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Core skills for learning,  
work and society  
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# Our world is moving quickly

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development, and cities, conflict and state fragility. She has worked in Africa, Asia and Latin America, undertaking significant research projects and advisory work in Afghanistan, India, Pakistan and South Africa. Her move to the British Council signals her commitment to education as a force for global good. Jo is a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences, a Member of the British Academy's South Asia Area Panel, and Honorary Professor of the School of Architecture and Planning at University of Witwatersrand, South Africa, and will be taking up the position of Chair of the Board of Trustees at INASP later this year.

## Foreword

We are living in a time of unequalled global collaboration. New technologies make it possible for individuals to work together and share ideas and insights in ways which were unimaginable a decade ago.

The potential to solve problems, to create innovative new solutions, and to facilitate constructive relationships between diverse groups of people is endless. However, to realise this potential our education systems have to support young people to develop the knowledge, skills and values they need to live and work in a globalised economy and to contribute responsibly both locally and globally.

Our education systems, and the young people within them, are facing some significant challenges. Firstly, education to employability reports over the last few years, from across the political spectrum, have highlighted the paradox of large scale youth unemployment and employers struggling to fill entry level vacancies. The most often cited reason is that whilst employers still require and value subject knowledge, they are placing a much greater premium on the need for soft skills to sit alongside that subject knowledge than they have in the past. It is these soft skills that students are struggling to demonstrate because very few education systems are focused on giving students the opportunity to develop them.

Secondly, whilst we have much to gain from our increased connectivity, we are also faced with the reality of increasing inequalities. Our young people need not only to be globally competitive but also globally competent – able to analyse and understand intercultural issues and with

the social, emotional and leadership skills to contribute to the world's challenges. This is what a relevant education in 2016 needs to offer.<sup>1</sup>

And finally, as the UN's Sustainable Development Goals stress, 'high quality and equitable quality education' needs to be achieved across the world. The Global Monitoring Report in 2014 shows that although many more children are in school, many are not learning the basics and, in addition, many others are intellectually disengaged from that schooling because the education that they are receiving does not appear to be relevant to the context in which they operating, or provide the skills they need to thrive.

As educators, our responsibility is to prepare every young person for their future in the best possible way. Whilst qualifications and knowledge remain important, they are no longer enough to secure a successful future. Rather, young people need and deserve the opportunity to grow into well-rounded, creative and critical citizens, ready to engage with labour markets and shape the future for themselves and future generations.

Our work with schools directly addresses these issues through contribution to education discourse, system development and provision of support services for teachers and leaders. Within these work areas, we have brought together

international thinking and practice in core skills, competencies and teacher development. We believe this is the most productive way to invest in our shared future.

We are aiming to increase the number of young people globally with access to these intrinsic and integrating skills. Through our work with teachers and school leaders, we aim to empower individual educators to make informed decisions about how they can best provide for their pupils.

We know there is not one answer – no single template for success – but we believe that developing young people's core skills will enable them to engage critically with the world around them and this is worthy of our investment. And the British Council is uniquely placed to deliver on that investment: we have centres in over 100 countries worldwide and a proven track record in international educational transformation.

In this, our second publication about core skills, I am pleased to present stories from practitioners and policymakers who we have been working with over the last year. We are at the beginning of our journey with them but with mutual respect and commitment, I am certain we can enable more young people to play their part in a successful and prosperous future global community.

1. Brookings. (2016). What will the Sustainable Development Goals really mean for education? (Part I) | Brookings Institution. (online) Available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2015/06/18/what-will-the-sustainable-development-goals-really-mean-for-education-part-i/>

# Core skills for learning, work and society

## Introduction

Susan Douglas and Björn Hassler



Education is the only solution. Education first.

Malala Yousafzai

Every country in the world needs a high-quality, inclusive and equitable school system<sup>2</sup> that supports young people to develop the knowledge, skills and values to live and work in a globalised economy and to contribute responsibly both locally and globally.

However, our education systems, and the young people within them, face some daunting challenges. While there have been significant gains in improving access to education, universal primary education will not be achieved in some countries for another two generations.<sup>3</sup> In other cases, although students are in school, the lack of quality provision and infrastructure mean that they are leaving without learning the basics,<sup>4</sup> while further evidence suggests that other students are simply intellectually disengaged from their schooling,<sup>5</sup> reporting being dissatisfied with provision and their ability to acquire knowledge and perform at high levels – an issue faced by countries across the globe.

The capacity for human interaction is also changing in ways that were unimaginable a generation ago. The great increase in opportunities and ways to interact and connect also creates new challenges. The world remains fragile, with growing inequalities and young people need the appropriate skills and competencies to confront and talk about these issues in addition to the skills and commitment to want to overcome them. In the age of the shared challenges that the Sustainable Development Goals look to address, a relevant education must surely provide these skills alongside traditional foundational proficiency in literacy and numeracy.

Employers are demanding higher order cognitive skills from their workforces, as opposed to the traditional manual and lower order cognitive skills. If economies are to be successful in the long term, our young people need to be enabled to:

- generate and implement new ideas, solutions and products
- use digital tools to enable knowledge discovery, creation of resources and communication
- apply their knowledge to solve real-world problems.<sup>6</sup>

In order to do so, there is growing consensus that school systems need to be clear about the purposes of education and develop young people with **core skills and competencies** that relate not only to the world in which they are living, but also to the future world in which they will live. These are often known as 21st century skills or deep learning skills<sup>7</sup> and include:

- ways of working: communication and collaboration
- ways of thinking: critical thinking, problem solving, creativity and innovation, learning to learn and metacognition
- tools for working: information literacy, information and communication technology (ICT) literacy
- ways of living in the world: global citizenship and civic responsibility, including cultural awareness and competence.<sup>8</sup>

Whether you are a young person in Lagos or Glasgow, Jakarta or Bogotá, accessing education that supports the development of academic mastery alongside the acquisition of core skills such as these will be crucial to your future success, to the future and well-being of others and to the prosperity and security of our global society as a whole.

### The British Council's focus

Building therefore on the deep pedagogies framework<sup>9</sup> and UNESCO's transversal skills<sup>10</sup> and in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders across our network, the British Council is championing the development of these core skills and competencies by supporting teachers to develop their pedagogy in the following areas:

- **Critical thinking and problem solving:** Promoting self-directed thinking that produces new and innovative ideas and solves problems; reflecting critically on learning experiences and processes and making effective decisions.
- **Collaboration and communication:** Fostering effective communication (orally, and in writing); actively listening to others in diverse and multi-lingual environments and understanding verbal and non-verbal communication; developing the ability to work in diverse international teams, including learning from and contributing to the learning of others, assuming shared responsibility, co-operating, leading, delegating and compromising to produce new and innovative ideas and solutions.





- **Creativity and imagination:** Promoting economic and social entrepreneurialism; imagining and pursuing novel ideas, judging value, developing innovation and curiosity.
- **Citizenship:** Developing active, globally aware citizens who have the skills, knowledge and motivation to address issues of human and environmental sustainability and work towards a fairer world in a spirit of mutual respect and open dialogue; developing an understanding of what it means to be a citizen of their own country and their own country's values.
- **Digital literacy:** Developing the skills to discover, acquire and communicate knowledge and information in a globalised economy; using technology to reinforce, extend and deepen learning through international collaboration.

- **Student leadership and personal development:** Recognising the importance of honesty and empathy; recognising others' needs and safety; fostering perseverance, resilience, and self-confidence; exploring leadership, self-regulation and responsibility, personal health and well-being, career and life skills; learning to learn and lifelong learning.

In so doing, the British Council supports the argument that equal importance be given to the economic, social, cultural and civic dimensions of learning, as recently recalled and recontextualised in UNESCO's *Rethinking Education*.<sup>11</sup>

### Skills and knowledge

Developing pedagogy in relation to these core skills, however, cannot come at the expense of the development of knowledge and indeed mastery. Knowledge and skills are interwoven and when students are developing both simultaneously, they learn more efficiently.

