

Teacher Leadership

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Teacher Leadership is in two parts. The first part includes brief articles written by teachers and edited by the editors. The second part includes short ‘stories’ of teacher-led development work written by the editors on behalf of the teachers who led the projects described.

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Editorial

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I am privileged to be able to present the first issue of the second volume of the *Teacher Leadership* journal. This collection of papers, entirely focusing on development work led by teachers, provides impressive evidence of a profession that is not only alive and well but one in which its members are increasingly taking the lead in the development of professional practice. The development work represented here reflects a particular mode of professionalism, one that is essential if we are to improve the effectiveness of educational systems the world over. Whether it is a system which is struggling to find new strategies for innovation following years of centralised control – in what Andy Hargreaves (2008) has called the post-standardisation era – or whether the situation is one in which the process of transformation is only just beginning, educational systems need to mobilise the capital that so often lies dormant. This capital consists of the capacity that professional teachers have to put their creativity and effort into the enterprise of innovation.

This mode of professionalism can be characterised as one which is active and agential – teachers taking the initiative and courageously pursuing their own moral purpose even when faced with inertia and other institutional obstacles. It is also defined by a willingness to raise questions about curriculum and pedagogy, challenging taken for granted assumptions and habits and bringing evidence to bear on the debate. It must be emphasised however that this is not inquiry for its own sake – driven by idle curiosity or the need to impress university academics – rather it is inquiry that draws colleagues, students and other members of the learning community into the innovation process. The challenge is to lead such processes and this takes courage, persistence and ingenuity.

Caroline Mander's project reflects this mode of professionalism very well. Her article describes how she worked with her colleagues in an infant school to help them come to terms with the forms of literacy that their pupils experience in their daily lives. The narrative

illustrates very well the leadership challenge. Colleagues needed a framework for collaborative exploration through which they could develop strategies for working with the grain of popular culture and promoting children's speaking, narrative recounting and writing skills through the use of multimedia experiences. Caroline did have certain advantages in that she was Deputy Headteacher and the school's Literacy Coordinator; her colleagues' might reasonably expect that she would be leading change, but Harminder Thandi took on a similar challenge without the advantage of any formal position in the organisational structure.

Harminder's article describes how she worked with her colleagues in a secondary school to develop the art of modelling the writing process in their subjects. Students found the experience of seeing their teachers writing in front of them and verbalising the accompanying thought process powerful. This strategy was not easily developed. It involved Harminder working with a small number of willing volunteers and then using video recordings to show other colleagues what could be done.

The scope of Harminder's project was school wide. In contrast, Kari Esterhuizen's project sought to influence practice indirectly by developing networking for Early Years practitioners. Her goal was to provide for the professional learning needs of teachers of very young children across the county of Hertfordshire but her focus was the understanding and skills of the team of network facilitators.

Paul Rose's project was focused on the development of his own practice as a teacher. He describes how he developed 'learning how to learn' approaches as a way of supporting students as independent learners. However, along the way he found that he had to redefine the role of the teacher as someone who works in partnership with students helping them to grasp the essence of what learning is and to make judgements about the value of this or that learning activity. Paul felt that he had to undertake this personal journey before turning his attention to the professional development of his colleagues.

As in previous issues of Teacher Leadership, the stories are brief and are written on behalf of the teachers who were the leaders of the development work in focus. Like the articles the stories provide accounts of teachers setting their sights on pedagogical problems and planning projects to bring about changes in practice.

The story of Paul Andrew's development work is interesting in that he began with one focus – the way students pose questions in lessons – but as his project progressed, he realised that his project was as much about strategies for scaffolding professional dialogue as it was about the role of students' questions in the learning process. He has since developed this work and now focuses on creating the conditions for teachers' reflective practice.

Tim Smale's project began with a narrow focus on the teaching of RE (Religious Education) in a secondary school. He was particularly interested in questions about literacy within his subject but what he came up with was valuable more widely across the school, with the consequence that Tim was subsequently appointed as Literacy Coordinator. He is now working to support colleagues in all subjects on aspects of literacy.

In the UK primary school children now have an entitlement to learn modern foreign languages. Some enthusiasts have been pioneering primary modern languages for some time but many colleagues in the primary sector have found this challenging. Simon King led the way in his primary school by integrating languages learning into aspects of the curriculum. He reached out to draw in expertise in the local secondary school and in the local authority advisory team. He also built international partnerships. Simon's initiative helped colleagues to see that they had nothing to fear.

This theme of enriching the curriculum through international partnerships is continued in the story of Helen Gosnell's development work. She drew on her experience before becoming a teacher to develop collaborative projects with a high school in Zambia. Helen shared accounts of this activity at her school's annual staff residential conference and was subsequently able to help colleagues to make use of the links she had pioneered. One of the outcomes of this development work was to show students that they can make a difference through social action.

Another whole school issue was taken on in Rachel Noble's project – the development of the use of tutor time - but it is interesting to note that she wisely entered into collaboration with colleagues who held key positions in the organisational structure. Rachel knew that to have maximum influence she would need the cooperation of those who had greater leverage within the school because of their formal positions.

Kelly Dalkin's development work was focused on the use of practical activities in science lessons. She asked her colleagues to join with her to evaluate a series of practical activities in which the voices of students were harnessed not only to improve the activities but also to share responsibility for their learning and generate a sense of ownership.

The final story in this issue features development work on a national scale. This Turkish project can't be attributed to the leadership of a single individual although Ozgur Bolat is undoubtedly a key player. Like Paul Rose's project mentioned above, this focuses on transforming the role of teacher to one of facilitator. The idea of project-based learning was seen as a vehicle for developing a more student-centred learning pedagogy and Ozgur played an important role in bringing external evaluators to the project. It is interesting to hear of such efforts to build a pedagogy which empowers students in a climate in which preparation for national tests can have a constraining effect. A major outcome of this project is the realisation that there is massive scope for teacher leadership in Turkey. Ozgur's next project will focus on strategies for developing modes of professionalism that can contribute to national reform in Turkey.

I am confident that in publishing the articles and stories described above we have made a further substantial deposit in the bank of teacher-generated knowledge. I am sure that teachers from all over the world who read these accounts will be inspired to make their own contribution to the improvement of professional practice.

After a number of false starts, the new Teacher Leadership website is now fully functioning and we are at last able to celebrate the fact that all the material published in this journal can now be downloaded from the site. The site is provided by 'Leadership for Learning: the Cambridge Network' as part of our effort to build knowledge about distributed forms of leadership and learning. I hope that our readers will register with the site (www.teacherleadership.org.uk) and explore other aspects of the work of LfL.

In the forthcoming academic year we look forward to publishing the second and third issues of Volume 2 of the Teacher Leadership journal as well as an additional special issue in association with the National Union of Teachers. Our intention is to showcase the development work of teachers not only in the HertsCam Network but

also from the rest of the UK and from other countries around the world. We hope that, through our new website, many more teachers will discover these accounts of teacher-led development work and will be informed and inspired to take the initiative in leading change and improvement in their schools.

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Using multimedia experiences to develop children's literacy

Caroline Mander

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Abstract

Caroline Mander graduated from the Herts. MEd in Leading Teaching and Learning in 2007. In this article, she describes how she worked with the teachers in her school to explore and promote children's speaking, narrative recounting and writing skills through the use of multimedia experiences.

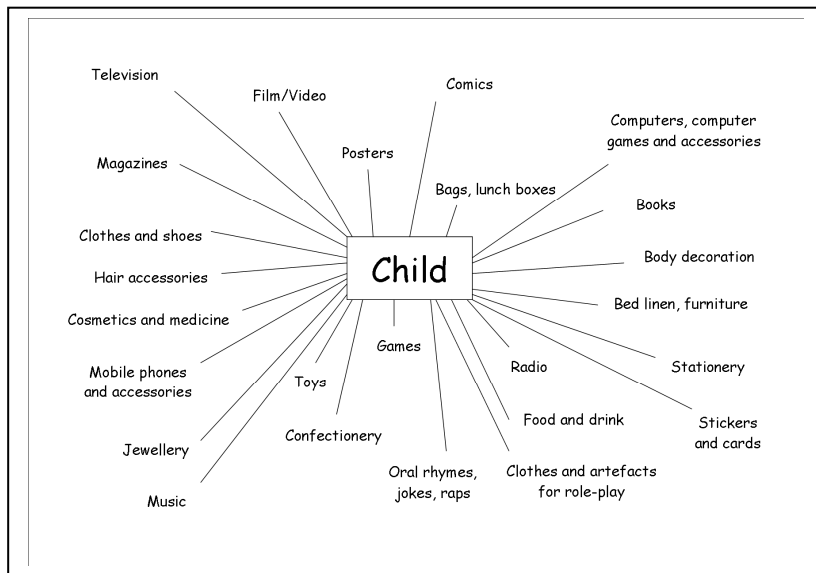
As the Literacy Coordinator and Deputy Head of my school I am in an ideal position to take an overview of the trends and issues in the literacy and learning needs of our pupils. Discussions with colleagues and friends, observations and analysis of results all suggest that the literacy skills of our pupils are changing. I have a comic strip by my computer. On it is pictured a very perplexed little man who has clearly been driving around for quite some time. He finally finds a sign post but all it tells him is: 'If You Are Here You Are Lost'. I began to wonder how many of our children had that sense of being lost whilst in school and whether the advancements of the multimedia world in which they live impacts on their literacy skills in the classroom.

Much of my reading was suggesting a gap between pupils' multimedia experience at home and at school (Merchant, 2003; Millard, 2003). I began to wonder if the 'literacy journey' that our pupils were on before and outside school was significantly different to the learning opportunities in school. I kept returning to my cartoon which raised many questions for me. Significantly, I wondered how we could use multimedia experiences to develop our own approach as practitioners to supporting children's literacy learning. My own journey began with an exploration of the multimedia world of the child.

Exploring the multimodal world of the child

Children's experiences of narrative are now far more flexible than in the past. Narratives are interwoven across an ever increasing range of different commodities and these can be seen as impacting upon every aspect of children's lives (Stutz, 1996; New London Group, 1996; Millard, 2003; Lambirth, 2003). I found Marsh's diagram below very helpful in illustrating the extent of this interweaving.

Figure 1: Narrative interwoven across commodities



Source: (Marsh, 2003:114)

The world of digital technology reinforces skills which are very different from those of previous generations and therefore many of our children appear to struggle with traditional literacy skills. Popular culture can be very useful in pedagogy however. Haas Dyson's (1996) and Marsh and Millard's (2000) explorations of the valuable role popular culture plays in the narrative and role play of very young children was very influential for me. I felt that it was time to introduce some alternative routes to learning in school, to work with colleagues to develop strategies within the classroom which give our children the power to play with stories and respond through the different modes which are part of their life outside of the classroom. I began to see that a broad interpretation of literacy, which explores aspects of not just the written mode of 'meaning

making' but also the spoken, is vital to understand the world of today's child.

In choosing an area such as multimedia I am also conscious that I am focussing on a sensitive and judgement laden topic. These issues are particularly significant for me because I teach across the school and therefore my development work could not be focussed upon the impact of new media and multimodality on my own class of pupils. Instead, I wanted to work with staff across the school to develop collaboratively ways of using multimodal experiences in the classroom. I was interested in learning more about:

- the extent to which pupils within my school engage in a multimedia environment;
- teachers' perceptions of the impact of teaching strategies using a variety of media on speaking and narrative recounting skills;
- the degree to which such strategies are perceived as workable or positive by staff.

Our staff team is enthusiastic and forward thinking. They were keen to work with me to discover more about this.

The project begins

Reconnaissance was a vital starting point for my project. I intended to use this as a means of involving teachers in the development of my project, as well as to trial my data gathering tools. I therefore sent out initial information to staff, met with Governors and representatives from the Parent Teachers Association and began to draft the tool that would form the starting point in exploring pupil engagement in the multimedia and multimodal environment.

Christensen and James (2000) proved to be a useful source of advice as I worked on developing this tool. They used visual media, asking children to produce drawings of how they spent their week, allowing even the youngest children to express themselves. I therefore developed my own tool based on their experience. I was also keen to gain the parents' views. I wanted to use a questionnaire but, knowing how busy the parents in our school are, it was vital that this tool was as simple as possible. I therefore developed mostly multiple choice questions using guidance from Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003) and MacBeath (2000). I then followed these up with interviews with some parents.

Parents indicated that their children engage with media resources for much less time that the children themselves indicated. I wondered if the children were emphasising the highly motivational aspects of multimedia out of proportion to their actual experience or whether the parents were self-conscious of their child's viewing and providing what they felt were 'good' answers. Yet despite this confusing response, multimedia opportunities were much higher than I had anticipated. I had been expecting, for example, three out of four children to have some degree of Internet access (BBC 4, 2007) but our school results showed a significantly higher level.

Discussion around this data at our regular staff meetings was very useful. As the chair of the meeting, my role was to raise an interesting theme, provide any relevant data and then, as often as possible, allow the discussion to develop without input from myself. I was fortunate that the enthusiastic, professional and enquiring nature of our staff meant that this approach was extremely effective.

