

The Wider Picture

Friday 14 September 2001
University of East Anglia

This report provides a summary of the contributions made by the conference speakers. A copy will be sent to every school in the county and the report is also on the Esinet website:

www.esinet.norfolk.gov.uk



This was our third annual Education Conference. Delegates from Primary, Secondary and Special schools all over Norfolk joined Education Officers and Advisers for the day. As well as providing inspiration at the start of a new academic year, the day was an endorsement of the partnership between schools and the Education Department.

For the third year our speakers inspired and challenged us. The theme was 'The Wider Picture'. The speakers helped us explore the context for education from political, economic, social and technological perspectives. We may not agree with everything they had to say but we are privileged to have the challenge to our thinking provided by such expertise. While there are always things to improve, everyone acknowledged the success of the day.

Introduction

Bryan Slater welcomed colleagues to the third annual Education Conference. He hoped that participants would enjoy the day and that in the tradition of the previous conferences it would provide an opportunity for broader reflection and intellectual stimulation.

He also identified three key issues for the year ahead:

- the perpetual drive to improve standards;
- the continuing difficulty over teacher recruitment; and
- the recently published White Paper and the legislation foreshadowed in it.

He expressed the hope that greater trust would prevail between central government, local government and the teaching profession in meeting these challenges.



Alison King

Leader of Norfolk County Council



Alison King thanked the conference for allowing her to be part of the day's proceedings and assured them of her deep interest in education:

'I've heard about schools and teaching all my life'

Referring to the recent political changes at local level she outlined the priorities of the new Conservative administration:

- to value education as the starting point or otherwise of every individual's potential;
- to provide an effective education service with effective schools that are properly funded;
- to keep rises in the increase in council tax down but not at the expense of damaging key public services; and
- to keep bureaucracy and paperwork to a minimum.

She pledged to take very seriously anything that would help schools and teachers in their vital work and welcomed such initiatives as the increased collaboration between smaller schools. She also wanted to see LEA services providing schools with the best possible value for money, with outside providers being used as and when it was appropriate.

'Providing the very best for our young people in Norfolk means the right money, enough teachers, the right buildings, less paperwork and above all a close working relationship of support and challenge from an LEA that is itself effective and capable of meeting schools' needs'

Alison King has been on the county council for 12 years and became the leader of the Conservative group in 1983. She has a BSc (Hons) in Sociology and worked as a childcare officer for Norwich City Council until she started her own family. She is a director of Norfolk King Chemist, which is run by her husband Joseph. Alison is a governor of both Hethersett High School and Norwich High School and is a Trustee of the Norfolk Windmill Trust and the Norfolk Autistic Society. She also sits on the management committee of the Charing Cross Centre in Norwich.

Professor Stephen Heppell

Director of Ultralab



One of the biggest challenges facing the teaching profession today, according to Stephen Heppell, is how we provide continuity and progression for the hugely ambitious children passing through our system when new technology is opening up such a vast range of possibilities for them. History has shown that every time a new piece of technology comes along making more things more accessible to more people voices have been raised in dissent. This has been going on ever since the Church tried to keep a monopoly on story telling. Today more than ever we need to exercise greater trust and less control in delivering the curriculum.

'What technology is offering us is new ways to inspire, new routes, new opportunities, but it also provokes us to think hard about the structures and the ways in which we organise learning'

Stephen Heppell expanded this concept by demonstrating some of the innovative projects Ultralab is working on.

Stephen Heppell holds a chair in Information Technology in the Learning Environment and is a teaching professor. He writes regularly for the press and appears frequently on radio and television. He is also director of Ultralab the learning technology research centre based at Anglia Polytechnic University, Chelmsford which is at the heart of the UK's largest and most innovative projects in ICT. Stephen sits on the DfES Standards Task Force (chairing the Standing Working Group on ICT), the Creative Industries Task Force and the Internet Policy Committee and continues to be at the heart of government ICT policy making, 'a revolutionary who is yanking the British educational system out of its Victorian slumber and shaping it for the information digital age'.