As Joe Kirby explains: 'knowledge and skills are like a double helix, progressing in tandem from surface learning to deep learning... skill progression depends upon knowledge acquisition.'<sup>12</sup> The timing of the introduction of core skills is therefore crucial – students need surface knowledge first (facts) and once they have mastered these, teachers can phase in deep learning skills that test the application and manipulation of these facts and how students use them to develop their skills.

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## Effective classroom practice

The way teachers implement the teaching of such skills therefore needs to focus on highly effective techniques and teaching approaches. Interactive learner-centred pedagogy will therefore play an important role, and the most effective approaches include:<sup>13</sup>

- drawing on students' backgrounds and experiences in teaching – with a positive attitude towards students
- increasing metacognition, self-regulation and self-directed learning
- responsive feedback to students – including teacher feedback which is sustained and inclusive
- collaborative learning – with mastery learning and peer-support; peer tutoring, pair and group work
- lesson planning that incorporates variety – that is, drawing on a variety of teaching approaches
- oral language interventions – interactive questioning style, dialogue, language learning and the use of local languages and/or code switching
- the use of learning materials – digital and non-digital, as well as local resources.

## Professional development

Teachers acquire the practical ability to teach these skills through carefully planned teacher professional development which has a strong relationship with teachers' practice, and which seeks to create supportive and reflective communities of practice – John Hattie's collective efficacy.<sup>14</sup> Such professional development programmes ideally support student acquisition of the intended core skills.

The British Council is approaching the development of these skills by advocating a school-based professional development model<sup>15</sup> based on teachers working together across subjects and year groups<sup>16</sup> and which lets teachers design the assessment and measurement for student progress based on what works best in their context.

This approach is supported by Darling-Hammond and colleagues who stress the importance of professional development being job-embedded<sup>17</sup> whilst also suggesting that learning should be collaborative, active and sustained. This aligns with a growing body of research<sup>18</sup> upon which our training packages are based. Research conducted in Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, identifies that effective professional development should:<sup>19</sup>

- focus on classroom implementation, be based on teachers' existing knowledge and offer opportunities for practice in different contexts
- be long term and structured involving several spaced interactions
- encourage and create opportunities for teachers to work together, to improve and sustain their learning after intensive training has been concluded
- develop teacher agency and leadership
- offer opportunities for modelling, reflecting on teachers' own practice, being observed and receiving high-quality feedback
- encourage and support teachers in obtaining resources.

Sharing is a critical component of learning communities<sup>20</sup> and this structured professional collaboration between diverse groups, that focuses on improved teaching in core areas ultimately benefits both teachers and young people. Effective programmes can impact on student attainment, even in the most challenging circumstances.

In addition, teachers who are offered opportunities to share and collaborate internationally are able to learn from each other across cultural contexts, further informing effective practice. Barber and colleagues<sup>21</sup> argue that successful innovation will only occur if certain key conditions are in place including ensuring people have the opportunity to work in diverse teams: 'top teams bring individuals with diverse backgrounds and perspectives together around a shared mission and set of values.'

The focus on professional development should always be to support teachers in raising student attainment, particularly in an equitable and inclusive way, heeding international commitment towards education for all.<sup>22</sup>

## The chapters to follow

In the following chapters, we will examine the six core skills, offering a more detailed definition of each one plus a rationale as to its importance. Working with experts in the field, the British Council has sought to apply an evidence-based methodology that has a strong relationship with teachers' practice, and which seeks to create supportive and reflective communities of practice. Thus the techniques and approaches outlined above underpin each chapter.

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Hennessey, S, HaBler, B, Hofmann, R (Forthcoming) Challenges and opportunities for teacher professional development in interactive use of technology in African schools. *Technology Pedagogy and Education: Special Issue 'Capacity Building for 21st Century Learning in Africa: A Focus on ICT Integration in Education'*.

14. Hattie, J (2011) *Visible Learning for Teachers* London: Routledge.

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16. Hattie, J (2011) *Visible Learning for Teachers*. London: Routledge.

17. Darling-Hammond, L, Wei, RC, Andree, A, Richardson, N, and Orphanos, S (2009) Dallas: National Staff Development Council. Available online at: <https://learningforward.org/docs/pdf/nsdcstudytechnicalreport2009.pdf?sfvrsn=0>

18. Cordingley P, Bell, M, Isham C, Evans D, Firth A (2007) What do specialists do in CPD programmes for which there is evidence of positive outcomes for pupils and teachers? Technical Report. In: *Research Evidence in Education Library*. London: EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London. Available online at: [http://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/uploads/toolkit/EEF\\_Toolkit\\_-\\_21st\\_November\\_2014.pdf](http://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/uploads/toolkit/EEF_Toolkit_-_21st_November_2014.pdf)

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22. Unesco.org (2016) *Education for All | Education | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*. Available online at: [www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-all/](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-all/)



# Critical thinking and problem solving

## Luxury or necessity? Critical thinking and problem solving should be at the core of learning for all

Artur Taevere

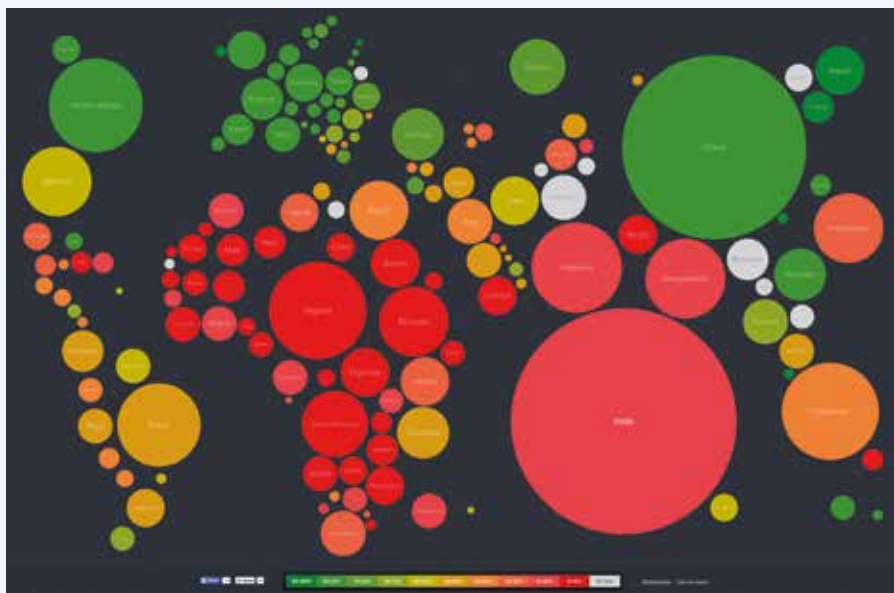
Even in a world where most children are still learning basic skills, critical thinking and problem solving can and should be taught.

In a low-income community in South Delhi, India, students are reading *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. Today's discussion is about the potions master. The teacher encourages students to think independently. 'I don't want solutions which the author gave you. I want you to be thinking, to imagine a better solution.' What happens next? It is visible that students are thinking hard; they are trying to come up with different answers. Deeper learning is happening. You can see an inspiring video of this classroom when you search for 'Learning to be a Superhero Teach For India'<sup>23</sup> on YouTube.

Learning to think critically and solve problems is not easy, but classrooms like this one suggest that all children are capable of it. However, the reality in most schools around the world is quite different. Even if children were capable of critical thinking and problem solving, they are currently not mastering these skills. Only four out of ten primary school students reach a basic level of competence in numeracy, literacy and science.<sup>24</sup> Given this reality, what is the role of critical thinking and problem solving? Can these skills be taught at all?

### Percentage of children who reach a basic learning level in reading, writing and arithmetic<sup>25</sup>

Each country is represented by a circle sized in proportion to its population



23. YouTube (2015) Student voice: Learning to be a superhero (Teach For India). [online]. Available online at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=sylcrIjN1T0&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sylcrIjN1T0&feature=youtu.be)

24. Whelan, F (2014) *The learning challenge: How to ensure that by 2020 every child learns*. Available online at: [www.acasus.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Acasus-The-Learning-Challenge-Report.pdf](http://www.acasus.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Acasus-The-Learning-Challenge-Report.pdf), p. 6.