I now knew more about the extent of children's multimedia experience and needed to plan an intervention to see how we could use this experience in the classroom. The teachers in Years 2 and 3 were very interested in the concept of multimodality, aware that they were not employing such strategies in their classrooms and eager to be involved. We decided to focus the first intervention in Year 3. The teachers and I worked as a collaborative group to plan and develop a series of multimodal opportunities that would take place across one or two weeks. These were planned using the model from the New London Group (1996) with an emphasis on using new media and flexible opportunities for narrative. We aimed to link in to the children's geography project on Europe. Children would work in small groups and use the Internet, TV holiday programs, brochures, books and teacher-made resources to research a location; they would create a simple PowerPoint, a holiday brochure page, write a story about their holiday and video record a 2 minute slot for the class holiday programme. Once the ideas were generated we shared them at a whole staff discussion session. This was invaluable in keeping the staff team informed and in checking and validating our ideas to make sure we were achieving the multimodality and flexible narrative that we were striving for. One of the key areas that arose from this discussion was the suggestion of setting up role play areas to encourage the use of flexible narrative. As a result, one class created a travel agency and the other a TV studio for a holiday

show: all of the children had opportunities to explore and extend narrative through role play before, during and after the project.

At this stage I carried out a pre-intervention interview to gain a picture of both teachers' ideas and feelings at the start of the project. At the conclusion of the project I carried out a second interview with the Year 3 teachers who also led a staff discussion talking about their week. I also gained pupils' views through interviews and a questionnaire.

Developing multimodal strategies

Organisational issues had a big impact on teachers' views of multimodal strategies. Both teachers involved in the project described their experience as a rollercoaster ride. The first days were high with the excitement of a new project but then there was a definite dip before another positive high at the end. During this dip the teachers' comments were all based around the difficulties of group dynamics and how certain individuals reacted together. The same could be seen from pupil responses with 6 of the 21 children claiming that their group had not worked well. We realised that planning the groups was vital to the success of the project. In the first intervention, teachers chose to select groups by randomly pulling names out of a hat. Whilst this fairness appealed to both adults and children, in the second intervention with Year 2 we planned and selected groups, which reduced the impact of organisational issues and allowed us to focus on multimodality.

Another early issue that arose was that of differentiation. Teachers felt that less able, hard to motivate children and boys in general had achieved well. Issues arose however in terms of more able children who the teachers felt were given lots of opportunity to consolidate their skills but not the scope to make further progress or acquire new skills. This opinion was mirrored in the response of one of the most able boys who commented that he had lots of fun *'but I don't think I learned anything new'*. I realised that teachers would not perceive multimodal strategies as useful or beneficial if some groups were not making progress. This theme became a key area of discussion during planning and staff discussion meetings.

By this stage of the project many of my colleagues were very enthusiastic and eager to join in. At moments of panic it felt as if my project was running off in sixteen different directions at the same time and I was jogging behind desperately attempting to keep up. I

believed that I was facilitating democratic activity and participatory research (Grundy, 1987; Cohen *et al.*, 2000), but it was enormously stressful to keep track of what was going on.

Having already carried out an intervention successfully with Year 3, several of our early reflections and understandings influenced the planning stage of our new project with Year 2. Groups were designed carefully. One of the key areas that I felt had to be addressed within this project was differentiation and challenging more able pupils. Throughout the planning process a strong emphasis was placed upon providing challenges for every ability level to develop and learn new skills. To achieve this, a topic theme was devised around 'Pirates', with a strong emphasis on flexible narrative and encouraging vocabulary and empathy to enhance writing. Children investigated the topic using the Internet, films, books and teacher resources. They engaged in a wide range of practical activities including scrubbing the decks, tying knots, sewing sails; they watched video diaries and then worked individually and in groups to write, perform, evaluate and improve their own video diaries. Finally they used the pirate theme to write their own pirate adventure stories. Activities were linked to work on coordinates and map skills. As a result the children engaged in a full week of pirate based activities including dressing-up, treasure hunts and themed PE (Physical Education) and music lessons.

During the post-project interview the teachers and I analysed the writing and video diaries of children to evaluate whether multimodality had impacted at all levels. The analysis suggested that across all ability levels fifty one of the fifty nine children in Year 2 had produced writing that their teachers judged as showing satisfactory or significant progress. Of the remaining eight children a further five showed some influences from multimodal strategies. This is an extremely subjective analysis but what is significant here is the conclusion from both Year 2 teachers that significantly '*more progress was made in writing*' as a result of a week that was not based on '*formal strategies in improving writing*'. Moderation from the staff discussion session validated these conclusions on the quality of work particularly of more able pupils and generated comments such as '*sophisticated language*'..., '*they put a lot more meat on it (the story)*'... and '*a more rounded view of it all – more options and it's showing in her writing.*'

Assessment was the other significant issue that had arisen from the previous intervention. After our first intervention both the teachers and I had been amazed by the range of multimodal skills that some children orchestrated. After the second intervention the teachers and I agreed that the video diaries were the area that had the most scope for demonstrating multimodality. Our initial aim was to identify multimodal references. We began by watching a selection of 6 video diaries that the teachers had identified from across the ability levels as demonstrating a good standard of work. We decided to keep a simple tally of multimodal references that we all agreed on.

I was delighted when we agreed that every diary showed multimodal influences as I felt that this reinforced the purpose and value of our project. However it was also evident that these multimodal designs varied widely in ability level and confidence of application. Assessment and acknowledgement of multimodal designs and strategies were areas that all those engaged in the project perceived as important and that we needed to return to and develop further.

Teachers confidently navigating new paths

I then moved into another stage of reflection. It is hardly surprising that teacher perceptions and the workability of multimodality were at the forefront of my mind when I considered how well the interventions had worked. Comparing and contrasting my journal notes from both phases I began to notice significant differences between the two projects. Perhaps the most demanding new issue that developed during the second intervention was that of pupil behaviour. One of the teachers in particular noted a marked deterioration in her class's behaviour and both teachers felt that children became very over excited and at times silly. When I reflected on the two projects I was very conscious that this second project was directly linked to popular culture; pirates were everywhere at the time, being a theme for current film releases and all of the associated intertextual marketing. This appeared to cause children difficulties in knowing which behaviour expectations applied – those from within the school or without. Interestingly, the two Year 2 teachers went on to plan additional multimodal projects independently and found that behaviour issues were not a factor with topics less focused on popular culture.

The second area I found of interest was teacher confidence. Whilst both teams of teachers were very enthusiastically involved, it had been much easier to plan the second intervention as teachers across

the school began to have a real understanding of the concept of multimodality and flexible narrative. I began to reflect upon teacher perceptions of the impact of these multimodal teaching strategies.

I felt very strongly that if teachers did not consider there to be value in using multimodal strategies for improving speaking and narrative recounting there would be little point in using them. In returning to my journal and interview transcripts, and reflecting on my data across discussions, conversations and interviews, the first thing that was apparent was a sense of enthusiasm and excitement. Teachers felt there was a real impact on speaking skills. In both year groups several children identified as reluctant to speak or contribute were described as far more involved than usual. Children were described as *'speaking clearly and really recognising their audience and I'm sure the video diaries helped with that'...* and also *'the video camera gave them a real sense of occasion ... their language was excellent'*. All of the teachers commented that they were pleased with the outcome of the travelogues and video diaries and that their classes had made satisfactory and in some cases significant progress. Teachers felt that children achieved similar success with narrative recounting skills; indeed after both of the story writing sessions I had teachers chasing after me to show me with great delight what children had achieved. In staff discussion sessions the general conclusion was that this was a positive way of improving children's speaking and narrative recounting and impacting upon their writing. This was particularly the case after the Year 2 intervention where the high number of practical activities helped children develop empathy and vocabulary. I am very conscious that the excitement and novelty of being engaged in significantly different activities could influence pupil responses in the short term. However, when year groups went on and developed additional independent interventions there was no lessening of response.

There were unexpected bonuses from multimodal projects. Teachers saw these activities as particularly motivating for boys and less able children.

those two really surprised me and I feel they got a lot out of it and did well

(Interview 15.4.07)

and also:

L's group really surprised me, they're three very middle of the road children who, looking at them, you wouldn't have thought they'd do very much... I actually had to prise the work out of their hands they were so keen to keep going and their travelogue was really good.

(Interview 1.12.06)

One teacher was especially impressed with how the project motivated and challenged a very hard to inspire child with significant learning difficulties.

M has really surprised me. He had no help today [Learning Support Assistant] but he was so eager he just got on with his group and he was contributing and discussing ideas and he produced a fantastic piece of work for him.

(Interview 1.12.06)

Another was keen to share her view of the impact on a particular pupil.

H has had a fantastic week this week. I've never seen him so keen and the boys I think in general seem to have been very keen.

(Interview 1.12.06)

Of the sixty nine children surveyed, fifty eight felt positively about the activities and only four had not enjoyed them. Which leads me back once more to the issue of multimodality at home: are these children so keen and motivated because these experiences were based on familiar skills from home? In providing a multimodal environment had we enabled the children to spot a familiar point on the road to literacy?

Have we found a new road to follow?

In one short year I feel that as a school we have been on a momentous journey. What started out as a concern that we were losing our children in the new media environment has blossomed into huge changes for our school. The staff team has travelled a long road, exploring the extent to which our children embrace the new media world of intertextuality and how we could use this to support their speaking, narrative recounting and writing. We are now aware that our pupils engage regularly in a multimedia environment, and to varying degrees of ability, play with and demonstrate multimodality as part of their day to day life. For teachers in our school adopting these strategies, their experience was positive; children showed high levels of motivation and enthusiasm and teacher perceptions were

that these strategies directly benefited speaking, narrative recounting and writing. Overall teachers found the strategies both positive and workable. This is just a beginning but it is an exciting phase in our development and we are eager to see whether these new pathways take us nearer to our ultimate goal of improving writing across the school. This project has had a huge impact upon the life and development of the school and I am really excited to discover where multimodality will lead us to next.

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Supporting writing through modelling in a variety of subjects

Harminder Thandi

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Abstract

Harminder Thandi graduated from the Herts. MEd in Leading Teaching and Learning in 2006. In this article, she describes the development of the strategy of teachers' modelling of writing in front of their students as a way of supporting students' writing in different subjects.

When I began my writing project I had a specific responsibility to work with students with dyslexia. I provided one-to-one specialist tuition and in-class support for students and also offered advice and guidance to colleagues. This work meant that I was able to observe how students are taught to write in a range of different subjects.

It became clear to me that some students, while able to demonstrate a good level of understanding orally, were lacking the ability to represent their learning in a written form. These students were at a disadvantage because current assessment arrangements are so dependent on writing (Bearne, 2003). My colleagues were also concerned about this and comments such as: *I know they understand but they cannot reproduce it in their course work* were not uncommon. The issue of students' writing was also raised in an inspection report. Improving writing became a key concern at my school and was included in the school development plan 2005/6. We were awarded additional funding under the 'Literacy and Learning' initiative (DfES, 2004a) which enabled us to access materials, training and consultancy support.

I had been a science teacher for fifteen years and like many of my colleagues had felt driven to cover *content* in my subject. Literacy was often seen as an 'add on' and the job of the English department. Then I researched writing frames as a strategy to support students' writing and found that, although this helped them to structure their writing more effectively, it did not help them to extend it. Writing frames are often used as a 'quick fix' tool without encouraging

students towards independence. They can lead to writing that is formulaic.

The challenge of writing

Why do students find writing so challenging when they seem to find it relatively easy to express themselves orally? Mostly children speak in the context of conversations which tend to be spontaneous, informal and interactive. Talk is predominantly a social activity with prompts and responses to help it forward. Writing on the other hand is usually organised, planned and undertaken as an individual activity (Perera, 1984). It requires taking control of language and restructuring it, making it more detailed and elaborate and adhering to the conventions of grammar such as spelling and punctuation (Smith and Elley, 1998). In addition to this, each curriculum subject has its own specialist vocabulary that makes up part of the ‘language of the subject’. In asking our students to compose writing, be it a conclusion for a science experiment or a persuasive essay in RE (Religious Education), we require them to think about many things simultaneously, without the prompting that usually happens during conversation. It is perhaps more difficult now than ever before for students to translate their thoughts into writing because they are exposed to multimodal texts e.g. sound and image (Bearne, 2003).

Writing is not simply a matter of representing your learning however. It involves quite sophisticated kinds of thinking. We could say that writing involves three processes: *planning*, *translating* and *reviewing* (Hayes and Flower, 1980). Planning can be described as generating and organising ideas. Translating is taking the ideas from the planning stage and turning them into sentences and paragraphs. Reviewing is the process of improving writing by editing. This has been referred to as the *cognitive engine of writing* (Sharples, 1999). For some of our students, poor writing ability may lead to low self-esteem and a loss of self-confidence (Galbraith and Alexander, 2005) preventing them from achieving their true potential.

