out. Just like Ruth Kelly, Dearing claimed that this could be accomplished without bias in favour of, or against, particular educational pathways: all would have equal esteem.

There are some constants in all of this, however. Government will always be trying to sort out the examinations system. There will always be a concern that at the age of 14 young people will lose interest in what schools have to offer them. Each secretary of state will wish to be associated with an initiative that must be described as both a 'first' and a success. Industry will always complain that their inefficiency is the fault of schools. And schools will constantly be exhorted to improve their results until they are 'world class'.

In this environment the job of the CPD coordinator can easily become reactive rather than proactive: trying to make sense of what has to be done and attempting to stretch scarce resources to breaking point. Carving out time in which to reflect and have a few good ideas is not easy.

In this issue Sue Kelly has given us an insight into a professional life that can be positive and maybe a little exciting (p4). CPD can be lonely, unnoticed by colleagues and senior management and eventually wither away for lack of sustaining nourishment. Being able to share professional hopes and fears without blame seems to be crucial for development.

Fiona Eldridge explains some advances being made in the CPD world (p8). In the past mentoring and coaching were more instinctive, hit and miss and ad hoc; and they were not supported by research or even given names.

The letter from Ann Nuckley on this page echoes the article in the last issue on the remodelling agenda and its implications for whole-school development. The white paper reminds us that schools will be more accountable. Ann's letter reminds us how widely that will affect the CPD coordinator.

Ruth Kelly, the secretary of state, recently told the Secondary Heads' Association that the workforce reform agreement and changes to the curriculum would provide space and resources for development. I note that

her speech was received with some scepticism. 'Working smarter not harder' sounds like a good slogan, but professional life does not always feel like that.

Maybe it is not only the school workforce that needs mentoring and coaching.

Dear editor,

I always read with interest *CPD Update*, but am always struck by the fact that the majority of professional development is about the teaching staff. However, if we are to promote the whole-school team, then some articles should address the support staff and their needs for professional development. In particular I believe that a tremendous change is taking place within school administration.

This has partly been encouraged by the workforce agreement which emphasises the need for teachers to teach and to leave administrative tasks to the support staff.

However, today's administrators in schools and colleges are a vastly different breed from the original school secretary. Administrators want to be seen as professional members of staff with the status and gravitas which their roles should allow.

Because of the agreement, many are now taking on extra responsibilities previously shouldered by teaching staff. In some areas of the country this has had a profound effect; in others sadly there is still little difference.

Many schools now hold the Investors in People accolade. This should mean that all staff have access to personal development and training, whether inhouse or external. Schools must demonstrate that all employees can and do have a personal development programme, geared both to the individual and the needs of the school.

However, when it comes to the 'training pot' the rules and the goalposts are moved. I write as a member of PAT (Professional Association of Teachers) and NAASSC (The National Association of Administrative Staff in Schools and Colleges). I hear from colleagues who let me know what is happening up and down the country as far as recognition and training are concerned. The overall picture is very patchy.

Administrators strive for professional recognition. A qualification specifically targeting education administration has been a long-held goal. In the mid-1990s the NVQ school administration certificate was launched and the association was consulted on its content. This is now no longer available – one of the problems being that those who should have been targeted were not.

However, the good news is that foundation degrees on school administration have been launched and I am keeping in close contact with one such colleague, for example, who is studying via Roehampton University in

conjunction with Carshalton College. The study programme includes a professional development portfolio and the educational context will cover current employment legislation, role of marketing and government policy and legislation with detailed investigation into current initiatives in schools and FE colleges.

Also a new certificate in educational administration will become available from January 2006 with a pilot scheme starting in July 2005. This has been developed with Hamilton House Mailings and the University College Northampton and will be distance learning study. Again students will study government policies and a core element will include school efficiency.

(Contact Maria Lockley for further information: maria@schools.co.uk)

Professional development for all support staff is vital if schools are to recognise the whole-school team ideology. Inclusion in training for all staff gives everyone the opportunity to contribute to 'value added' for their school.

Yours,

Ann Nuckley, Publicity officer NAASSC
(Part of the support staff wing of the
Professional Association of Teachers)

Editor's comment

Thank you Ann for this reminder that the business of CPD extends beyond the teaching force of a school. There are good reasons for adopting a strategic approach. We will be returning to this topic in future issues.