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### The meaning of critical thinking and problem solving

Cognitive scientists suggest there are three types of thinking: reasoning, making judgments and decisions, and problem solving. Critical thinking is a specific way of thinking. This means that reasoning may be uncritical or critical, and the same applies for the other two types of thinking. It is critical if it has three features:

**Effective** – critical thinking avoids common mistakes such as only seeing one side of an issue, discounting new evidence when it conflicts with your previously held views, reasoning from passion rather than logic, and failing to support statements with evidence.

**Novel** – critical thinking involves thinking in new ways, not just remembering solutions or situations that are similar enough to guide you.

**Self-directed** – critical thinking involves thinking independently, in a way that is not overly controlled by anyone else, such as a teacher.<sup>26</sup>

When young people choose what to study, they can think critically by considering multiple perspectives: the opinion of family members, possible job openings, wages and graduation placement rates. A recent international survey suggests that fewer than half of young people have the necessary knowledge about all of these different perspectives.<sup>27</sup>

Effective thinking also involves an open mind: being open to new evidence even if it is in conflict with one's previously held views. For example, some people think that the disease HIV spreads by sharing baths, towels or cutlery, or using the same toilets or swimming pools.<sup>28</sup> In fact, none of this is true. But discrimination continues in many communities, because people's views are based on misinformation and prejudices. How will people react when they are presented with evidence on how HIV really spreads? It is not easy to change one's mind, especially if the issue is very emotional. That's why the attitude of having an open mind and being open to new evidence needs to be practised at school, so that it becomes a habit.

#### Is it important?

Critical thinking and problem solving may sound like terms that a young philosophy student would talk about at university, but these are important skills for everyone.

One of the main reasons is an economic one: it is about jobs and livelihoods. Critical thinking enables people to make better decisions and improve their livelihood. This is vital for everyone. For example, 78 per cent of people living in poverty are in rural areas and are farmers. Being able to think critically about different approaches to water and grassland management may boost productivity and increase income. In some communities, adopting different breeds has grown milk yields by 65 per cent, and better grassland management has doubled the income of herders.<sup>29</sup>

The economic argument has far-reaching implications. Because of technological change and productivity growth, the nature of work is changing in agriculture and many other industries. A growing proportion of jobs now require teams of people working together to solve unique problems, as opposed to routine problems.<sup>30</sup> However, relatively few students learn these skills at school. In most countries, fewer than one in ten (15 year old) students are able to solve fairly complex problems creatively, according to the PISA tests in 2012.<sup>31</sup>

#### Creative problem solving among 15 year olds

According to management consultants McKinsey & Company, 75 million young people around the world are unemployed, and a shortfall of 85 million high- and middle-skilled workers is expected by 2020. In a recent international survey, four out of ten employers said a skills shortage is a leading reason for entry-level vacancies. Alongside general work ethic and teamwork skills, problem solving is among the skills that are highly valued among employers – but where the competence of new employees does not meet expectations.<sup>32</sup>

Critical thinking and problem solving are also important for another reason, which goes far beyond jobs. The purpose of education is also about enabling learners to fulfil their potential and make a positive contribution to the world. Better critical thinking and problem solving would enable both.

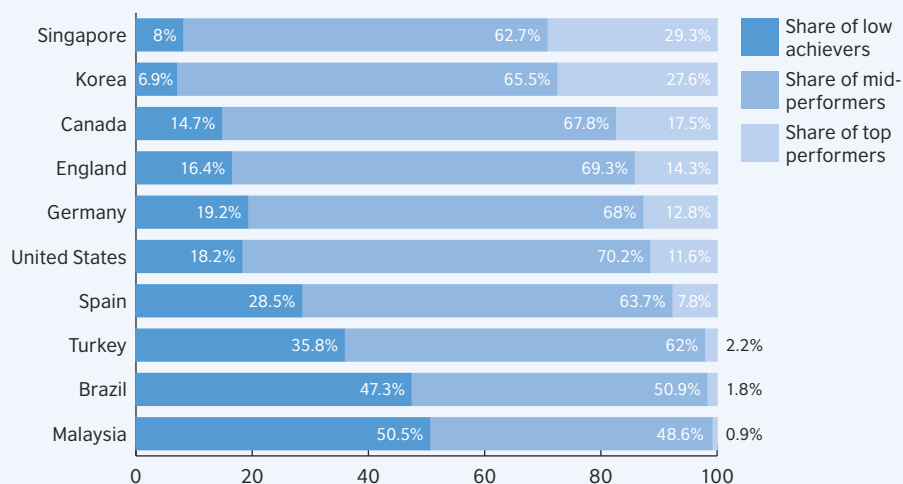


### Can it be taught?

This brings us to the question: if critical thinking and problem solving are important, can these skills be taught?

General critical thinking programmes have been relatively popular in the past. These have often focused on learning 'how to think', but research suggests that this approach usually brings about a modest benefit.<sup>33</sup> Why? Critical thinking is not a general skill; you always think about something. Being able to think critically about historical events does not mean that the same person is able to think critically about the nuances of farming. Both critical thinking strategies and content knowledge are needed.<sup>34</sup>

Therefore, a more promising approach involves integrating critical thinking into subjects. Critical thinking strategies – such as looking at an issue from multiple perspectives – need to be made explicit by the teacher, and practised extensively by students.



All of the above can only be achieved if we invest in high-quality professional learning programmes for teachers – how to model critical thinking, how to ask open questions, and how to provide feedback that enables students to solve non-routine problems. Teachers need new skills and better tools to meet these expectations. Curriculum resources have to be redesigned with

critical thinking and problem solving in mind. And finally, the focus of exams needs to shift to evaluate these skills as well.

If students learned how to think critically and solve problems, it would make a big difference to their livelihood and happiness. This is not a question of luxury.

26. Based on Willingham, D (2007) *Critical thinking: why is it so hard to teach?* *American Educator*, Summer 2007, pp. 8–19. Available online at: [www.aft.org/sites/default/files/periodicals/Crit\\_Thinking.pdf](http://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/periodicals/Crit_Thinking.pdf) p. 11.

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28. National AIDS Trust: *What everyone should know about HIV: facts and myths*, [online.] Available online at: [www.hivaware.org.uk/facts-myths/faqs-myths.php](http://www.hivaware.org.uk/facts-myths/faqs-myths.php)

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# Case study

## Developing great questioning techniques

by Stephen Ellis, St Joseph's RC Primary School, London, United Kingdom

### St Joseph's is a Roman Catholic primary school for 240 boys and girls in the London borough of Wandsworth.

#### Why we wanted to improve core skills

One of the school's priorities for 2015–16 was to embed critical thinking and questioning at the heart of the curriculum, in order to raise standards.

#### What we did

The critical thinking and problem solving project involved all of the eight teachers and 12 learning support assistants (LSAs) across the school. We wanted to move the respective proportions of questions asked by teachers and pupils from 50:50 to 30:70.

I attended the core skills training and disseminated my learning in a planned way: teachers were introduced to techniques for asking better questions, and then had a whole school staff training day on critical thinking.

Teachers were asked to strengthen the process of critical thinking in either geography or history through the development of questioning techniques.

We introduced a 'no hands up' policy in classes, and instead teachers picked small wooden lollipop sticks with pupils' names on to structure who was asked questions. Teachers introduced the pose, pause, pounce, bounce questioning technique (PPPB) which involves posing a question, pausing to give pupils time to think, pouncing on one individual for an answer, and then bouncing that answer on to another pupil for an opinion. They also developed pupils' use of thinking time through the think, pair, share approach. Pupils also developed their

thinking skills through activities such as hot-seating, roleplay, imagery stimulation and mind-mapping.