The first example was Notschool.net, a virtual school for children who have been excluded from school long-term. It enables children, via their computers, to work with retired teachers and experts who can offer a few hours of spare time. Providing the children with computers, printers, scanners and any other essential equipment for the task on hand is still a cheaper alternative than strategies employed hitherto. It also appears to be much more successful. Stephen played part of an on-line saxophone lesson and extracts from the diary of one young learner charting his astonishing progress and blossoming self-esteem.

Another example was the summer school run by Ultralab, which sets children demanding tasks such as telling the story of transformation in still pictures. The samples of the films with accompanying soundtracks were eloquent proof that the children are quite capable of rising to such challenges, including one group who thought nothing of 'holding the sea up' whilst one of them ran back to the lab to change the film in their camera! Because new technology is making learning processes easier Stephen is convinced the tasks set have to be made tougher in order to maintain the level of challenge; otherwise disaffected children will walk away from the curriculum. This belief was reinforced by his involvement in SchoolNet 2000, a project run in conjunction with Tesco.

'All we did was give them tools, ask them to contribute and give them tough tasks. Great journalism resulted'

He predicted that there would be more and more evidence of industry seeking to work in partnership with education, not for altruistic reasons but because there is a growing recognition on the part of industry that they have a lot to learn from schools. The reason this has been overlooked for so long is partly because schools have not been very successful in the past at reaching out to the community and this problem of communication is all too often reinforced by the design of schools. £8 billion is being spent in the next few years on school buildings and as part of his involvement in three building projects he is determined to seek out the views of the children and teachers on how to improve the learning environment. Meanwhile new technology is also breaking down the traditional boundaries of the learning environment and enabling people to take their learning out onto the streets. An illustration of this is a project that involved local writers coming into Chelmsford, writing their own soap and then having it acted out on the streets of Chelmsford in front of the security cameras.

New technology is posing many challenges for the teaching profession but it is also providing them with the ability to access greater support. The virtual college of leadership set up by the DfES and Ultralab is changing the face of professional support and development for headteachers and policy makers alike.

Stephen concluded with the message that the new technology is not about quality control but about quality assurance and that it can contribute greatly to raising standards but not by imposing standardisation. It is not about collecting a lot of content but about equipping people to participate and embracing a creative curriculum rather than a prescriptive one. Viewed in this way the new technology can be a means of building bridges between different communities and cultures.

Patricia Collarbone

Director of the London Leadership Centre



Patricia Collarbone has worked in education for 30 years and is currently the Director of the London Leadership Centre based at the Institute of Education, University of London. Pat completed her MBA in September 1995 and her Doctorate on educational leadership in November 1999. She is an associate director of the International School Effectiveness and Improvement Centre (ISEIC) and a member of the advisory board of the International Network of Principals' Centers. In May 1999 Pat was asked to lead the development of the new programme for the National Professional Qualification for Headship in readiness for transfer to the National College for School Leadership. In January 2000 she was charged by the Minister of Education to lead development of all national leadership programmes related to headship. She is currently seconded three days a week to the DfES.

Pat Collarbone started by acknowledging that in recent years the cup of education has been filled to the point of overflowing and it has been a difficult task for headteachers to make sense of all the initiatives. The quality of their leadership within schools is going to be crucial to raising standards, which was why she wanted to share some thoughts on leadership with the conference today. She intended to concentrate on three aspects:

- leading and managing change;
- motivating and managing people; and
- designing systems, processes and resources to raise standards.

'We need to know about learning in order to lead learning'

She suggested that a good starting point is to look at industrial age assumptions held about learning across the globe and to challenge their validity. Education should be about 'radiating possibilities' and we should scrutinise our language and the systems we adhere to for unintentionally implying that there are limitations to what can be achieved. As we find out more and more about how the brain works and how we learn, we realise that there are many different learning styles. We do not just learn with our head and we do not just learn in the classroom. Schools that run in accordance with old assumptions about knowledge being compartmentalised, acquired individualistically and accelerated by competition are no longer appropriate. It is therefore a huge challenge for headteachers to lead their colleagues out of the industrial age model into a knowledge society model where knowledge is much more integrated and there is an emphasis on acquiring learning skills which can be applied to a variety of tasks in differing situations.