The cognitive demands of writing are also dependent on the type of writing task. Some writing tasks are merely ‘knowledge telling’ activity, for example to fill in the answers in the box requires very little thinking. I was more interested in ‘knowledge transforming’ activity which involves the construction of meanings and the transformation of ideas (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1987). This leads to deep learning. Knowledge transforming tasks require more time which is a challenge when colleagues are under pressure to cover the

content. The National Curriculum and the examination culture of today's education system must take some of the blame for this.

The idea of modelling

I felt that I had something to contribute to this development agenda – the problem of extended writing for deep learning across the curriculum. When I worked with students with dyslexia I had been able to help them extend their writing by modelling the writing process. This had been suggested in various national reports and guidance documents (DfEE, 2001; DfES, 2004b). In these documents the following 'sequence for teaching writing' is suggested as a way of modelling writing.

- Establish clear aims
- Provide examples
- Explore features of the text
- Define conventions
- Demonstrate how it is written
- Compose together
- Scaffold first attempts
- Independent writing
- Draw out key learning

Modelling involved showing them how I write myself, making my thinking explicit in the process. It was particularly important to model writing in our school because many of our students are unlikely to see adults engaged in writing other than informal writing such as shopping lists, telephone messages and absence notes. In Stevenage, the number of adults with higher education is below national levels and students enter the school with attainment that is below average (Ofsted, 2005). This makes it even more important that they are exposed to good writing and see adults engaged in writing at school. My proposal was that modelling writing in subject specific ways would significantly enhance students' learning.

Modelling writing is not simply writing on the board for students to copy into their books and in my experience students often protest if they are faced with this task. Modelling writing requires the teacher to make explicit the thought processes that are usually invisible (Wray and Lewis, 1997). According to David Perkins and his team at Harvard, making thinking visible is a powerful strategy for learning (Perkins, 2003). I wanted to ask my colleagues to write in front of their students and make their thinking visible by thinking

aloud – not just saying what they were writing, but providing a running commentary which makes explicit the cognitive process as it unfolds. This would include for example the choice of words and decisions concerning the structure and organisation of the writing. This has been referred to as ‘metacognitive modelling’ (Tonjes, 1988).

This was going to be challenging for colleagues who were unused to revealing the ‘cognitive engine of writing’ (Sharples, 1999). I had to address the issue of colleagues’ confidence with the conventions of a chosen text-type, for example active or passive voice, first, second or third person, connectives, sentence structure and so on, particularly in non-fiction subjects. Previous attempts to develop teachers’ understanding of such matters in our school had not proved very effective in transforming practice. In considering how best to help develop my colleagues’ knowledge, skills and confidence in using this approach I came to the conclusion that coaching would be the most suitable option. Evidence suggests that coaching is a more effective form of professional development than attending external courses (Cordingley, Bell, Evans and Frith, 2005; Angelides, 2002).

Learning about coaching

My first move was to seek support from one of the consultants funded under the National Strategy. Sheila Ball became my coach which enabled me to experience the range of different coaching styles I had read about in the literature. The point of coaching is to enable colleagues to engage in systematic reflection through awareness-raising and active listening and to support experimentation in the classroom. This demands a ‘safe-to-fail’ atmosphere in which there is a great deal of trust and collegiality. I think that the fact that I was not a head of department or a member of the senior leadership team was an advantage in this situation. Perhaps I was able to exercise leadership because there were no complications regarding power or position in the organisational structure of the school. I also benefitted from working in a school where senior leadership actively encourages teacher leadership as part of a long term capacity building strategy.

In taking on the role of coach I was guided by the principles set out by Roberts and Henderson (2005); in particular I would:

- avoid being critical or judgemental
- respect confidentiality

- remain positive and build on strengths
- challenge colleagues
- maintain the focus
- share responsibility in the initial planning stages
- encourage reflection.

I thought that a three part coaching cycle would be most suitable to achieve this.

The developmental process was initiated at an annual school residential conference in June 2005. The purpose of these conferences is to provide the opportunity for governors, teachers and other colleagues to focus on a priority identified in the school development plan and work collaboratively towards an agreed outcome. This then informs the collective response of the school community in taking forward new policies and procedures. The launch of the project was carefully planned in collaboration with the school's Literacy Coordinator (Pam), the Local Authority Consultant (Sheila) and the Deputy Headteacher (Paul). We wanted to create a dialogue about writing and persuade colleagues to adopt the modelling approach.

Seeking collaboration

I opened the conference with a presentation in which I explained the links between cognition and writing, drawing on the learning theory proposed by Vygotsky (2002). This was followed by a demonstration of how to 'model writing'. We then asked colleagues to work in groups on the same writing activity. We all had the opportunity to view each other's compositions during the evening relaxation period. We enjoyed these interactive activities, but the key challenge was to enable colleagues to apply what they had learnt to the very particular nature of their subjects. We asked colleagues to select a writing task they would use with their Year 7 students and describe the text type or types, its main features and conventions at text, sentence and word levels. This proved challenging for many colleagues. My email at the end of the first week asking about progress with modelling writing within the context of their subjects got very little response. I had to conclude that our grand launch had achieved little more than awareness raising.

The next step was to try collaborating with colleagues who were already confident. Marie, an Advanced Skills Teacher and head of the humanities department, was keen to try modelling writing with one of her classes. This provided me with the opportunity to pilot evaluation tools and rehearse the coaching cycle. I asked Marie to keep a writing log and allow me to use a student questionnaire and a group interview strategy to explore students' experience of the modelling writing activity. I learnt a great deal through this collaboration with Marie. It gave me the confidence to try working more closely with other colleagues.

We then convened a meeting of a small group of interested colleagues. I had made a video recording of my colleague Pam, the school's Literacy Coordinator, using the modelling approach. We looked at the video in the meeting and colleagues responded well. One colleague commented: *it's our students and not some model classroom in a fancy school somewhere*. Another commented *so it's not about teaching English but about teaching about how to write in your subject*; the penny had dropped. Even so, some colleagues felt that it involved too much writing and they found it difficult to see how this could possibly work in their subjects. I proposed that I would work with colleagues to see if we could develop these modelling strategies through coaching using video recordings. After due consideration, only one colleague, Iain, agreed to the arrangement. I needed at least one other colleague and so I approached Sophie, a science teacher. She was not a member of our literacy group and had missed the residential conference, but once I had explained my project to her she was keen to develop this approach to improve students' writing in science. I was very relieved to be able to move forward with two colleagues from contrasting curriculum areas, Science and RE, to the next stage of this process.

Using the three part coaching strategy

It was at this point that I was able to deploy the three part coaching cycle (Roberts and Henderson, 2005) which consists of a pre-observation meeting, observation and a post observation meeting. This type of coaching model is traditionally associated with developing a particular skill, craft or practice – in this case, the practice of modelling writing. However, for us coaching became a critical activity, a learning conversation through which we were able to come to a new understanding of the complexities and the

challenges of writing experienced by students. This understanding allowed for greater inclusion of all students in extended writing.

The pre-observation stage

In this stage I met with each colleague to explore the nature of writing in their subjects. We discussed key concerns about the state of students' writing and the improvements we hoped for by participating in this project. Iain and Sophie had similar concerns about students' writing even though their subjects, Science and RE require very different types of writing. In RE for example they are expected to put forward an argument or write a persuasive text; writing can be subjective, whereas in Science it tends to be objective and relatively brief. Despite these differences there were common concerns about the lack of detail and structure even in their best students' writing.

The writing tasks chosen were not specially created for the purposes of this project but were part of the current schemes of work, the only difference being that students were taught how to write in that text type by their teachers modelling the writing. We used annotated published examples to learn how to analyse text-type (Wray and Shilvock, 2003) – a part of the process that colleagues had previously expressed insecurity about. We agreed that both colleagues would practice modelling writing with a Year 9 high ability class even though the Deputy Headteacher had suggested that the focus should be on our middle band students because they had the least value added score. We agreed that raising achievement for our middle band group of students is very important, but both colleagues felt that with these high ability classes they would be able to focus on practicing this new approach in a situation in which students would be cooperative and there would be no behaviour issues to deal with. They needed to operate within their safety zone and I think this is important when trialling something new, but, as they both became more confident and came to realise the benefits for their students, they started to use the same approach with their other groups.

Observation stage

We used video recording as an aid to lesson observation and asked a number of other colleagues to help with the filming. This also had the advantage of widening participation in the process. We agreed that I would only view the recordings either in the presence of my colleagues or with their express permission.

Post-observation stage

We viewed the video recording of the lesson together, my role being to help my colleague to reflect critically on their lesson. This was more of a mutual exploration rather than a one way coaching process. I recorded the discussion so I could reflect on my own role and evaluate the strategy. It was clear that trying to write what we ask our students to write is not as easy as it might seem.

I wanted to write it myself. I needed to see what they go through and I felt that if I hadn't experienced writing it I could not talk them through it. It was harder than I thought and the last time I wrote like this was when I was at school. Yes it is difficult and requires a lot of thinking. I would never have realised this had I not written this example.

(Interview with Sophie)

At the end of the discussion, action points were discussed informally; I wanted to avoid the possibility that a formal procedure might interfere with the nature of this collaboration. An example of an action point for Sophie was to analyse the text for its textual features such as choice of connectives, sentence structure, voice and audience whilst reading it aloud.

To help Sophie with this we agreed that we would view the recording of Iain's lesson. He was particularly good at analysing the text using the language of literacy, for example, voice, audience, use of connectives and verbs and vocabulary. He also made reference to 'point, evidence and explain' with which our students are very familiar from their English lessons. He then engaged in some writing whilst thinking aloud although he hadn't yet been able to involve the students in this activity. That came later. Sophie really appreciated this rare opportunity to see a colleague teaching within a different subject. In the next cycle she appeared much more relaxed and confident. She used the language of literacy, for example purpose, audience, connectives, punctuation and point, evidence and explain. She also managed to engage in composing whilst thinking aloud in front of her students. Following this lesson, most students' writing was better structured and included appropriate scientific language and they appeared to be working more independently.

Including the students in the collaboration

As part of the evaluation of the modelling strategy I invited small groups of students to view the recordings with me and discuss their views on the way they were being taught how to write. The students

were very positive and the most interesting thing was that this approach enabled them to transfer learning from their English lessons. The following comment shows how my colleagues' focus on the use of connectives enabled students to transfer learning.

I know it seems funny but it doesn't seem right, you use them in English but you do different things in Science. Like in English you learn about language and in Science about experiments. You don't expect to go into a science lesson and think about writing using connectives and stuff like that but now we know that we can.

(Group interview with students)

Iain also learnt from Sophie. In her second lesson she involved the students in this process to a greater extent and was able to think aloud very well during the composition stage. After a short time both Sophie and Iain found that they could make their thinking visible to their students by thinking aloud in front of them. Even with the very small amount of writing done by their teachers, the students were able to see the workings of the 'cognitive engine of writing' (Sharples, 1999). This helped them to learn that writing requires thinking and editing and that it is an ongoing process as illustrated by this comment.

Before we didn't see her writing like this but now we can see that it's OK to go back and restructure the sentences and change stuff. Instead of thinking that once you've written it, it must stay like that because that's how it probably seems when she puts it up and says 'this is what I wrote before'. You don't know if she changed anything but now we see how she's thinking as she is writing.

(Group interview with students)

In the next cycle we decided to focus on editing and inviting the students to help with the composition. We decided then to extend this by asking students to work in pairs to compose a small section on mini white boards. During this stage students also engaged in thinking aloud. As my colleagues' confidence grew the modelling became more interactive with more time spent writing collaboratively. My interviews with students indicated that students preferred the more collaborative approach to writing when it is supported by the modelling approach.

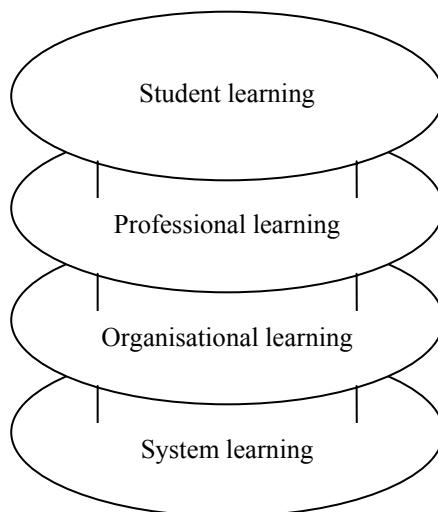
There was clear evidence from students and colleagues during interviews that writing was improving. I did not set out to measure this against National Curriculum levels. I was more interested in my

colleagues' professional opinions of their students' writing and in the opinion of students about their writing. The views expressed were more positive than those at the start of this collaboration. Iain felt that his students' writing was better structured and organised. It was also more detailed and they used 'point, evidence and explain' effectively. Students showed a much better disposition towards writing at home following the modelling sessions. Similarly Sophie reported an improvement in the conclusions students wrote. Their writing made reference to all the key findings and patterns in an investigation; it was no longer limited to the personal narrative but instead had become more factual and scientific.