The outcomes of the project were monitored carefully. The LSAs monitored questioning frequency and types of question asked. Teachers observed each other and collected samples of pupils' work to show the progress and impact of critical thinking. Outcomes were analysed and shared as a PowerPoint presentation at a staff meeting.

#### What we have achieved so far

The project achieved its aims by using three critical thinking strategies:

1. Geographical and historical photographs and images were very powerful in helping the children develop their higher order questions.
2. The strategy of 'no hands up' and the use of lollipop sticks has been successful. Pupils are enjoying the improved questioning techniques. One seven year old said, '*Questions – we solve them as mysteries*' and a nine year old said, '*I like the lollipop sticks because it makes me listen and concentrate on what the teacher is saying.*'
3. The pose, pause, pounce and bounce strategy (PPPB) has worked well. Teachers said that it improved the children's listening skills and that it encourages children to consider alternative thinking and to build on that thinking.

The teachers and their LSAs matched the children's question types against Bloom's Taxonomy before and after the project; findings suggest that the children were asking higher order questions by the end. In five out of six classes surveyed, learners were showing a higher level of thinking.

In six out of seven classrooms we found that pupils were asking the majority of the questions. As one child said, '*Using questions all the time is exciting, because we learn more about the world around us.*'

#### What we plan to do in the future

Critical thinking strategies have become part of our teachers' daily planning and practice. It has been decided that we will extend our practice of critical thinking across all curriculum areas and adopt it as a whole-school approach to raise the achievement of our learners. We are considering our next steps and it is likely that they will be to:

- set up 'good questions' boards in each class and link vocabulary walls to good questions
- have a 'questioner of the week' award
- set homework linked to the question of the week
- develop debates as classroom practice
- run a workshop for parents on critical thinking skills
- target underachieving pupils with more opportunities to develop their critical thinking and questioning skills.

# Communication and collaboration

## Communication and collaboration: a new significance

Lynne Parmenter

All humans communicate.  
All humans collaborate.  
Communication and collaboration are basic human survival skills.

A newborn baby cries to communicate hunger. People collaborate and co-operate to do everything from farming to surgery to driving safely through a city. So why are collaboration and communication the subject of so much attention now? What is the difference between communication and collaboration as survival skills dating back to the earliest humans, and communication and collaboration as core skills now? This paper examines communicative and collaborative competence through discussion of definitions, followed by purposes, then approaches.

One of the clearest definitions of communication and collaboration as core skills is provided by the Partnership for 21st Century Learning.<sup>35</sup> Their definition of communicating clearly states that it requires effective listening and an ability to communicate in different models (oral, written, non-verbal) for a variety of purposes, working confidently in diverse environments including multilingual contexts and using technologies effectively. Their definition of collaborating with others involves the ability to work responsibly and willingly in diverse teams to achieve

common goals, demonstrating respect for the contributions of each group member, as well as the ability to be flexible and make compromises when necessary.

These definitions indicate what is necessary to cope in and contribute to the economy and workplace of the 21st century. However, communicative and collaborative competence are more than this. An important report from UNESCO, known as the Delors Report,<sup>36</sup> laid out a foundation for education beyond the economic rationale, and one of its four pillars was 'learning to live together', which is fundamentally about communication and collaboration. The goals of education need to go beyond employability-focused skills, to 'address the... moral issues that face the planet such as conflict, inequality, lack of resources, poverty and citizenship'.<sup>37</sup> Communication and collaboration are at the heart of such education, alongside other focus areas such as citizenship, leadership and critical thinking.

There is tension in debates over the development of skills through education. Policies of the World Bank and OECD, especially in previous decades, have focused on skills for economic competitiveness, with priorities such as employability, productivity, economic development and the improvement of socioeconomic indicators. An alternative emphasis is on development of core skills that enrich each individual and contribute

to improvements and greater equity in society. The two purposes for developing these skills are not mutually exclusive, of course, and it is important to note that the development of communication and collaboration aligns with both purposes; they are important for economic, humanistic and social justice reasons, at local, national and global levels.

In more concrete terms, communication and collaboration are vital for the purposes of obtaining, sharing, creating and disseminating information, knowledge, opinions, skills, values and ways of thinking and seeing. Whether it is in the classroom, in the playground, in the home, in the neighbourhood, in a place of worship, or through television and the internet, children and young people spend a huge amount of their time building and sharing knowledge and experiences through these core skills.

At another level, communication and collaboration are also essential for dealing with change and coping in society. Education professionals who want to make improvements in their classrooms, schools, communities or systems can only do so through the effective use of these skills and to do so with all the people they work with. They also have a responsibility to develop these competencies among young people because, as Fullan noted, 'the ability to collaborate on both a small and large scale is becoming one of the

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Children (and adults) in today's globalised world not only need to be able to communicate and collaborate; they also need to be prepared to do so interculturally, in diverse and often multilingual settings.

core requisites of society'.<sup>38</sup> The importance attached to this competence is reflected in the PISA 2015 Collaborative Problem Solving Framework.<sup>39</sup> Additionally, as societies and economies become ever more interdependent, the ability to learn and work in other languages is increasingly important for effective communication.

Having discussed definitions and purposes the next issue is to consider approaches to the development of these core skills. Approaches based on theories of social constructivism, deriving from the work of psychologist Lev Vygotsky, provide a solid base for understanding how and why the development of communicative and collaborative competence should be a focus in schools. These approaches show that children learn through social engagement with the teacher and with each other. The role of the teacher here is to scaffold children's learning through collaboration and communication, facilitating children's learning as they build their knowledge, skills and experiences through social interaction with others.

Going back to the question in the introduction about how these core skills differ from communication and collaboration as human survival skills, the key concept is diversity. Children (and adults) in today's globalised world not only need to be able to communicate and collaborate; they also need to be prepared to do so interculturally, in diverse and often multilingual settings. The role of languages and language learning is central to this as it opens doors to other cultures as well as providing tools to enhance understanding of your own language and culture.

Byram's framework for conceptualising and developing intercultural communicative competence<sup>40</sup> suggests that this involves: knowledge of self and others and of interaction; the ability to discover, interpret and relate information from another culture (often through another language); the ability to use that information and knowledge effectively; the ability to interact and mediate between cultures and languages, and the possession of attitudes conducive to intercultural competence; including openness to otherness, relativising self, and critical cultural awareness. Extending this model to intercultural collaborative competence, abilities such as working together to share and create knowledge also become paramount.

Using theories such as these, it becomes possible to examine and understand ways in which core skills can be practised in schools and classrooms. One important point here is to emphasise that communication and collaboration skills need to be embedded in the curriculum and in classroom practice, not treated as optional extras or discrete skills to be squeezed into an already full timetable.

In conclusion, communication and collaboration are core to the development of every child as an individual, as a learner, as a member of school, and as a citizen of their community, nation and world. Communicative and collaborative skills are universal and have a history as long as humans themselves, but as competencies for today's world, they have a new significance in the context of globalisation, diversity, and intercultural dependency and co-existence.

38. Fullan, MG (1993) Why teachers must become change agents. *Educational leadership* 50: 1–13.

39. OECD (2013) *PISA 2015 Draft Collaborative Problem Solving Framework*. Available online at: [www.oecd.org/pisa/pisaproducts/Draft%20PISA%202015%20Collaborative%20Problem%20Solving%20Framework%20.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/pisa/pisaproducts/Draft%20PISA%202015%20Collaborative%20Problem%20Solving%20Framework%20.pdf)

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The training made us revisit and revitalise our school's approaches to collaboration and communication.

Sandra Lewis, Russell Street School, UK

## Communication and collaboration: the place of languages

Vicky Gough



When children learn language, they are not simply engaging in one kind of learning among many; rather, they are learning the foundation of learning itself.