To meet this challenge we need headteachers who are emotionally intelligent, who can understand their own behaviour, are aware of the effects it might have on colleagues, and who can encourage an open and supportive climate in which feedback can be freely given and taken. In helping people to manage change headteachers need to be aware of the different rates at which their staff move from denial and resistance to change through to an understanding and ownership of the change agenda. She suggested that by focusing on a particular recent incident and analysing why it happened, how it was handled and what the reactions were, a lot could be learned about the way the systems and people are operating in an establishment, clarifying the changes required.

Time and again research has found that it is the quality of the leadership that has the most impact on school performance. Acknowledging that there are many factors which can derail the change agenda, such as lack of communication, or underestimating the power of vision, she cautioned that schools could not be 'driven' to change. What is needed is distributive leadership and the ability to involve others, particularly those who are models of excellent practice within their own schools. It is also important to design and align systems and resources to reflect the school priorities.

Pat went on to highlight some of the initiatives at national level for the NPQH scheme:

- trying to raise the level of performance across the board by encouraging everyone to spend some time reflecting and reconsidering – a technique referred to as double loop learning;
- actively seeking to harness the wisdom of the profession;
- moving towards more training on site where learning can have a context; and
- introducing facilitated self-directed learning.

She concluded by identifying the three aspects of leadership that they would be working to develop:

- IQ (intellect, powers of analysis and problem-solving);
- EQ (personal awareness and understanding in working with self and others);
- SQ (spiritual intelligence and 'dreaming' ability).

'Leadership, like Jazz, is a public performance. It is dependent upon so many things – the environment, the volunteers in the band, the need for everybody to perform as individuals and as a group, the absolute dependence of the leader on the members of the band'

Max Dupres

Tim O’Riordan

Professor of Environmental Sciences



Tim O’Riordan stood in stocking feet to address the conference on sustainable education and climate change:

*‘If you want to talk about the earth you should touch
the earth’*

He reminded us how important it is to encourage the pupils in our schools to maintain a direct link with our planet – a unique and exhilarating place but a place we are putting under threat. Hitherto the earth has always been self-organising with the ability to create the conditions needed to maintain life. We are now starting to see the effects of an earth under stress from overheating: hot days, stormy conditions, increase of disease, spread of pathogens due to the human induced changes which are entirely artificial. His message was stark. The planet will survive but unless we are prepared to maintain, enhance and support the life processes which bathe this earth in habitability, the well being of huge numbers of people will be destroyed.

Our planet used to be shaped by four forces: the oceans, the atmosphere, ice and vegetation but now human beings have become a fifth force inducing a rate of change that the earth has never previously experienced. Tim acknowledged that whilst we do not yet know what the de-stabilizing consequences of that will be on the planet, there are studies deducing the threats and tensions this will cause within our societies unless we meet the global challenge of managing climate change. He believes it is imperative to start addressing these issues within the next ten years whilst there is still time for our actions to influence outcomes even though the worst symptoms have not yet revealed themselves.

*‘That requires determination, collective will and a
tremendous sense of being in relation to the planet’*

There are four questions facing us:

- how much license are we going to allow the market?
- how much regulation are we prepared to use?
- to what extent can we incorporate sustainability into our systems and policies?
- how strong is our belief that we are citizens of evolution, collectively responsible?

Tim O’Riordan is Professor of Environmental Sciences at the University of East Anglia and is closely associated with the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, the Leverhulme Programme on Understanding Risk and the Centre for Social and Economic Research on the Global Environment. He is a faculty member on the Prince of Wales’ Business and Environment Programme. He is also a member of the UK Commission on Sustainable Development. Tim is leading research into what is needed to turn Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft towards sustainable development. He is also actively involved in the management of the Upper Thurne catchment and in the Flood Alleviation Strategy for the Broads.