Impact of the project

In evaluating this project I used the 'leadership for learning wedding cake' as a framework to analyse the multi-level learning that could be associated with the project. The wedding cake representation is helpful because not only does it highlight the way learning arises at different levels, it also draws attention to the vital links between these levels.

Figure 1: Multilevel learning



(Frost *et al.*, 2004:2)

Over a short time scale and with only two teachers it would not have been possible to draw any reliable conclusions about any increase in National Curriculum levels of attainment. I was more interested in understanding the ways in which this practice supported student

learning. Inviting groups of students to view video recordings of lessons provided an opportunity for them to reflect on how the practice affected their learning. I facilitated this by using prompts and probes in addition to open questions to explore their thinking. From the data collected during these sessions the following salient messages emerged:

1. Seeing the teacher's example of a piece of writing provided clarity about what the students should be aiming for.
2. The use of key literacy terms by teachers when they analysed the text triggered transfer of learning from their English lessons.
3. The students got a sense of how to structure and extend their writing, in the words of one student: *It shows me how it all fits together.*
4. The collaborative phase allowed students to tap into each other's thinking and learn from each other through dialogue.
5. Seeing their teachers think aloud and go through the cognitive struggle to select the correct vocabulary encouraged them to do the same.
6. The modelling approach helped students to understand that editing is a natural part of writing.
7. Engaging in dialogue about writing helped students to learn how to write a conclusion or a persuasive text in terms of voice, sentence structure, flow; and point, evidence and explain.

Most students said that they were aware of a great improvement in their writing.

These benefits arise when students are working as 'apprentices in learning' (Rogoff, 1990). This is not a matter of mimicking the teacher. As students went through a series of lessons where colleagues modelled writing, their confidence grew and they were even able to complete writing tasks at home to a good standard because they felt prepared. Even students who previously struggled with writing handed in a good piece of work with which my colleagues were very pleased. One student made this comment during a reflection session *it's the first assessment I have completed and handed in on time.* When I probed to find out why he replied: *I felt really prepared and confident that I could do it.*

The modelling writing project provided an opportunity for professional learning that went far beyond the technicalities of writing as described above. Both Iain and Sophie developed their

capacity for professional learning, for example by using video recording to evaluate other aspects of their practice. In this way I think that the project had contributed to capacity building which Gray *et al.* (1999) define as the development of a school's internal resources aimed at the improvement of student learning. It is not insignificant that both colleagues were subsequently appointed as Advanced Skills Teachers. In this role they have developed the use of coaching to support other colleagues' professional learning.

The regular presentations to colleagues, governors and the senior leadership team helped to influence colleagues and overcome resistance to the innovation. After the final presentation at our school's Teaching and Learning Forum, I showed video recordings of Sophie and Iain modelling writing. Following this, the Head of Mathematics approached me and said that she wanted to develop this approach in her department. She had already used writing frames which had been helpful but wanted to lift her students' writing above the formulaic. Other colleagues found the presentation revelatory, for example one said: *I usually try to correct my mistakes or sentences without the students knowing. Perhaps I should try this approach where I will be able to discuss these more openly with my students.*

Learning within the third layer of the wedding cake was evident although organisational learning cannot easily be attributed to any one development project. Nevertheless, I think it can be claimed that the project made a significant contribution to school development in that it raised awareness of the key role that writing plays in learning and established in the consciousness of the staff as a whole that this is something we can all work on in our subject teaching. It could also be said that collaboration between departments increased as a result of involvement in the project. It is also clear that the value of coaching as a professional learning strategy was promoted and has since been adopted and adapted for a range of purposes.

Beyond the school, presentations about the project have supported colleagues in other schools in taking up both the practice of modelling writing for students but also the practice of coaching for professional learning.

Engagement in this project has enabled me to grow and develop in different ways. I have become more confident in my ability to influence colleagues and lead change. I have presented my work on

a number of occasions to different audiences which has helped to refine my presentation skills and improve my confidence. I have learned a great deal about how to set up collaborative processes to influence change in classroom practice. I have improved my knowledge about the cognitive demands of writing and how a modelling approach can help to overcome these. I have developed my skills as a coach and learnt how to enable colleagues to reflect critically and improve their learning. I believe that I now have a higher profile in the school and have a significant role influencing and leading change.

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Supporting professional learning for Early Years practitioners

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Abstract

Kari Esterhuizen graduated from the Herts. MEd in Leading Teaching and Learning in 2007. In this article, she describes how she used her project to develop her own and others' understanding of networking and the skills to facilitate it, with the aim of supporting professional learning for Early Years practitioners.

In my role as Early Years Adviser within Hertfordshire local authority I have a professional responsibility to ensure that Early Years practitioners can be confident participants in an exciting, ever-changing learning landscape. I began to question the impact of current professional learning opportunities available across a range of Early Years settings. As an experienced adviser I also had a responsibility to support my colleagues in the Early Years advisory team. I began to consider the possibility of addressing both sets of needs through the development of effective networking.

The development of Children's Centres as part of the Government's Ten Year Strategy (DfES, 2004) highlighted the need for training and support services for Early Years workers across all disciplines. I felt I had an important role to play in encouraging the development of these multi-agency partnerships and collaborating with colleagues in the provision of a range of personal development opportunities.

I began to consider the potential for developing a community of collaborative learners, particularly in relation to the new 'Children's Centres'. What were the potential opportunities for collaboration between practitioners in local areas and how could such a community of learners be facilitated? The role of local authority network facilitators seemed pivotal. I therefore decided to investigate the strategies that experienced network facilitators develop in order to facilitate effective practitioner communities.

Designing the project

I began by gathering local information through a discussion with the Early Years management team. The analysis of documentary evidence and a limited number of interviews with experienced network facilitators would inform my plan for working with inexperienced network facilitators to raise their levels of skill and understanding.

My discussion with the management team was extremely useful. Not only did it help me to clarify my purpose, it also assured me that we had shared goals and a sense of mutual accountability. The next step was to involve my advisory team colleagues. During one of our meetings I explained my project, gained their consent and explored team members' perceptions of networking. My aim was to identify effective networks through the local intelligence of my colleagues. The facilitators we identified as experienced would be interviewed in order to gain a better understanding of successful network facilitation strategies. Our conversation was useful but we lacked a common understanding about what constituted an effective network and we also lacked knowledge of the local networks. We decided to identify successful networks by their longevity and therefore chose the three most established Early Years networks in the county for further investigation. In reflecting on this meeting it became clear that my project would need to focus on the development of a clearer understanding of the key principles of network facilitation within our advisory team. I was also keen to find ways to encourage team members to reflect on their own roles within the developing Early Years networks.

I used a document search (Duffy, 2005) to assess whether my proposed project was feasible and gain further understanding of the background to and nature of local networks. I gathered evidence from administrative artefacts and databases held by the administration team. This included surveys, attendance registers, staffing returns and minutes of working group meetings. I established that the networks we had identified did indeed have consistently high attendance figures. It was at this stage however that information came to light which was very influential in my development work. I had previously led a conference for practitioners on the KEEP¹ principles (DfES, 2005) during which I had gathered their views about professional learning opportunities

¹ KEEP: Key Elements of Effective Practice

and networking. Participants indicated a low level of attendance at local cluster networks and this raised questions about practitioners' beliefs about the value of learning from each other. It was clear that the challenge was to foster a much broader appreciation of the potential different professional learning activities. These reflections provided a starting point for the interviews I would conduct with network facilitators.

Supporting effective network facilitation

I interviewed experienced network facilitators to help determine the criteria for successful network facilitation. Recurring themes included: management and organisation, constructing networking as learning, practitioners as facilitators, communication skills, membership of the professional community, informal relationships and sharing practice.

Network management

Experienced facilitators developed systems for network management which included: regular correspondence, advertising and publicity strategies. They had a well developed awareness of their audience and had thought carefully about the type of venues to be used.

Networking as learning

Facilitators understood the potential of networks to support learning. They believed that network participants need to share this view although they were not confident that this was the case. The facilitators also commented on the need to make explicit the link between teacher and pupil learning.

Effective networks have the potential to lead to this improvement, but participants do not necessarily link continuing professional development with children's learning.

(Sarah)

Encouraging network participants to take ownership of the network and to drive the agenda was seen as one way of addressing these issues.

When I encourage the participants to steer the content and identify an area of need and/or interest, all participants return to the next session and contribute from their own experiences/practice... An effective collaborative style of working has developed naturally!

(Jessica)

Practitioners as facilitators

The network facilitators I interviewed were dealing with the same issues as their network participants on a day-to-day basis. This raised a new question for me: is it essential for network facilitators to be practitioners? There were serious implications here for those network facilitators who were local authority advisors who would have a different relationship with network participants.

Communication skills

A recurring theme was the importance of the facilitators' communication skills (Rodd, 2006). This included being able to communicate across the spectrum, including everything from the effective use of buzz words on advertising materials to a friendly smile and eye contact with participants on arrival at a venue. This was illustrated by the following comment from one of my interviewees.

As the facilitator I carefully try to ensure that all individuals are very warmly welcomed and invited into a friendly, non-threatening space for refreshments before the session officially starts.

(Lindy)

Facilitation of learning conversations is also a highly skilled dimension of the role of network facilitator.

Membership of a professional community

Interviewees reported that invitations to participate in the network were not based on the individual's personal status or qualifications; membership of the professional community was based on working to support the learning of very young children in some way. Specifically, all facilitators mentioned that it was essential that support staff also be considered as network members. This was particularly interesting to me as I had been keen to discover if practitioners with varying levels of responsibility and qualification can contribute to each others' professional development. This seemed to confirm that the membership of networks in the primary education sector is usually more inclusive than that in other phases (Bolam *et al.*, 2005). In Hertfordshire virtually all Early Years education is provided within the context of primary schools. The professional networks therefore seemed to offer an effective forum for acknowledging and learning from the contribution of the different members.

Informal relationships

The experienced facilitators were keen to emphasise the value of the informal relationships that developed between network members. I became increasingly aware of the need to help inexperienced network facilitators to appreciate the importance of informal professional relationships in a successful network.

Sharing practice

Network facilitators were clear about the centrality of enabling practitioners to share accounts of their work as illustrated by the following comments from one of the interviews.

It is not a training session, we do not invite a trainer. We consider the issue and discuss what is known amongst ourselves. We are always seated in a circle. Practitioners make voluntary contributions to the discussion. At some sessions some practitioners have more to offer than others since they might be more knowledgeable about that particular subject whereas at another session another practitioner might be better informed and have more to share with the group. It is more about sharing ideas and explaining what works for you within your particular context.

(Inger)

If Early Years professional networking was to be successfully developed across the county, I needed to highlight the importance of this function which is essentially about enabling practitioners to build professional knowledge together through the exchange of accounts of practice.

The next phase – developing an intervention

I met again with the Early Years management team and we discussed what I had discovered. We decided that I would design a series of half-termly workshops to support inexperienced network facilitators. These would be based on the themes I had identified as being common to successful networks. The workshops would build on the episodic nature of adult learning as emphasised by Rogers (1996) and, by revisiting previous learning and respecting the on-going experiences of the new facilitators, enhance their professional development.

In the first workshop I wanted to address organisational and management issues in order to underpin more strategic development. I asked the new network facilitators to consider developing a predictable pattern to their future network sessions. It was

subsequently agreed that the agenda for the termly network sessions would be structured to enable the new facilitators to communicate some key messages as well as to provide opportunities for collaborative learning conversations between and amongst participants. This style of organisation closely matched the models described by the successful network facilitators. It also helped to challenge an underlying misconception that these networks were additional training opportunities with content driven by the local authority's quality improvement agenda.

We also addressed the issue of geographical location in this initial workshop. We decided to map our networks against existing consortiums such as Extended Schools and Children's Centre communities. Each network facilitator reviewed current participation and considered the accuracy of the database for their particular patch. In this way, the networking database was adapted and the idea of collaborative working established.

Collaborative learning

I wanted to provide an opportunity within the workshops for discussion about the ways in which adults learn collaboratively. I prepared an interactive workshop activity using key statements from my reading. The statements included the five assumptions proposed by Knowles (1984) regarding how adults learn.

- a) Adults are largely self-directed and require a climate of collaboration to learn effectively.
- b) The previous experiences of the learner have to be implicit in the learning process.
- c) The adult learner needs to accept the need to learn and they only internalise learning if motivated by intrinsic factors.
- d) Adult learners are biased towards problem solving as a learning activity.
- e) Practical relevance is a significant factor in gaining commitment.

We used these statements to lead us to reflect as a group on the importance of workplace learning and the notion of learning by doing, sharing, reviewing and applying as described by Dennison and Kirk (1990). The strapline from the government's professional development strategy (DfEE, 2001) helped to summarise our thoughts: 'learning from each other, learning from what works'.

During this interactive session it was agreed that the key to motivating the Early Years professional community was to involve them in sharing their experiences and facilitating the transferability of ideas. New facilitators regarded the potential support of ‘Leading Teachers’ and ‘Lead Practitioners’ in achieving these aims as a positive way forward. It was agreed that there would be great benefit to the allocation of a Leading Teacher to each of the 10 districts across the county to work in partnership with them.