Michael Halliday<sup>41</sup>

Living and working in today's society requires young people to be able to communicate and collaborate effectively across a wide range of diverse and multilingual environments, which means that the ability to speak different languages and understand other cultures has never been more important. As well as being central to education and training, languages have an impact on prosperity, through international relations, security and defence; and identity, through well-being and social cohesion.<sup>42</sup>

Exposure to different languages and the contexts in which they are spoken enables students to understand the similarities and differences between cultures. It is so much easier for someone to actively engage with people from other societies and to navigate effectively across a range of linguistic and cultural contexts if they have a functional knowledge of the language. So students who can speak two or multiple languages are in the privileged position of being able to reflect on their own identity and society from the perspective of another, and by doing so can more easily consider what it means to be a citizen of that country. Students become able to compare, contrast and critically analyse diverse visions of the world, promoting intercultural understanding and bringing benefits both to their own society and to others. The value which is deemed to come from such abilities can be clearly seen by the fact that in many countries it is considered the norm to learn a home language and another national or international language.

Language learning is about so much more than just learning new words, it is about being open to, and understanding, other cultures. In order to build the trust with people from other countries that underpins any kind of meaningful global relationship, we need to be talking to hearts, not just heads. And you don't have to be fluent to be functional, even a few words can make you friends and influence people.

Learning a language has many benefits on an individual level too. Evidence has suggested that languages can boost employment opportunities, brain power and mental health, with the UK's National Health Service even recommending learning a language as one way to help combat stress and depression.<sup>43</sup>

The ability to speak another language is therefore a vital skill for the future – and the teaching and learning of languages should be held in the same high regard as, for example, STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) in the school system, with the appropriate amount of resources and curriculum time allocated to it.

International research<sup>44</sup> shows that different countries provide vastly differing amounts of teaching time to languages with England providing half the amount of the OECD average. The British Council provides English teaching across the world and our experience tells us that, in order to make substantial progress in a language, a significant time investment must be made.

Language learning poses particular challenges not only for the UK, but also for other countries where English is the first language.<sup>45,46</sup> With English increasingly becoming the international common language for business, research, law and much more, does it really matter that young people in the UK learn other languages? Doesn't everyone speak English these days anyway? And then, which language (or languages) should English speakers learn?<sup>47</sup>



If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his own language that goes to his heart.

Nelson Mandela



While speaking English is of course a huge asset, a knowledge of other languages is absolutely vital for the UK's future prosperity. In fact when it comes to the UK, young people hoping to compete in an increasingly global employment market may find that speaking only English might be considered as much of a disadvantage as speaking no English at all,<sup>48</sup> and this issue applies to other predominantly Anglophone countries too. It should also be noted that only a quarter of the world's population speaks English, and while that's clearly a lot of people, it still leaves three quarters of the planet with whom most people in the UK are – quite literally – lost for words.

The current lack of language skills is said to be holding back the UK's international trade performance at a cost of almost £50 billion a year<sup>49</sup> and employers are increasingly demanding language skills.<sup>50</sup> With this in mind, the UK needs far more of its young people to learn languages in order to boost their own job prospects and

to help the UK stay competitive on the world stage. More than that, understanding another language is the basis for understanding another culture – and an open mind and an international outlook have never been more important for young people anywhere in the world.

For many in the world, the reality is that learning languages means learning English, which is seen as an essential skill providing access to education, university, the internet, the business world and science. English is the most widely taught foreign language in over 100 countries and in most of those it is the chief foreign language, often displacing others.<sup>51</sup>

As David Graddol notes:

*The role of education in school is now seen as to provide the generic skills needed to acquire new knowledge and specialist skills in the future: learning how to learn. Literacy in the national language and, perhaps the mother tongue where that is different,*

*remains a basic skill, as does numeracy. But information technology – how to use computers and applications such as word processors, spreadsheets and internet browsers – has become just as important in basic education. In globalised economies, English seems to have joined this list of basic skills. Quite simply, its function and place in the curriculum is no longer that of 'foreign language' and this is bringing about profound changes in who is learning English, their motives for learning it and their needs as learners.<sup>52</sup>*

Therefore, whether it is about adding English to a home language or native English speakers learning different languages, experiences of language learning and exposure to other cultures are key to enabling intercultural collaboration and effective communication in diverse environments.

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# Case study

## The importance of effective communication

by Mrs Subashini Samarakoon, Berrewaerts College, Kandy, Sri Lanka

### Berrewaerts is a semi-urban primary school in Kandy. Pupils come from a range of backgrounds.

#### Why we wanted to improve core skills

We view language competencies – and specifically English language learning – as central to the development of our pupils' general communication skills and, ultimately, their critical thinking abilities. We realised that one of the foundations for achieving a good level of proficiency in English was the habit of reading for pleasure, both inside and outside the classroom. We found, however, that our children could not read or express themselves well in English, so we needed first to build their confidence and skills.

#### What we did

The school leader and two other teachers took part in core skills training. This was disseminated to all of our English teachers through an awareness-raising workshop, there was also a programme for other teachers and some of the parents belonging to the school development society.

We formed an English book library as the foundation for a suite of activities involving 40 nine year old pupils over 12 weeks. The English teachers took the role of librarians

and made story presentations to increase the children's interest in reading. Parents supported the teachers by providing visual aids.

Our approach followed a pathway from enhanced interest, to increased understanding, to critical reflection, in an age-appropriate format. First, the children were motivated to memorise the stories which the teachers presented, helped by audiovisual aids, sound effects and using fingers to portray the characters. The teacher then asked the children to use their understanding of the story to develop predictions about what would happen next.

Pupils would then be challenged to consider and act out what they would choose to do in the fictional situations, and to reflect on the differing views and experiences of the various characters. This enabled them to create their own endings to the stories and consider multiple perspectives.

The English language component of the project also enabled our children to make their own picture dictionaries and word

walls using their new vocabulary. They also created various games, activities, and worksheets based on the stories, and their own picture stories incorporating speech bubbles.

#### What we have achieved so far

Our awareness programmes and demonstration lessons helped other teachers to build critical thinking into their teaching and learning processes while also raising the profile of language learning and effective communication across the school.

Both parents and teachers noted the children's increased confidence, engagement, and progress, and test scores in English language improved. One pupil said, *'Now my hobby is reading books'*. The whole school community took an interest and wanted to borrow books from our library.

We have organised a language camp for children, and using their creations we prepared an exhibition involving nearby schools, which promoted interest in our work from their teachers.

# Core skills for learning, work and society

## What is education for citizenship?

Clive Belgeonne, Rob Unwin and Helen Griffin

Education must fully assume its central role in helping people to forge more just, peaceful, tolerant and inclusive societies. It must give people the understanding, skills and values they need to co-operate in resolving the interconnected challenges of the 21st century.<sup>53</sup>

### Unpacking citizenship

As a contested concept, there are many ways of defining citizenship. One helpful model, developed by Osler and Starkey<sup>54</sup> sees it as a status, a feeling and a practice:

**Status:** Whatever the political regime in a country, states generally seek to protect citizens through laws and policing and provide some collective benefits such as education, healthcare and a justice system. In return, citizens are generally required to contribute to such benefits through paying taxes and possibly through jury or military service. The status of a national as 'citizen' will have changed over time and can be contrasted with that of 'subject' to an absolute power, where there may be a greater emphasis on obedience, rather than having rights and freedoms.

**Feeling:** Even when someone has legal status as a citizen, they may not feel fully included in a society because of disability, gender, ethnicity, faith, language, social class or caste, or sexuality. This can act as a barrier to citizenship. Many members of a nation may also feel an allegiance to their communities that exist within, and often also beyond, the boundaries of the state. The Runnymede Trust suggests that a multicultural country can be reconceived as both a 'community of citizens' and a 'community of communities' where individuals may be, for example both British and Asian.<sup>55</sup>

**Practice:** Active citizens know their rights and freedoms and may act individually, or collectively, to achieve a more inclusive and sustainable society. This might include raising public awareness, fundraising, voting, lifestyle or consumer choices and active campaigning.

### Citizenship education

These features of citizenship, their interrelationships, associated competencies and underpinning values can be explored and developed in school.