Tim urged us all to go back to our schools and communities not just to teach about conservation and sustainability as a topic within a classroom but to encourage and promote

‘ the whole idea of being collective, of having trust, of sharing and of wishing to be part of a greater totality losing (the) ego, gaining self-esteem, building the consent of common responsibility towards greater futures’

He reminded us of the importance of building partnerships to work on solutions collaboratively and the unique opportunities schools have to build partnerships with the community via their parents and to build global partnerships by setting up links with schools on other sides of the world. The aim should be to govern by sharing and link the global to the local because

‘every act we do has global implications and every global phenomenon is going to bear on us in one way or another locally’

His final message was that at this crucial point in the history of the planet we are all faced with choices. We could choose to go into denial and make life very tough for a lot of people within the next fifty years or we could individually and collectively take steps towards creating a more liveable and peaceable society.

Roy Leighton

Actor, author and trainer



Roy Leighton trained as a classical actor at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School from 1979-82. He then went on to study physical theatre and traditional Japanese theatre technique with Tadashi Suzuki in the remote actor-training centre in Toga-mura in the mountains of North Japan. On returning to the UK he set up a training company offering arts based coaching to industry, developing innovative workshops combining learning and performance skills for business. Over the past few years Roy has gained a reputation for his transformational approach to learning and personal development. He is currently involved in supporting a 'knowledge weaving' network for artists, educationalists and industry throughout Europe as part of the 'Transmission' programme for the Royal National Theatre and is the author of several books.

Roy began by confiding to the conference that he is passionate about the underachieving young men in our society today. This is not just because he is the father of three daughters(!) but because he believes the education system is failing these young men on a massive scale and will continue to do so until creativity is put at the heart of the curriculum. The world today needs people with creativity and vision, people who can communicate and empathise with each other, who have the skills and confidence to face change and to deal with it. We now know that boys' brains are less equipped for these life skills. Yet at a time when they need help and encouragement more than ever there is less likelihood of them having adequate male role models to help them through.

'Do we give our children a vision or do we give them a certificate?'

Society needs people with vision. We are still living with an education system devised by the Victorians designed to prepare the majority of the people for one job for life. It is an education system that concentrates on nurturing mathematical and linguistic skills but places little value on a whole host of other abilities such as physical agility, artistic or musical ability and a whole range of inter-personal skills. This is now hopelessly inappropriate. We have to change and we have to instill confidence in our children to face change. Confidence is a key factor. Confident people give out energy and light and having confidence is what helps you to grasp opportunities.

It is FEAR (False Expectations Appearing Real) that stops us from making the most of our chances.

'Don't get to the point in your life where you regret not risking.'

As teachers and leaders it is important that we understand the fears and insecurities of the learner and it is better to present them with experiences that will build their self-esteem and empower them. Roy then provided the conference with a graphic illustration of what he was talking about. It was with some trepidation that the audience followed his instructions to get up and sing a song, but within minutes, empowered by our success in singing en masse, we gained the confidence to sing it in four-part harmony and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves!

It is evidently possible for us all to change but to bring this about we have to work smarter not harder. We have to link the learning to where the children are coming from and engage their hearts. This means showing them not only how to do something but why. It also means tapping in to

not only their intellect but also their creative intuition and their spiritual energy. We have to '**become**'. This requires:

- Bravery
- Energy
- Creativity
- Openness
- Motivation and
- Esteem.

'If you can imagine it you can do it'

Roy concluded with the vision of his perfect school, which he is hoping to realise with the aid of funding from industry. This is a place where teachers work a three-day week allowing time for mentoring, lesson planning, taking learning out into the community and continued personal development. Pupils attend lessons for half days and spend the other half of the day learning out in the community. And if this seems radical, Roy's final recommendation was to

'have a vision that startles even you'

A date for your diary

*The 2002 Norfolk Education
Conference will take place at the
University of East Anglia on Friday,
13 September 2002*