The focus of our last workshop was effective communication. I used a self-evaluation grid as a means of encouraging the new facilitators to reflect on their personal communication skills. The aim of the workshop was to draw attention to the importance of communication and to develop an appreciation of the value of encouraging participants to become involved in reflective dialogue. We collectively identified that the challenge facing all facilitators was how to bring about change not only at the level of talk, but also in practice.

Evaluating my development work

I wanted to know how the new network facilitators’ saw the impact of the workshops on their understanding of networking and on their ability to facilitate effective networks. I chose to interview them collectively. It was clear that a more collaborative pattern of working had resulted in improved ‘structures, conditions, personal relationships and an agreed common language in use’ (Turbill, 2004:102). Over the weeks and months since the initial workshop they had clearly improved their personal and interpersonal capacity (Frost and Durrant, 2002) and had developed a clearer understanding of networking.

Networking is an important part of a whole menu of opportunities that should be available for practitioners to access. The social context of networking provides opportunities for practitioners to exchange ideas and learn from each other. It is a means of embedding professional development, not only a means of broadening it.

(Agreed Statement)

Their fundamental values and beliefs about networking had become more coherent, as had their practice.

We have realised that there is a need for the facilitator to be overall responsible for organising the network, from basic tasks like writing the correspondence to more demanding skills like facilitating group

discussions. We also appreciate that a blame culture was developing and that we have now realised our level of accountability. Having taken ownership of this responsibility we will ensure that the management and organisation strategies agreed amongst ourselves are consistently applied and reviewed.

(Agreed Statement)

They reflected a high level of awareness of the importance of developing skills in building and maintaining professional relationships (Frost and Durrant, 2002).

Developing relationships is one of the most important aspects leading to successful and sustainable networking. Fundamentally networking is dependent on good relationships, mutual trust and respect developing between practitioners and between the facilitator and the practitioners. These relationships are more likely to develop if a key person facilitates a local network over a period of time and makes an effort to get to know the participants.

(Agreed Statement)

On a personal level, the network facilitators were very positive about the impact of the workshops as opportunities to network and establish a shared understanding of their role. This was expressed in the following agreed statement:

(The workshops) provided a unique opportunity to consider, reflect on and clarify their roles and responsibilities as new network facilitators. The workshops helped individuals to develop an appreciation of each others' points of view, a chance to discuss current leadership and management strategies and to collectively affirm the vision for Early Years networking in Hertfordshire.

(Agreed Statement)

Following this session I met with the Early Years management team to feed back what I had learned.

Moving from knowledge to action

In the feedback I recommended focusing our attention on networking at three levels. I believed we should continue to manage and organise the networks according to the procedures we had agreed in the workshops and review these regularly to gauge their effectiveness. At a strategic level we should respond to the important issue of understanding impact and agree a policy for Early Years networking. We should also focus on developing relationships and leadership, that is, on building capacity in order to ensure long-

term sustainable improvement. Opportunities for networking need to be expanded and relevant professional development experiences offered to the facilitators.

The management group responded very positively to these suggestions. We agreed that our particular focus will be creating organisational capacity and developing opportunities for integrated networking in relation to specific Children's Centres.

Networking and pupil learning

Despite the positive evaluation of my work with the network coordinators, there was little evidence from either the experienced or inexperienced facilitators that networking impacted on pupils' learning.

Although we are confident that we have personally acquired new knowledge and that this has directly and indirectly improved our network facilitation we are unsure as to whether the participants internalise, reflect upon and apply their learning to their particular context. It is difficult to measure impact other than through evidence of visible changes and therefore we need another means by which to evaluate impact.

(Agreed Statement)

I too had little evidence that networking positively impacted on the quality of teaching and learning in Early Years provision. I felt that I had learned little about one of my areas of interest, that is, whether it is possible to influence learning and teaching through improved and on-going interaction between adult learners and more specifically amongst Early Years practitioners. I was continually challenged by a comment in the 'Better Schools' document from the 1980s which made the point that 'insufficient attention had been given to evaluating the extent to which teachers and schools benefited from training undertaken' (DES, 1985:44). The annual Ofsted report demonstrated that little had changed, stressing that 'few schools evaluated successfully the impact of continuing professional development on the quality of teaching and on pupils' achievement' (Ofsted, 2006:4).

In discussing this issue with my colleagues, we felt that we needed to continue to attempt to develop quality indicators to determine the impact of effective networking on pupil learning. This became an area for development for the Hertfordshire Early Years team.

The way ahead

Early Years provision is currently undergoing fundamental changes in response to the Government's Green Paper, 'Every Child Matters' (DfES, 2003) which sets out the proposals for reforming the delivery of services for children, young people and families. Proposals include, among others, the development of Children's Centres and the promotion of full service extended schools. Against this backdrop and key to the Government's agenda to reform the education system is the 'New Relationship with Schools' (DfES, 2004). This initiative was aimed at streamlining the bureaucratic channels between the school, its local authority and the DfES. Within Hertfordshire this new relationship is referred to as 'The Hertfordshire Learning Partnership' (CSF, 2005). Under these arrangements, schools will have more autonomy to determine their improvement priorities and the appropriate support packages to enable them to address these priorities. Recognising that some schools are more creative in finding solutions than others, the local authority's role is to build capacity by creating links and encouraging schools to work in partnership with each other and with local community groups. The time is ripe for us to grasp the opportunity to broker such networks, to facilitate lateral learning relationships and re-configure our own functions to support networks as the new 'units of engagement' (NCSL, 2006).

Through this development work I have come to a deeper appreciation of the value of professional learning through membership of a professional network. I have developed my ability to identify my own learning needs and those of others. In facilitating a series of professional development workshops I have sharpened my understanding of the demands of network facilitation and now appreciate the depth of challenge related to the role of a facilitator.

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Developing students as intentional learners

Paul Rose

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Abstract

Paul Rose graduated from the Herts. MEd in Leading Teaching and Learning in 2007. In this article, he describes how he developed 'learning how to learn' approaches as a way of supporting students as independent learners.

By 2003 I had spent 15 successful years in teaching. However, I was becoming increasingly frustrated at not being able to influence student understanding as effectively as I would have liked. My reading of Mike Hughes' 'Closing the learning gap' (Hughes, 1999) was a turning point for me. His discussion of the gap between what we know about effective learning and our classroom practice was very interesting, as was his view of the extent to which successful learning depends on the way students engage with the learning process. It became obvious that I needed a better understanding of what matters for learning to take place and that I needed to develop a way of sharing this understanding with my students. I hoped that this would help them move from being passive learners to active agents in their own learning.

Focusing on intentional learning

I started to think about what effective learning might look like. Over the past few years, both government and schools have attempted to develop a more active approach to learning in which students are more involved. I wondered what I could do to develop the active engagement of learners in my school. A plethora of approaches from government and elsewhere, under the banner of 'Learning to Learn' (*LtL*) have attempted to address this concern but I wanted to develop and evaluate my own *LtL* approach focusing on *intentional learning* which has been characterised as 'the situation where pupils are trying to learn and teachers are helping them to do this' (Black, McCormick, James and Pedder, 2006:123). In order to develop our

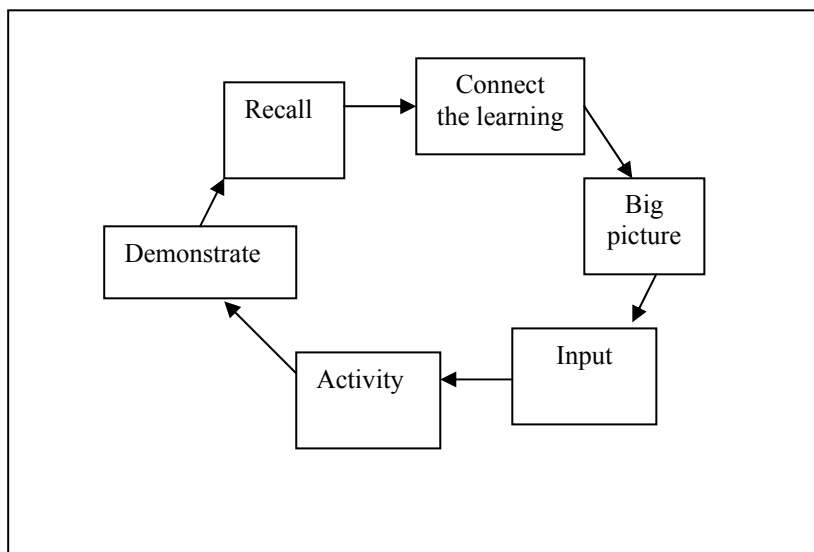
support for *intentional learning* I would need to explore students' understanding of learning to learn, what this entails and their view of how this could help them to learn more effectively. In addition, I needed to consider the vital related questions about my own role in promoting student learning.

I originally came across the term *intentional learning* in the work of Black *et al.* (2006), who describe it as the highly desirable situation where a student, aided by the teacher, focuses primarily on trying to learn rather than to do. It implies that both parties share an understanding of what is important in learning and that they have found a way of encouraging learning so that it is deliberate and desired. My review of the *LtL* literature indicated that students' adaptability needs to be encouraged by giving them more control over the learning process (Riding and Rayner, 1998; Adey, Fairbrother and Wiliam, 1999). However, there was little agreement over the most effective way to do this.

I chose to work with my low-ability Year 8 English group for several reasons. This group was characterised by an over-reliance on the teacher. They seemed to expect me to organise them, motivate them and tell them what was important. This had not been productive. I felt that they would benefit from an investigation into the factors that influence *intentional learning* and the possible impact of *LtL* strategies. It was at this stage that my reading led me to Alistair Smith's 'Accelerated Learning' programme which is similarly underpinned by the desire to move beyond traditional classroom practice (Smith, 2003). I found reflection on this programme both sobering and enlightening as it helped to explain my limited effectiveness, despite the excellent relationships in my classrooms. My view of the suitability of the Accelerated Learning Cycle to support my intended project was bolstered by a study at Cramlington High School where significant improvements were made when the cycle was employed as the school-wide model for planning (Wise and Lovatt, 2001).

The 'Accelerated Learning Cycle' proved to be a helpful model for planning lessons. More important perhaps was my decision to share this with my students as a framework for helping them to reflect on the nature of the lesson as an effective support for their learning.

Figure 1: The Accelerated Learning Cycle



The model gave me a reference point for discussion with the students about the different stages of the lesson (Rose, 2007).

Discovering the students' views

I wanted to find out more about students' views of learning. I used a questionnaire as a tool to enable them to raise issues and express their views. My students' responses to this initial questionnaire were disappointing. Many appeared to be trying to please me by endorsing the status quo (Bell, 2005) and there was a disappointing level of engagement with the more open-ended questions about their views of learning and their experience in my classroom. I decided to follow up with some student interviews, using the questionnaire responses as a basis for a discussion. As with the opening questionnaire, I saw this first interview as a way of developing my understanding of students' attitudes and raising their awareness. I chose three boys and two girls from across the ability range who I hoped would give me interesting insights.

The students struggled to describe their perceptions with any degree of accuracy. Never having had this type of conversation before, they were without an adequate mental framework or vocabulary. However the interview did indicate that nearly all the students saw their own learning as controlled by external factors. They perceived

learning as in the gift of the teacher and solely as a classroom-based activity.

I reflected on this and decided that I needed to develop a series of *LtL* activities to challenge students' views of learning. In order to explore which aspects of the Accelerated Learning programme would be most effective for my students I chose a unit focused on Shelley's 'Frankenstein'. By making group script-writing the students' central task, I hoped to focus on both specific learning practices and dispositional challenges. The task allowed sufficient opportunity for extended individual and collaborative work, and, crucially, placed considerable responsibility in the students' hands.

I introduced the work with a unit summary which introduced key vocabulary and allowed for target-setting. Information about curricular intentions was interwoven with those about *LtL*. This was a deliberate departure from my normal practice, and the first of several conscious attempts to structure the experience as part of a holistic model where learning and *LtL* are perceived as one (Black *et al.*, 2006).

The students' response

I devised a learning log to help students record what they thought about at different points in their learning (Siegler, 2002). I followed this up with further student interviews. Analysis of the data encouraged me in that the students felt the *LtL* focus was making a positive impact on their understanding of, and willingness to engage with, the process of learning, i.e. more *intentional learning*. In support of the students' views, I had noticed a remarkable improvement in their approach to learning. This was also noted by my Learning Support Assistant and by a maths teacher who was visiting bottom sets as part of his professional development. He was struck by the marked difference in approach of this group, wanted to know more about the project and immediately took on a helpful role as 'critical friend'.

In an interview with my Learning Support Assistant, students reflected carefully on the notable changes in the ways in which I had encouraged them to learn.

Well, he writes more stuff on the board, like he's asking us like personal questions, like not just answers like 'When did Macbeth die?' or something like that.... He's asking questions like 'What do you

think?’ personally, like.... ‘How do you learn the best?’ or ‘What do you think should be the best R [dispositional strategy] to use when?’