Teaching and learning needs to take place:

- about citizenship – knowledge and understanding
- for citizenship – which requires active methods of learning by doing
- through citizenship in an atmosphere which reflects a concern for the ideals and practice of citizenship.<sup>57</sup>

Learning may be seen as a process of 'dialogic encounters within a community of learners who together pose problems, enquire and seek solutions for change.'<sup>58</sup> Values and a range of key concepts related to citizenship can be explored and audits used to evaluate citizenship across

**Citizenship as a status**  
(rights and duties)

**Citizenship as a feeling**  
(identity and belonging)

**Citizenship as a practice**  
(making a difference)

**Citizenship as a competence**  
(participation skills)<sup>56</sup>

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I was inspired and convinced of the importance of learning for sustainability, which I will in turn pass on to learners in my classes.

Greg Duncan, Dunfermline High School, UK





As citizenship is as much about feeling and practice as it is about status, it is also about behaviour and actions.

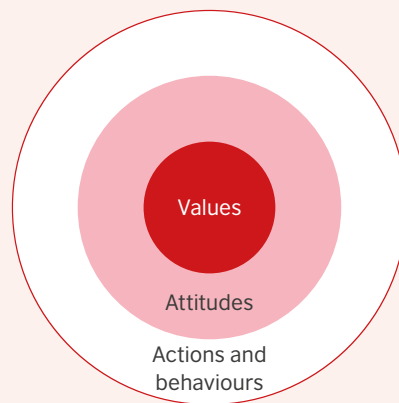
the curriculum and school life. It should also be recognised, however, that there may be considerable challenges to the teaching of citizenship within school systems and structures that may not always give voice or agency to students – or even teachers.

### Citizenship in a globalised world

Citizenship is usually defined as the status of a person recognised under custom or law as being a member of a state, so is often seen as synonymous with nationality. However, 'Rapid globalisation and modernisation are posing new and demanding challenges to individuals and societies alike. Increasingly diverse and interconnected populations, rapid technological change... and the instantaneous availability of vast amounts of information are just a few of the factors contributing to these new demands.'<sup>59</sup> People are being increasingly bound together by common interests, and a shared fate and 'As a result humankind is acquiring some of the broad features of a political community.'<sup>60</sup>

### Importance of values

As citizenship is as much about feeling and practice as it is about status, it is also about behaviour and actions. As the diagram shows, values are at the core of what determine our attitudes which in turn determine our behaviour and actions.



The Schwartz Values Survey<sup>61</sup> identified ten basic values recognised in cultures around the world. The values 'circumplex' explains the dynamic relations between values and shows two motivational continua: self-enhancement versus self-transcendence and openness to change versus conservation. Individual people and even countries may differ in the importance that they attribute to particular values, but the same structure of opposition and compatibility between values seems to apply universally. There is evidence of the link between two of the values – universalism and benevolence – and people's attitudes towards the environment, human rights, difference, and global poverty,<sup>62</sup> key issues for citizenship in a globalised world.

Values also help to determine whether one sees oneself as a citizen in a globalised world, where some of the key challenges may be human rights, democracy, inequality and social justice or as a 'planetary creature'<sup>63</sup> where the challenges may also include interdependence, sustainability and our relationship with the biosphere.

An exploration of values and concepts is central to understanding and implementing citizenship education. It is useful to give both teachers and students an opportunity to identify some of their own values, consider how these relate to those of their countries and to explore those perceived to be needed for active citizenship. Values underlie what people are motivated to take action on and exploring them critically with school students can support their understanding of what it means to be an active citizen.

An ability to unpack and problematise key concepts in relation to issues of human and environmental sustainability is important, as is an understanding of how power operates and the ability to use a range of techniques to generate and select potential courses of action to take in relation to such issues. These skills help support young people in taking informed and effective action as citizens.

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# Dealing with current affairs in schools: risk or opportunity? Why citizenship education can, and should, play a role in every classroom

Stephen Hull

Sadly, extremism and acts of terror are ever present in today's world. It seems hardly a day can go by without reports of another city, country or community recovering from the after effects of a random attack, threat, or loss of life. Such events serve as continual reminders that the world is in conflict, people are unhappy, and injustice is common. The question is, that on top of all the pressure of teaching, exam preparation, and administration, is it right that teachers should be required to respond to these complex global issues? The answer, I will argue here, is 'yes'.

One of the many ways to distinguish educational paradigms is to think of education as either technical or intellectual.<sup>64</sup> The former deals with certainties and needs: what facts children need to learn and what skills they need to acquire to get a job. The latter takes a different view: its focus is on thinking, understanding and above all, questioning. Research, policy and practice in the first view assume that contexts are largely stable, populations are homogenous and that we can plan and manage the future. The second view, on the other hand, rejects conformity, assumes diversity and positively embraces the anarchic. Ask yourself, which reflects the world we live in today?

But without getting too abstract, let's consider a morning at school following another appalling terrorist incident in a neighbouring country. Pupils have seen the news; they follow social media; and they can relate some of the words and images they see to people they know or communities they have heard of. They are curious, worried and confused. How should teachers react when it comes up in class? What if pupils draw naïve conclusions or it affects their perceptions about other nationalities or ethnicities? What if the teacher tries to mediate but inadvertently offends someone? What if they are scared of their own prejudices?

One way to react is via the safe option. Teachers carefully condemn the attack, reiterate the safety provided by institutions there to protect people, and then move on. After all, the teacher is there to teach a lesson. Children should be advised to follow up with their parents if they must, and will be reprimanded if they bring it up again. It's too risky to do anything else, isn't it?

Alternatively, the teacher puts the lesson plan to one side and facilitates a discussion about the incident. The teacher reassures the children that it's natural to be scared and that everyone else is too. When they ask why it happened, the teacher tells the truth: we don't know; or at least, it's very complex. What do they think? Why might people be driven to violent actions? What could have happened in their family and cultural life for such extreme actions to seem logical? And if a pupil prejudices, it isn't condemned, instead an alternative way of seeing things is introduced.

This is what could be referred to as a safe space, in which pupils can show and talk about powerful emotions and confusing feelings while they try to make sense of the world. Children are innocent and should be reassured, but their reactions should not be suppressed, rather they should be explored. And in their questioning, political decisions may be deconstructed, self-interest uncovered, and banal law-breaking revealed for what it is.

This kind of dialogic approach to practice considers the ways of thinking and being which learners bring to class, and values how they interpret the world.<sup>65</sup> It is open and fair and arguments can be made, discussed, retracted or strengthened, under the guidance of a responsible adult. And herein lies our collective responsibility to young people. But what's the connection to contributing to our global security?

More often than not, terrorist attacks take place in countries we may never visit and affect people we will never meet. But they are even more terrifying when they take place close-by; and above all else, when we can ourselves relate to the perpetrators' backgrounds. The path to extremism is always complex but has been linked to various psychological, social and cultural factors. One line of thought from social science suggests that extremist views can develop when individuals' experiences of society do not meet the expectations provided through educational or other institutions.



Simply put, if your experience of the world is frightening and you are told you are safe; if you experience injustice but are told society is fair; and if you empathise with a cause but you are told it is wrong, then there is increased risk. In particular, failing to connect with the grand narrative of what might be perceived as the ‘normal’ structure of society and its institutions leaves the dispossessed in search of an alternative.<sup>66</sup>

And the remedy? The same research implores education to be founded on criticality. Authority figures cannot answer all questions or reassure everybody that the world is really fair and just. But they can explore complex and contradictory positions with learners, and facilitate pupils to come to informed and balanced views. This approach increases genuine engagement and is more likely to result in active citizens than isolated outsiders.

And such approaches are not just idealistic or hypothetical: countless curricula for citizenship across the world reference pupils’ entitlement to critical engagement with political and social issues<sup>67</sup> as vitally important. This is backed up by numerous educational organisations including the

Australian-based Global Education, which encourages teachers to pay attention to controversial issues and the negative effects of globalisation. The provision of safe spaces and dialogic approaches can therefore meet both mandated and ideological aims. More young people should be afforded the opportunity to develop the personal resilience needed to approach, discuss and understand extremist arguments and thereby keep themselves and each other safe.