(Interview Series 3: Student R)

This is evidence of the change in focus from performance goals, attached to specific knowledge about the curriculum, to mastery goals. It also indicates the resultant change in discourse between teacher and student which has profound implications for the classroom. The implied benefits for students regarding an increased sense of self-worth led me to question Brophy’s view on what the limits of a teacher’s ambitions should be. In his conceptionalisation of ‘motivation to learn’, Brophy (2004) argues that we should be focusing the student on understanding content and engaging with learning objectives. Based on my project, I think he underestimates the potential of a *LtL* focus to impact more broadly.

Giving more regard to the students’ views means that the learning experience is perceived as more purposeful. When asked, ‘In which area do you think you have made most progress over the weeks of the project?’ one student responded as follows.

I thought that you could learn just by coming into class and copying what the teacher wants. But now I know that you really have to try and take part in the lesson (answering questions, for example)

(Terminal questionnaire: Year 8 Student)

This response is symptomatic of a general increase in ‘self-efficacy’ generated by a change in classroom relationships. The data also points to a wide recognition of the gradual transition of responsibility that the *LtL* focus engendered. The following extract is one of many which showed that, by mid-way through the project, there was a fuller understanding of the balance implied in *intentional learning*.

Interviewer: *When you think you’ve had a really good learning session and you’ve really got something out of it, that it’s really gone in, who do think is normally in control of the learning?*

Student: *Both.*

Interviewer: *When you say both do you mean, you and...*

Student: *and Mr. Rose.*

(Interview Series 3: Student D)

My Year 8 students seemed to be saying that the teacher can be encouragingly influential in supporting *intentional learning*. They indicated that the group had developed a much more enthusiastic and thoughtful approach to their classroom learning, and that they felt that this had influenced their attitudes elsewhere. A large majority of the students had a much clearer understanding of the complexities of learning and now perceived themselves in a learning partnership with me where we co-owned all aspects of learning. However, though the students' views were heartening, I was aware that the progress made was superficial. Due to the brevity of the intervention, new ideas and ways of working had been introduced only. They would require reinforcement and development if they were to make a sustained difference to those involved.

Towards a deeper understanding of 'learning to learn'

Students were very keen to talk about the significance of *LtL*'s impact on classroom roles. This led me to question whether it is what the teacher imparts that is at the heart of progress towards *intentional learning* or the roles that classroom protagonists play. I then read 'Intentional Learning as a Goal of Instruction', Bereiter and Scardamalia's original chapter (1989) from which Black *et al.* (2006) had taken the phrase *intentional learning*. The chapter forced me to re-evaluate my previous interpretation of 'where pupils are trying to learn and teachers are helping them to do this' (Black *et al.*, 2006:123). It gave me insight into why my version of *LtL* was having such impact. The chapter makes it clear that students are likely to see learning through a lens of 'doing school' – a series of activities to be completed. The strategies suggested by the authors, where *intentional learning* as the 'pursuit of cognitive goals, over and above the requirements of the task' (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1989:385) becomes the norm, were similar to the approach I had taken.

There is a strong recognition in Bereiter and Scardamalia (1989) of the overarching importance of metacognition in its strongest form – the main element that distinguished my *LtL* approach from the 'narrow' approaches of the DfES and others. McGuinness (1999), in her review of thinking skills research, concluded that a metacognitive perspective should be key to any *LtL* programme. The DfES (2004) defines metacognition as a pupil's evaluation of whether the learning objectives of the lesson have been achieved. However, my project

points to the importance of creating conditions where a stronger interpretation applies. I believe the shift in focus away from the curriculum itself and towards awareness of what is required to make sense of it led to the alterations in expectations and relationships noted by the students. My prioritising of metacognition reflected Watkins' 'meta-learning' model (2005). He advises making learning the object of attention, of conversation, of reflection and of learning. I feel that it was my decision to make a rigorous distinction between 'doing' and learning to learn that underpinned the success of my attempt to encourage *intentional learning*. By encouraging a focus on the quality of the learning process rather than the outcome itself, the intervention encouraged self-esteem, 'a way of experiencing yourself when you are using your resources well' (Dweck, 2000:128) so that students found a new level of determination to master challenges, learn and assist others in learning. This is perhaps best conveyed by the attitude of Student C when he eschews the chance to take easy praise. Instead, he demonstrates improved critical perception and a focus on learning, rather than performance goals. The interviewer had asked him about one of his pieces of work that had been judged to be very good.

*I thought like cos we I well I needed more time to like make the play...
Cos it didn't really make sense really ... Like, it was okay but....*

(Interview Series 3: Student C)

Dweck's (2000) warning to teachers against trying to hide students' deficiencies and eliminate obstacles in an attempt to boost self-esteem struck a chord. However, the *LtL* focus allowed me to escape this expectation. Instead of attempting to fill gaps I encouraged the students to explore the gaps for themselves and this fundamentally changed the climate of the classroom.

The impact of *LtL* on the teacher

I believe that so far, there has been insufficient attention to the implications of the *LtL* approach for the teacher. I have come to appreciate that the phrase 'learning to learn' cuts both ways. The literature concentrates on the importance of the teacher's role rather than on the impact of the implementation of a comprehensive *LtL* approach on the teacher's role.

My sense of the fundamental importance of the teacher's practice was given a timely organisational framework in a lecture at the Cambridge Faculty of Education on 'Creativity' by Nicholls and

McLellan (2007). In it they explored the concept of teacher as ‘gatekeeper’, applying Csiksentmilhalyi’s systems approach to creativity to education (1999). On further inspection, Csiksentmilhalyi does make an excellent case for focusing on the ‘field’ [teacher] rather than the ‘individual’ [student]. As standard setters, teachers make the decisions about what should be included in the ‘domain’ and to whom the individual looks. If the aim of *LtL* is learner autonomy then, paradoxically, the best way of achieving this is not to focus primarily on the learners themselves, but on the teachers who have the capacity to engender it. My experience of the intervention and the data springing from it resonates with this. The teacher validates what is worth knowing, as all the work on the importance of learning practices recognises.

Implications for my own practice

My development work gave me insight into the extent of the teacher’s influence in encouraging *intentional learning* and pointed to ways of maximising this impact. Instead of seeing myself as the expedition leader across the landscape of learning, armed with a metacognitive machete to clear a path for those following, I came to see myself as a Park Ranger – someone who opens the gate to admit the adventurers; briefs them on the upcoming challenges; provides a range of appropriate tools for the journey; advises in an emergency and celebrates their experience on completion.

The transformation from teacher as the provider of tasks, to ‘learning consultant’ was liberating, empowering and noted by my students. The interviewer asked the students about their perceptions of changes in my practice.

Yeah. He seems to be a lot quieter like just ... looking at us and seeing what we are doing and sometimes walks around and like gives us pointers and everything ... (this is) more helpful.

(Interview Series 3: Student B)

Towards a fuller understanding of *LtL*

My first aim was to find out more about the conditions that encourage effective learning. The evidence seemed to provide relatively unambiguous signs as to how an efficacious climate can be created by the teacher. Pupils’ performance, both individually and as a group, improved significantly. However, students did not identify any particular part of the lesson as being more helpful. Instead, they continually commented on the usefulness of any moments that made

learning the object of learning, expressing this in terms of its ability to increase their levels of reflection and its impact on classroom roles and relationships.

Becoming more aware of what encourages effective learning helped to realise my second aim – to distinguish between the different *LtL* approaches. Through the combination of reading and experience I have come to an informed point of view about how learning can be promoted, though one that challenges my school's current approach. The fact that I now feel better equipped to contribute to the school's improvement agenda indicates that my project has been extremely useful in helping me to achieve my third overarching aim – to become more effective in the professional development of others.

By reflecting on the responses of the students to my new way of working I have learned much about the characteristics of my version of *LtL* and the sources of its impact. This has led me to reflect on my previous understanding of the concept. In my experience, *LtL* should not be considered a family of practices that can be presented to the students in order to improve their learning. This widely held view is unhelpful in that it suggests a looseness of structure and the maintenance of a 'delivery' model of teaching. Neither should it be seen as a precursor to *intentional learning* as it was in my own original framework. Instead, I think *LtL* and *intentional learning* should be seen as contiguous – a unitary attitude rather than skill where the teacher is helping the students to learn in a transformative way. It should not be described in terms of a programme as, if it is going to be sufficiently responsive, it will never take the same shape twice. Rather, it should be recognised as a metacognitive lens through which first teachers and then their students judge the best way of facing any learning challenge. Of course, such an exacting mental framework, in the current context, provides a challenge to what is considered best practice in our classrooms, one for which I was unprepared at the outset of the project.

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Paul Andrew's Development Work

Exploring student questioning

at Birchwood High School, Bishop's Stortford

Paul had noticed that students who seemed to be actively involved in their own learning tended to ask challenging questions and he began to wonder how he could help more students to pose such questions. He wanted to open up a dialogue with colleagues about the role of questioning in learning and so he began by emailing all teachers in the school to ask for a response to two questions:

- What prevents students from asking challenging questions?
- What examples of challenging questions recently posed by students can you give?

The response rate was disappointingly low and Paul wondered why. Was it indicative of the ethos of the school, teachers' lack of time or did his request lack clarity? Should he conclude that the work of teachers is too intensive and pressurised for them to reflect on their own practice? He wondered how it might be possible to create the conditions needed for such reflective practice. This interest in teacher reflection emerged as a parallel strand in Paul's development work.

Despite the low level of returns, Paul reviewed the limited information he had received. He needed to delve further into the types of questions which students ask. His reading (e.g. Morgan and Saxton, 1991) provided him with ideas about ways to categorise questions. A fellow network member, Louise Farrell, had examined the Socratic approach and put forward five types of questions, some that seek clarification, some that probe rationale and so on (Farrell, 2007), but these typologies were quite sophisticated and mostly assume that it is the teacher who does the questioning. Paul wanted to involve the students themselves in the exploration so he needed something very simple.

He brought together a group of students who would act as a research team. It consisted of six Year 7 students, selected by Paul and the Head of Year. The students were given a grid to stick into their planners. The grid set out three different types of questions. The

student researchers were asked to listen to the questions asked by students in three of their lessons. They had to give each of the three types of questions a rating between 1 and 10 to indicate the frequency with which they were asked. Below is an example of a grid completed by one of the students.

Figure 1: Example of grid used by students to record types of questions asked.

Questions that are asked in three of my classes.

When I did survey:-

0 = Rubric
 1 = No Fgs
 10 = Load

Lesson	Can I have? Do I have to? Simple questions.	Why is that? More complex questions that do go with lesson	Questions that are good however have nothing to do with lesson.
French	0	1	1
Teach	1	10	0
Caseo	0	10	1

Thursday 13 Friday 13
 Parent & Teacher
 Student

Paul used the completed grids as a stimulus for exploring with his student researchers their views of questioning, what type of questions were asked, what the teacher might do to support questioning, what the teacher might do to hinder questioning and so on.

Paul learned a lot about students' views of questioning from this discussion. He learned that students believe a secure environment to be critical in encouraging them to ask questions. Enjoyment of the subject is also seen by students as important as this stimulates their interest and desire to actively engage in the lesson. This resonated with Paul's reading (e.g. Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam, 2002). Students also felt that challenging lessons are more likely to stimulate them into asking more higher level questions. On the other

hand, some students appear to ask pointless questions as a work avoidance tactic.

In parallel with this work with his student research team, Paul kept up the email dialogue with colleagues. His initial email survey was followed up with the distribution to colleagues of a simple self-evaluation tool – one that employs an appealing graphic. In the Evaluator’s Cookbook (McCabe and Horsley, 2008) he found the idea of the thermometer and adapted it for his purpose.

Figure 2: The thermometer self-evaluation tool

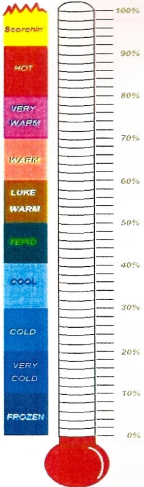
How often do students ask questions in your lessons?

Task:- Choose one class and by the end of next Friday fill in how often they ask or answer questions that further their learning. What I mean by further their learning are questions like:-

Why is it impossible to go faster than the speed of light? Why are raindrops drawn on a weather map incorrectly? What would happen if I was to live in a world without friction?

Class I chose:- _____

Ability of class top/middle/ bottom/ mixed



Draw a line on the thermometer to show how often student ask questions that further their learning

Colleagues were asked to draw a line to indicate the level of questioning by students and some colleagues also annotated the diagram with comments such as:

They ask lots of questions and they further their learning in the sense that the answers help them, however, lots of questions are unnecessary

– if they had listened in the first place they wouldn't need to ask them!
(Teacher 1)

One colleague added commentary that indicated that the task had begun to ripple out further. This teacher had carried out a lesson observation and had noted next to the thermometer:

I spoke to some of them afterwards – they said once they are clear on the actual instructions they can focus on the work and think about it more. They wanted a question box on the desk they could put questions in that teacher could answer at the end – they didn't want to look silly in front of their mates.