Worryingly, however, recent research<sup>68</sup> by the London-based educational charity Think Global, shows that many teachers lack confidence or training in how to embed critical approaches which build resilience to radical viewpoints – approaches they refer to as ‘proactive safeguarding’.<sup>69</sup> Therefore now is the time for us to act, to prioritise a thoughtful, educational response to current affairs, and support teachers to take the lead. This isn’t about ticking boxes or providing training for compliance, it’s about the very essence of membership of society, both locally and globally. Or to quote Hannah Arendt, it’s deciding you love the world enough to take responsibility for it.<sup>70</sup>

In 2015, the UN launched the historic Sustainable Development Goals, which have since been adopted by governments across the globe, and make specific reference to the promotion of tolerance, peace, global citizenship and countering extremism.<sup>71</sup> This paves the way for an emphasis on a values-based approach, recognising links to promoting tolerance, human rights, social justice and respect.

For these reasons, reacting to current affairs as a thoughtful and questioning education community can contribute to society’s broader response to difficult global issues. Teachers around the world need support and development in working with their pupils to develop a critical understanding of, and responsibility for, the world around them. The opportunity to promote and facilitate genuine dialogue will enrich pupils’ learning experiences and could also lead to a safer, more democratic and more cohesive national and global society. And without doubt, that is an opportunity we cannot afford to ignore.

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# Case study

## Developing responsible citizens

by Bhuvana Barshikar, Kids' Kingdom Public School, Maharashtra, India

Kids' Kingdom Public School is located on the outskirts of Nanded, in India's Maharashtra state. It accommodates boys and girls aged 2½ to 18.

### Why we wanted to improve core skills

We wanted to deepen pupils' understanding of citizenship and encourage pupils to think critically about some of the challenges that society faces, responding in particular to the acknowledged national need for a new generation of critical thinkers. We particularly wanted to develop our pupils' understanding of:

- citizenship as a practice – making a difference
- citizenship as a competence – participation skills.

### What we did

The Principal and three of our leading teachers attended the core skills training. This enabled us to visualise the changes that we wanted to make in our teaching practices in order to improve learning and increase impact on the learners. We then developed action plans with the support and guidance of our Principal. This process provided opportunities to explore cross-curricular approaches and to work collaboratively.

We involved 44 16 year old pupils in an integrated cross-curricular project that looked at the topic of senior citizens in our society. The activities included:

- a visit to a home for older people, with each student writing a report on the visit in Hindi
- a PowerPoint presentation by the students, looking at statistical and factual information about the situation

of older people in India and also in the UK – this enabled students to analyse differences in context and approach

- an enactment of the Stanley Houghton's drama, *The Dear Departed*
- completing a life skills audit.

### What we have achieved so far

Our awareness programmes and witnessing the challenges facing older people during their visit has sensitised and informed students about the issues and challenges facing older people, and improved their connection with their own parents and grandparents. They have a greater understanding that they belong to communities which rely on interdependencies and co-operation. They have also developed strong views about their own responsibilities to ensure that older people receive appropriate support and care.



The visit to the old-age home and the PowerPoint presentations by our friends helped us to understand our social responsibility as citizens.

Pupil, aged 16

In terms of changes to our practice, we have greatly encouraged pupil engagement in, and a sense of responsibility for, their own learning. This has been achieved by replacing the traditional lecture method with more interactive teaching, with pupils presenting to their peers. The pupils particularly enjoyed this aspect of the work and the shift in responsibility from teacher to pupils transformed the students into more active listeners and enabled greater peer learning.

The action planning process has guided our thinking in terms of organising and delivering lessons in new ways so that we are more effectively learner-centred. The process of integrating core skills with subject areas has strengthened our relationships with colleagues involved in those subject areas.

# Creativity and imagination

## Preparing children for the future: the essential role of creativity and imagination in learning

Pat Cochrane

Creativity and imagination are essential human capacities. They enable us to express thoughts, feelings and aspirations, and help us to fashion our ever changing culture.

They underpin scientific and technological development. They drive forward our economies and social development through entrepreneurship, and enable us to contribute fully as citizens. In this fast-changing world, the capacities of creativity and imagination are more crucial to our lives than ever before.

Education systems across the world are increasingly recognising the importance of preparing young people for the growing challenges, uncertainties and complexities they face.<sup>72</sup> For young people to thrive in the future the curriculum needs to nurture skills, capacities and habits of mind as well as knowledge.<sup>73</sup> Our children are inheriting a world characterised by increasing inequality and competition within and between countries, a world in which some of the challenges we face, such as global warming, a growing population, migration and poverty, seem insurmountable. The ability to imagine new ways of approaching these challenges and to seek and craft

creative solutions is surely one of the most important capacities we need to nurture in our children and young people.

The economic imperative for creativity has been made by business leaders across the globe. They recognise that creativity and imagination are essential ingredients for enterprise, development and growth. The ability to imagine, connect, create and innovate is crucial to success.<sup>74</sup>

The cultural imperative for creativity and imagination is equally compelling. We need to find ways 'to live together in a world which is more dynamic, more nuanced, more connected, more independent' than ever before.<sup>75</sup>

There is also a personal imperative. Creativity and imagination enable us each to lead fulfilled and satisfying lives. And so, nurturing the creativity and imagination of future generations is not a choice, but a necessity.

It is possible to promote an environment that favours creativity, innovation and calculated risk-taking, whilst also focusing on the acquisition of knowledge and the promotion of excellence and high levels of achievement. Both creativity and imagination can be nurtured by schools, but they can also be suppressed.

Repetitive and uninspired teaching can reduce children's capacity to be imaginative and creative, particularly when there is an over emphasis on testing and examinations. However, there are schools and education systems that are rising to the challenge and making remarkable changes to practice that unlock the creative and imaginative capacities of our future citizens.

### What do we mean by creativity in learning? And why does it matter?

The term creativity is often strongly associated with the arts, and creative capacities are often nurtured through arts learning. Mastery in the arts can free students to explore and experiment. In a context where there are no right or wrong answers, imagination and experimentation are encouraged. The arts support our ability to introspect and find personal meaning.<sup>76</sup>

However, creativity has a vital role to play across all areas of learning including science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects. When we are being creative we are inquisitive; we wonder and question, explore and investigate; we challenge assumptions; we are persistent, sticking with difficulty, daring to be different and tolerating uncertainty. We are imaginative, collaborative and disciplined, and work through challenges to create outcomes.<sup>77</sup> It is hard to imagine any aspect of life

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where we do not draw on this repertoire of capacities or habits of behaviour. Therefore the imperative to nurture creativity in schools is compelling.

### What are the implications for teachers' practice?

Many teachers teach creatively. They use imaginative and innovative approaches to deliver the curriculum, to make learning more interesting, exciting and effective and provide memorable lessons.

Even so, in order to teach for creativity, in other words, in ways that enable children themselves to develop their creative capacities, teachers need to change their stance, to enable solutions and ideas to emerge through questioning and exploration.

Teachers can encourage a spirit of enquiry, the generation of ideas and the use of imagination by asking enabling questions that encourage dialogue and exploration such as 'what if?', 'why?', and 'what would happen if?' Imagination can be encouraged by extended role play, exploring issues from a particular perspective and experimenting with thoughts and options. Teachers can model possibility thinking,<sup>78</sup> an important element of creativity.

Shaping learning around a provocation, a big question or a series of questions is more likely to generate creative thinking and behaviours than a curriculum which focuses solely on the transfer of knowledge.

A teacher who is focused on developing learners' creativity will encourage their students to work towards an outcome or product. They will work with students to co-construct the approaches used during the lesson, and will support risk taking, while ensuring challenge and rigour.<sup>79</sup>

Such a transformation of the teacher's role requires effort, practice and careful planning. It has implications for teacher training and also their professional development.