(Teacher 2)

This thermometer device eventually led to a rich dialogue, by both email and face to face, amongst colleagues about the type of questions students ask. Paul learnt as much about strategies for stimulating professional dialogue as he did about students' questions. His subsequent appointment as an Advanced Skills Teacher in the school enabled him to focus on this challenge, developing the art of engaging his colleagues in collective evaluation and reflection on the factors that help students to learn.

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Tim Smale's Development Work Exploring literacy-based approaches to learning in RE at Tring School, Tring

Tim was in his second year as a teacher when he began to focus on the question of how to raise students' levels of literacy. He believed that all teachers, regardless of their curriculum area, have a responsibility to address this problem. It had been suggested that a focus on students' literacy can lead teachers to pay greater attention to the differing needs of individual learners (Sylva, 1997). In addition, the use of a variety of strategies for developing literacy leads to more positive classroom management. Students tend to be less distressed when their difficulties with literacy are recognised and help is provided.

Tim began his development project by focussing on one of his Year 9 religious education (RE) classes; he reviewed their written work and reflected on this as evidence of their engagement with the subject. The lack of attention to detail and low level of care taken by the majority of students compared to their performance in other subjects confirmed his view that his students lacked the motivation to learn in this subject. He decided to give them the opportunity to share their views of the subject with him and was surprised by their responses. Many students said that they enjoy RE. Positive comments included:

Even though its RE, its not heavily religious – you don't get religions preached to you – you learn about justice and other worldly subjects.

and

I have given a 7 out of 10 for RE because some of Mr Smale's lessons are really fun because we do role play, paired work and group work which are good.

Despite the rather negative evidence in their written work, the students claimed to enjoy RE. This raised questions about the link between enjoyment and the quality of students' learning, but these comments at least gave Tim grounds for optimism. The positive

attitudes expressed meant that there was scope for improving the student's level of enthusiasm and engagement.

The responses from the students also indicated the kind of activity that they find most engaging. For example, one student said that his favourite subject was Maths because:

We play a lot of games on the Smart Board which is a great way of learning and its also fun for the students. If we did this in RE it would make a real difference to my liking of the subject.

Tim redesigned his next lesson and prepared a variety of resources which required students to interact with text and use language to present ideas in many different forms. Some of these tasks were very traditional and others were more creative, demanding a higher degree of interaction. One activity involved text messaging. Tim had read a report (Marshall, 2006) which claimed that text messaging could help students to improve their literacy skills because it increases phonic awareness and linguistic creativity.

The students' response to these tasks was very positive, as was the impact on the quality of their subsequent written work. In this the students displayed much greater thought, care and attention. Their levels of interest appeared to be raised.

Tim discussed what he was doing during a department meeting. Many colleagues volunteered to use some of his techniques and materials and then give each other feedback. One teacher tried these strategies with a particularly difficult Year 9 group. She then met with Tim for a focused discussion about the experience. She talked about the improvements in the students' work and her own gains in confidence with this group.

Subsequently, Tim continued to develop new resources and ways of working with the students to develop their literacy skills through the RE curriculum. For example, he developed a card-based activity and set up a graffiti wall for students to comment on their experience of it. He then used these comments to help him to plan further activities. He was excited by the fact that the project only in its infancy. He met with the Headteacher and with colleagues from numerous departments to discuss his development work. Tim has now been appointed as whole-school Literacy Co-

ordinator which will give him further opportunities to work with teachers across the school on developing these ideas.

The project has already had impact on practice within the school. Members of the RE department, for example, now meet regularly to share new ways of helping students to access the curriculum. Staff at all stages of their teaching career are involved in this sharing and mutual support. In addition, the English, History and Life Skills Departments are also trialling new approaches stimulated by Tim's work.

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Simon King's Development Work **Developing language skills through a cross-curricular approach**

at Martindale Primary and Nursery School,
Hemel Hempstead

Simon was a fluent Spanish speaker and responsible for the co-ordination of Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) in his school. Since the UK government's recent steps to promote MFL in primary schools there has been an ongoing debate about whether the subject should be an additional discrete subject or taught through other curriculum subjects. Simon agreed with those who argued that the integrated approach is the way forward (Jones and Coffey, 2006).

Developing an integrated approach to MFL would need the active support of the pupils so, drawing on techniques from the literature on pupil consultation (MacBeath, Demetriou, Rudduck and Myers, 2003), Simon set up small discussion groups to explore pupils' views. He was surprised at the impact of consultation; pupils seemed more motivated and were keen to have a go at developing their Spanish skills together. Simon had already been using registration time to introduce Spanish vocabulary. He did this by displaying some questions and answers in Spanish on the interactive whiteboard. He modelled pronunciation and asked pupils to respond to their name in the register with a Spanish phrase of their own choosing. This activity was successful although somewhat narrow in scope and limited by being 'stand-alone'. He therefore began to look for opportunities to integrate Spanish learning into his pupils' cross-curricular topic work.

One of his experiments involved teaching a colour mixing session by using the Spanish colour names in instructions for how to make a colour wheel. Simon again consulted pupils about their reactions to this and, through these discussions, realised that there were many other opportunities for language learning both in different curriculum areas and through classroom routines. He tried out using the colour vocabulary learned in Art for a game in PE (Physical Education) and found this to be very successful. He then started to introduce classroom instructions in Spanish.

The next step was to look for a Spanish-speaking international partner class to share topic work with. He eventually discovered a class in Argentina and pupils have now begun to exchange letters and share some aspects of their topic work. For example, Simon's children sent the Argentinian children drawings derived from their Heroes project, labelled in Spanish. This link is now developing with some joint planning of topic work taking place.

Simon began to find it increasingly easy to identify opportunities for the learning of Spanish, including in literacy lessons. It was clear from discussions with pupils that they were unlikely to be confused by the use of Spanish in this way and Simon wanted to see if he could use Spanish to reinforce the development of literacy through comparison. He decided to begin to include Spanish in word and sentence level work. It quickly became apparent to him that not only do the languages work in a similar way with regard to the addition of suffixes and prefixes but that some of these were the same or similar in both languages. Simon had previously been aware that there were some letter strings and word categories which had strong similarities in both languages but he was surprised by the number of links he was discovering. Most of the work in the literacy lessons continued to use English examples. However, in the area of spelling for example, he took some time to investigate Spanish spelling rules. He found that the children's learning was reinforced by the discovery of links. Simon then went on to use a Spanish poem as a shared reading text. This was very successful as it focused the pupils' learning on language features without the distraction of content. They found they could listen easily for the rhythm and rhyme in Spanish and this helped them to develop their understanding of these concepts in English.

The main thrust of this development work rested on Simon's own teaching but towards the end of the academic year he asked his colleagues to write a memo to the Headteacher to say how they felt that his work had affected their own practice. He was surprised at the evidence that came back including the following.

I wasn't very confident with how language could be integrated into the school day. Mr King gave me some examples of QCA planning at the beginning of the year and we discussed how the objectives could be fitted into the day without doing it as a separate lesson, for example through PE, taking the register and other classroom instructions. ... I currently use French for the register and sometimes give instruction in French but would like to develop this further. Mr King has set up

partnerships with other schools so I would like to do a project involving a French school. I would like to further development planning for MFL in other subjects next term.

Another colleague also talked about having been anxious about integrating MFL but in her memo a few months later she said this.

Through the e-twinning partnership he has established, we used a powerpoint sent by a Spanish school about mosaics in their area. The register is answered in my class in French, Spanish and several other languages.

Simon's development work had been very influential. The feedback carefully sought through the series of pupil discussion groups ensured that the programme developed in a responsive way. It was clear that the pupils enjoyed learning Spanish and they can now be observed independently looking for opportunities to use their language skills around the school. He led by working on his own practice but he also provided his colleagues with support. Many of his colleagues at Martindale have embarked on international partnerships and began to trial their own ways of teaching a modern foreign language to their pupils. He also reached out to languages specialists in the local authority advisory team and in nearby secondary schools. This not only brought expertise into Martindale School but also contributed to the development of the management of the transition from primary to secondary school.

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Helen Gosnell's Development Work **Collaborative projects with Ndeke High School, Zambia** at Sir John Lawes School, Harpenden

Before becoming a teacher Helen had worked in the Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) programme with a posting to Kitwe, a town in Zambia. When she returned home she kept in touch with people in Kitwe and with international development organisations. When she started teaching at Sir John Lawes (S JL) she was able to make good use of these connections. Her interest coincided with the government's White Paper (DFES, 2004) which aimed to enable schools to establish partnerships with schools in the developing world. Funding for joint curriculum projects was made available through the 'Global School Partnerships' programme and Helen was able to draw from this source to support her development work.

Helen's personal commitment echoed what she read on the One World Linking Association's website about the benefits of such work (UKOWLA, 2006). It helps to challenge stereotypes, develop empathy and understanding, recognise interdependence, value diversity, and involves pupils as active agents for change, tackling inequality and injustice.

Helen contacted Ndeke High and invited one of their teachers to visit S JL. She then worked with the Zambian teachers to develop a unit of work for her Year 8 students: Zambia as a case study of a developing country. Her Year 7 students made a collage called 'Exploring the UK' for the Zambian students. This portrayed key landmarks, geographical features and traditions. A project with Year 10 students involved collaboration with students at Ndeke High School in which they used primary and secondary sources to investigate 'Nurse migration'.

Figure 1: A piece of artwork from students at Ndeke High School



This work was challenging in a number of ways. Pupils found the delays in receiving resources and feedback from Zambia frustrating, highlighting the need to establish web-based links. Other communication problems centred on language. Both students and staff struggled to understand Zambian English used in the video footage they saw.

Having explored a range of possible curriculum development projects herself, Helen wanted to support the development of curriculum projects in other curriculum areas so she established a 'Global Working Group'. She worked alongside individual colleagues sharing her expertise and building the school's capacity for further development. She also used opportunities such as staff meetings and the annual staff residential conference to share her work with colleagues and encourage them to become involved. This helped to establish projects across the school which included:

- A Design and Technology project undertaken in both schools using recycled materials. Pupils were given a design brief to make a product which has some value or use. Photographs of the activity were exchanged and used to stimulate discussion about the importance of the sustainability of resources.
- Video footage from Zambia was used at SJL to develop a series of lessons focusing on 'Access to water'. Pupils engaged in role plays of public meetings to discuss what should be done about water shortage.
- The Global Working Group organised an International Day. Year 7 English lessons focussed on Fair Trade, writing 'persuasive poetry' for the Divine Chocolate Poetry

Competition. Year 10 students worked on ‘Movement of people around the world’ through dance and drumming with a Zimbabwean musician and viewing extracts from the film ‘Amistad’, illustrating the impact of slavery.

The impact of Helen’s development work has been considerable. Feedback from students indicates that it has made the issues of poverty real, enabling them to understand more deeply the issues facing the developing world. Teachers believe that the international work has led to a richness of experience for pupils and teachers at the school and also has given teachers the opportunity to reflect on their own practice when planning joint projects with the link school. One of the Assistant Headteachers said that this work has helped students to believe they can make a difference through social action. Students have had opportunities to engage politically, campaigning for change. For example, a group of pupils went to Kenya to make a film for the ‘Global Campaign for Education’; students visited Downing Street and interviewed Gordon Brown about the campaign for ‘Every Child Needs A Teacher’ and a group of pupils went to the G8 summit in Germany to lobby politicians.

Helen extended her work beyond the school. She organised a series of master classes on International Development for Year 9 pupils in local schools. In the classes she used video material and examples from Zambia. She enriched the programme with input from other professionals from Christian Aid and Oxfam. The classes focussed on topics such as education, aid, debt and trade. The culmination of the work was a series of presentations from the pupils to an audience of pupils and parents. She also shared her knowledge and expertise with other schools in Hertfordshire by organising a conference entitled ‘Developing the Global Dimension in the Curriculum’ which 35 teachers attended.

Helen has also developed her own leadership capacity through this development work. In her portfolio of evidence she reflected on the professional culture in the school and the pivotal role of the leadership team in giving the encouragement and freedom to develop this initiative. As a novice teacher leading an important area of work she was concerned about how she would be perceived by colleagues, but her previous experience and specialist knowledge gave her authority. Helen has collaborated with many colleagues at school to ensure that the development work will endure even if she leaves the school. As a result of her development work Sir John Laws School

was awarded 'International School' status and, according to one of the teachers at Ndeke High School, Helen's work 'has opened people's minds to development work'.

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Rachel Noble's Development Work An exploration of the role of the form tutor and the value of form time at Bushey Meads School, Bushey

Rachel was a member of her school's Learning Working Group during 2006-7. She was concerned about the role of the form tutor, and in particular the quality of students' experience of 'form time'. These sessions provided the opportunity for regular contact between pupils and teachers but for many they seemed to be unproductive.

In order to help her clarify her thinking on this, she consulted a number of books, articles and websites as well as the school's own guidance to form tutors. What she found was that there many expectations placed on the form tutor, ranging from 'secretarial' tasks such as taking the register and distributing notices and letters, to more substantial responsibilities such as monitoring the academic progress of pupils and liaising with other colleagues and parents about issues relating to pupils in the form. Some advise that the form tutor is also an 'uber-counsellor' who guides the students through a wide range of social challenges (Watson-Davis, 2005).

Rachel took up the challenge of improving the effectiveness of form time in her school. She wanted to devise strategies that could help fellow tutors carry out this complex and demanding role. She decided that her first task would be to gather views of staff and pupils about form time to inform her planning. She asked all tutors and pupils in Key Stage 3 (pupils aged 11-14) to complete a questionnaire during a form period. In addition, she secured colleagues' agreement for her to observe a tutor period in each of Years 7-9.

She found that teachers wanted greater structure and direction in the work they carried out with pupils in form time. They identified problems such as a lack of resources and insufficient opportunity to discuss approaches with each other. Pupils, particularly those in Year 9, felt that tutor time was often boring and lacking focus; they too expressed a desire for a more structured programme of activities. Rachel's observations supported this view; in some of the Year 9 classes pupils did not appear to engage in formal group or individual

activities and the questionnaire responses indicated that, in contrast with their younger counterparts, they were more inclined to dislike form time.

Having gathered evidence Rachel met with the Head of Key Stage 3 to have a conversation about this evidence and possible ways forward. They agreed with the need for more structure and direction in form time, particularly with the older pupils, so Rachel offered to pilot some activities and share them more widely with colleagues. She would identify two 15 minute 'slots' per week in which she could trial activities and obtain feedback from pupils.

The questionnaire responses were an excellent source of ideas for these activities. The pupils had suggested some simple yet engaging and worthwhile activities. She worked on these and developed a programme of games and competitions with simple prizes for winning teams and individuals. These activities would aim to promote group cohesion through team work and competition. The first of these was a competitive personal and social education activity that was based on the format of a popular television game show. This was initially successful, but Rachel soon found that clearer ground rules were required as pupils became over-excited and began shouting out answers. She developed a scoring framework that included the deduction of points for such behaviour. She also noticed that while some pupils were highly motivated by this game, others appeared to withdraw and 'switch off'. She realised the importance of developing a range of activities that would appeal to all personality types.

Once she had tried out and improved a range of activities Rachel was able to offer them to colleagues to use in their 'form time' periods. In the following academic year she continued to build a bank of electronically available resources to support Year 9 tutors during form time, and these have been welcomed and have helped to transform the quality of tutor time particularly for Year 9 students.

The support of colleagues with middle and senior leadership roles played a vital role in this development project. They had given specific support and had recognised the need to encourage teachers to take on the challenge of whole school issues such as this one. Another key factor in the success of the project was 'student voice' (Rudduck and McIntyre, 2007). Rachel had listened attentively to what students had to say and they had helped her to identify ideas for

the activities that are now being used in form time throughout the school. In her final reflections at the conclusion of her project portfolio, Rachel made a simple but powerful statement:

The best advice I would give to anyone trying to improve the quality of their form time is to ask the students what they want and need.

Sound advice indeed.

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Kelly Dalkin's Development Work **Engaging students in science learning: the power of the practical** at Barclay School, Stevenage

Kelly was in her second year of teaching when she began a development project focusing on students' attitude to their learning in science. She was concerned about the obvious lack of enthusiasm on the part of some students. It was clear to her that students reacted very positively to practical lessons but Kelly was concerned that the introduction of the new GCSE in science, 21st Century science, might reduce the time available for practical experiments, focusing instead on moral and ethical debates.

Kelly wanted to understand more about the impact of practical lessons on learning in science and began by going back to the literature. Her reading reminded her of the importance of enabling students to act as scientists in order to learn through experience the nature of scientific method (Parkinson, 1994; Toplis, 2007). Practical science activities such as experiments provide a context for the sharpening of logical and analytical thinking as well as developing manual dexterity and the skills of observation, and recording (Woolough, 1998). Research by Scott and Jewitt (2003) underscored the importance of using a variety of different styles of teaching and learning in order to take account of the different ways in which students prefer to learn and the different ways in which their thinking is supported. Understanding is nourished through many different ways of expressing ideas including active and visual ones. She discussed these issues with her science colleagues and invited them to collaborate with her to explore the value of practical activities more systematically.

One teacher was particularly keen to collaborate with Kelly to learn more about the impact of practical lessons on student learning. They decided to work together to plan and evaluate a variety of contrasting ways to teach the next science topic to their Year 9 students. The strategies would include some very active, practical activities and some more verbal and visual approaches. The two collaborators planned to evaluate these activities by gathering feedback from students and examining both the students' work and their responses

to a quick test at the beginnings and ends of the lessons. Kelly asked her students to feed back to her orally and to write on post-it notes to share their reactions to both science lessons generally and to the particular lessons on UV light. They would then reflect together on the evidence and clarify their thinking about how best to develop the use of practical activities.

The topic chosen for this project was the effectiveness of various suntan lotions as protection against UV light. One activity involved the students using a UV detector to shine light onto cling film stretched over a beaker. Different types of sun lotion were smeared onto the cling film and the results identified by the UV detector recorded and compared. Another activity required the students to write a report in the style of a newspaper article revealing what they had found out having tested a range of products.

What did Kelly and her colleague learn from the evaluation of these activities? The first message was that the students enjoyed undertaking practical activities, particularly those students who found science more difficult. They were highly motivated to learn when involved in active ways and seemed more secure in their understanding than when they had been taught in more verbal and visual ways. The students had expressed their views on post-it labels which they were invited to post up on a notice board. Below are examples of the students' responses.

Experiments are better than just listening to a teacher talking at it. You learn a lot more and you have more fun.

Experiment is better than writing.

I like practicals. But sometimes they are boring. I do learn from them. Better than writing boring stuff.

This was as Kelly had expected. However, some unexpected issues were also raised. One issue was that some students expressed anxiety about the social side of practical work as the following comment indicates.

Practicals are OK but sometimes I don't like to work with the people in my class.

Kelly and her colleague reflected on the need for careful management of the groups formed for the purposes of practical experiments and on the need to achieve a balance of types of learning strategies to match the variety of preferred learning styles.

Another interesting point was that some classes had been taught the topic when the weather was hot and sunny. The ability of the teacher and students to relate discussion of the impact of UV rays to the real world outside of the classroom window appeared to have a big impact on the students' understanding. Kelly and her colleague resolved to think about how this insight might be reflected in their planning of future modules.

Another unexpected insight concerned the importance the students placed on having an immediate indication of progress in their learning. Kelly had devised a simple check list of questions which she gave the students at the beginning of the unit of work. This helped Kelly and her colleague to have a better idea of what prior knowledge they could build on. However more interesting was that when students were asked to respond to the same questions at the end of the unit, many of them were amazed to see how much they had learned. They were very enthusiastic with comments such as:

Miss I've learnt loads today, look!

This is amazing.

Kelly and her colleague also reviewed the work produced by the students and were impressed by both the depth of learning and the interest and enthusiasm it demonstrated.

Kelly learned a great deal through this development work and she had drawn her colleague into a valuable collaboration. She went on to champion the use of practical activities in science teaching both within her school and more widely and to work on further strategies for helping the students to have an instant picture of how much they are learning.

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Ozgur Bolat's Development Work Transforming pedagogy through project- based learning in Turkey

In common with many developed countries Turkey has been seeking ways to reform its education system. The Ministry of Education has drawn support in this endeavour from the Turkish Education Foundation, an independent body which relies on funding from sponsors such as Vodafone. It was with the support of the Foundation that Ozgur Bolat was able to come to Cambridge as a research student. Ozgur was interested in distributed leadership and in particular teacher leadership which seemed to him to offer a way forward for national educational reform.

During his first year in Cambridge Ozgur came into contact with Hertfordshire schools when he was asked to assist in a project led by David Frost. Schools in Stevenage were working collaboratively to improve all students learning and had adopted tools and ideas from the Carpe Vitam LfL project (Frost *et al.*, 2008). They were seeking to make innovative practices visible to each other, so Ozgur was asked to visit schools and to interview teachers and students about initiatives such as 'Vertical Tutoring', 'Student Observation of Teaching' and 'Feedback on assignments through audio files'. The data would then be used to produce case studies that could be shared within the participating schools. This work provided a clear view of teachers leading change.

At the same time the Turkish Education Foundation had launched an initiative to contribute to the transformation of pedagogy in Turkish schools. The initiative carried with it a significant challenge to established pedagogical norms. It required teachers to adopt student-centred approaches in which students would exercise choice in the content of their learning and inquiry-based modes of learning. This cast the teacher in the role of a facilitator of learning rather than someone who parcels up and transmits knowledge. The chosen development strategy for the 'Project-Based Learning' initiative was to organise a summer school for a teacher from each of the 154 schools in the network of teacher training schools. These high schools play a role in preparing their students for teacher training

university programmes. The 2 week long training course featured seminars led by experts from the University of Marmara and the newly trained teacher leaders were sent back to their schools to train their colleagues in project based pedagogy. The University of Cambridge Faculty of Education was asked to work with Ozgur to evaluate the initiative over the course of an academic year (Opfer, Frost and Bolat, 2008). They designed questionnaires aimed to assess the impact of the summer school on the participants' pedagogical values and beliefs and gathered data along the way with follow up surveys (Opfer, Frost and Bolat, 2008). Towards the end of the academic year Darleen Opfer, David Frost and Ozgur Bolat visited a sample of schools in the region of Istanbul to examine at first hand the way the initiative had been implemented.

These visits were delightful occasions characterised by impeccable hospitality and warm welcomes both in the Principal's office and in classrooms. In each of the five schools visited the team interviewed the Principal, the teacher leader who had participated in the original summer school, a group of teachers who had been involved in the initiative and a group of students who took part in projects. Interviewees were asked to judge the level of penetration of the initiative and many said that it had been very successful and had been widely discussed throughout the school. It was said that the initiative had brought a new way of thinking about teaching and learning into the school. Consciousness about alternative pedagogy had certainly been raised.

The research team received presentations from students about their projects. Some projects were focused on social and environmental issues: for example, in one project the students had investigated air pollution and its impact on agriculture. They discovered that some plants absorb pollutants more than others. The herb parsley seemed to be the most vulnerable to pollution from nearby industry. In other projects students had focussed on strategies to support their own learning. For example, one group of students had devised fictional stories in which were embedded factual content they needed to be able to recall for their exams. One crucial variable in these projects was the extent to which the focus had been identified by the students themselves rather than by their teachers.

From the perspective of both teachers and students, the project-based approach had a range of benefits. For example, students developed confidence in their learning and a greater sense of responsibility.

They reported that they had been able to engage in deeper learning of aspects of the national curriculum through their projects and their performance in normal lessons and assignments had improved because of increased motivation and concentration. Through their projects they had learnt about team work and project management. Their social and communication skills had been enhanced and they experienced the thrill of determining the direction of their own learning. The support of school principals was paramount as was the sanction and support given by the Ministry of Education.

The initiative culminated in a ceremony in the capital city, Ankara, to celebrate the achievement and award prizes for the twelve best projects. This event, together with two broadcasts on national television, reflects the overall success of the initiative in raising the profile of pedagogic discourse. The project-based learning initiative involved approximately 2,000 students working on 450 projects with the support of a core of enthusiastic teachers in each of the 154 schools. It has clearly shown what can be done when teachers are provided with support to explore innovations in professional practice. Nevertheless, there are challenges to the long term impact of the initiative.

One of the encouraging findings of the initial survey was that most of the teachers participating in the summer school did not have entrenched beliefs antithetical to the goals of the initiative and many were already using teaching approaches that would support project-based learning. These approaches flourished as the project-based learning developed in the schools, but the question of sustainability arises because the project-based learning seems to have taken place in parallel with the normal national curriculum focussed lessons. In some cases students were allowed to take time out from their normal lessons to work on their projects, but in the main the projects were done in their free time. Some students reported that there was a tension between their need to prepare for their exams and their desire to make progress with their projects. This is not to say that principals and teachers do not want to see the approach flourish in the future, but it is not clear how the project-based approach can be integrated into the curriculum when the main driver is the final examination on which university entrance depends.

One of the challenges highlighted by the project-based learning initiative is the role of the teacher leaders in enabling the school to implement such initiatives. In survey responses some said that, in

the summer school, there was not enough time devoted to a consideration of the skills needed to steer change. During the case study visits the research team heard accounts from the teacher leaders about their approach. For example, one said of her colleagues that: *they do it so as not to break my heart* (Teacher leader interview, School 1). For her, the leadership role was about personal relationships, trust and loyalty. For others it was a matter of effective provision of the prescribed 10 hours of school-based seminars outlined at the summer school. At the time of writing, Ozgur Bolat is developing his plans for a further project which will build on the project-based learning initiative. He plans to invite some of the same schools in Istanbul to participate in a project to investigate how teachers can be supported in developing their professional roles to encompass the leadership of innovation and change. Through a national survey, he hopes to be able to map the dominant patterns in the way Turkish teachers see their professionalism and then engage in practical experimentation in a small number of schools to see what enables teacher leadership to flourish.

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