### What is the role of leadership in schools?

School leaders have a key role in encouraging and enabling their staff to embrace creativity in both teaching and in how they facilitate learning. Meeting the challenge of a powerful drive for raising standards, as well as promoting the development of creativity, may at times appear to be in tension. However, there is increasing evidence that schools can, and do, achieve both.<sup>80</sup>

Leaders do more than promote creativity. They sustain and nurture it in the way that they provide opportunities for others, license innovative practice, and model the characteristics of creativity themselves. One of these characteristics is using imagination. School leaders' ability to imagine what might be, and share that with others, is one of the most important contributions they can make to promoting creativity in their school.

Wider research consistently highlights a number of common leadership strategies in generating creativity. When leaders and staff feel creative, they:

- collaborate and explore which approaches really work in the context of their school and community
- review and reflect on their teaching process
- control and take ownership of their practice
- are innovative and ensure relevance to learners
- enable teachers, pupils and others to engage in calculated risk-taking
- envisage possibilities and differences, and see these through.<sup>81</sup>

### Conclusion

Creativity and imagination are central to the human condition. They are critical to success in relation to real-world challenges, whatever the context. If we are serious about nurturing the creative and imaginative capabilities of our students, we need to think carefully about all aspects of our education systems including curriculum design, assessment of learning, the culture of classrooms and schools and the way in which teachers work.

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# Interview

## Interview with a teacher from Zimbabwe about the creativity and imagination programme

by Dr Sara Bubb

We spoke to Donald Jaravaza, a 42 year old primary school teacher from The Grange School in Harare to find out more about his experience of the British Council Creativity and Imagination programme. He told us first about himself.

I have taught for 18 years in primary schools in Zimbabwe: five years in public schools and 13 years in private schools. Currently I teach at The Grange School, which is a private Christian school in Harare. I teach Grade 4 and I have a class of 29 girls and boys.

### **Donald then gave us an insight into his involvement with the British Council programme.**

I undertook the Creativity and Imagination course in December of 2015. In fact, four of us from the school did it. We have been involved with Connecting Classrooms for some while, and through this I've visited a school in England.

### **When asked for his views about the Creativity and Imagination programme, Donald had some interesting reflections.**

I think the two important aspects of the course are its ability to change the way we teachers look at teaching and learning and secondly the outcome in making learners become more creative in all spheres of the curriculum. Zimbabwean pupils need their horizons widened and schools generally lack teaching and learning resources across the board. This course enables teachers to do more with less, after good planning and reflection.

I liked the programme for being a new approach to teaching. I think it's a more effective approach than traditional teaching methods, which can tend to be boring and meant to make learners retain as much content as they can cram in! I was pleased to learn that creativity and imagination can be taught – that was news to me!

### **The value of the programme can be judged by what differences it has made. Donald agrees.**

The course has made me a better teacher. I'm not hammering learning, I'm taking time to listen to the students. It has made life easier for me as now I collaborate with learners and I am able to make them partners in the teaching and learning process. It has allowed me to reach out to the slower children in my class as I can now creatively adapt learning materials to suit different learners because I'm better at spotting areas of misunderstanding.

I have managed to brighten up my classroom with colourful displays and made teaching and learning materials more interactive. My teaching used to be one-sided. Now I'm inviting feedback from the learners. My lessons used to be a bit boring, well, now they're more fun. The children are enjoying learning more.

I'm better at reflection: analysing critically the teaching and learning processes, without fear.

### **Donald went on to explain more specifically what differences the programme has made to the pupils.**

The learners now brace up for learning and they have more 'Aha!' moments as they learn. They achieve more when I try to make learning as effortless as possible. The use of music, dance and movement allows children to learn without even realising it! The stories they are writing are much more imaginative, especially the ones about 'My Perfect Day'.

I'm now helping the children to learn more creative life skills, not just the academic curriculum. We are teaching agronomy for example, and the children are loving it.

### **When asked about any impact on other people in his school, Donald makes clear that it is not just the pupils who have felt the effects.**

I now plan more easily and I collaborate with other teachers, especially the other Grade 4 teacher, in planning, implementing, and evaluating lessons. My subject schemes and lesson planning are more holistic and integrated as I look for links across the curriculum.

Other staff members have benefited from the way I have designed display materials as well as learning corners. My use of IT to make PowerPoint presentations is quite engaging! This has allowed me to share with other teachers.

### **Finally, Donald told us about his plans for the future in relation to the Creativity and Imagination programme.**

The areas we are focusing on at the moment as a school are making more creative usage of computers in teaching and learning, and the assessment of practical subjects, like agriculture, without using tests.

We are keen on continuing innovation so that The Grange School is the school of choice here, because we provide the best education for our pupils. We will come up with exciting programmes in academic subjects, sports, music and art, to make it possible for students to shine all of the time.



Teaching digital literacy is about more than just integrating technology into lesson plans; it's about using technology to understand and enhance modern communication, to locate oneself in digital space, to manage knowledge and experience in the Age of Information.

Nadia Dahman, Beach Prep Girls School, Palestinian Territory

# Digital literacy

## Why schools and teachers need to take action

Dr Tim Rudd

Digital technologies are rapidly becoming embedded in more and more aspects of our daily lives. Our personal and social lives are increasingly influenced by them, and our culture is constantly being shaped by new developments.

Digital literacy skills, therefore, are becoming increasingly important and essential skills for both learning and employment, as well as being vital in enabling us to function effectively in an increasingly complex and digitised world. As more and more services and transactions occur online, the need to ensure young people are aware of the potential and pitfalls that new technologies can bring becomes more and more important.

Many major international organisations, and a growing number of governments, are also recognising the need to develop digital literacy, with claims that such skills will become ever more important in assuring economic competitiveness in a globalised world. They highlight that the need to develop digitally literate citizens is necessary so that future workforces have the skills required to handle information and create new resources, and also that individuals become effective problem solvers who can participate fully in all aspects of society.

Increasingly, employers will expect staff to be able to use a range of digital tools and programmes, make sense of complex materials and information, and communicate

and collaborate using various tools and media. Young people will also need to develop the capabilities that will enable them to search, analyse, create, edit and remix digital resources.

Some commentators have also interpreted digital literacy as the ability to operate digital technologies in a safe and secure manner. However, while e-safety and security are essential aspects of digital literacy, this does not represent the whole picture or the breadth of the concept. Digital literacy also includes the ability to understand how digital tools can be used meaningfully, and how they can be harnessed to solve problems and create opportunities that were not previously possible. Being digitally literate also means individuals can fully participate in democratic, economic and social processes in informed, safe and meaningful ways. It means that they can critically assess the nature of information, and consider how technology might be harnessed to support and enhance society and the environment.

### So what does this mean for schools?

Developing digital literacy should be a key area of concern and development for schools, colleges, universities, teachers and students themselves. However, it is often assumed that young people are already digitally literate and that teachers can do little to help them enhance their digital literacy skills. This is clearly an over-generalisation at best and a dangerous assumption at worst. Educators have a crucial role to play in guiding, supporting and modelling acceptable practices, and in encouraging students

to think critically about digital technologies and the opportunities and risks they present. Educational institutions have a responsibility to consider how they might support the development of digital literacy among students, and also how they can support the professional development of teachers so that they are better informed as to how they might provide students with appropriate guidance.

Many argue that digital literacy is now so important that it has become a pre-requisite for the development of other skills and capabilities, which are crucial to an individual's life chances and necessary for engaging successfully in a whole range of activities we could not have foreseen even a decade ago. Perhaps, therefore, we should now consider digital literacy as a core entitlement for young people.

However, there is still a very long way to go. Many countries, governments and educational institutions still do not have adequate strategies, policies, plans or practices in place that are capable of adequately developing digital literacy skills among young people or educators. There are currently many misunderstandings about what digital literacy is. Many mistakenly believe that digital literacy is merely the practical ability to use digital technologies. However, such narrow interpretations miss the point and must be addressed. Being able to use a tool tells us nothing about the quality or the purpose of its use. Technology can be and is used poorly, and can be used to detrimental and harmful effect. Moreover, as the availability of different technologies, hardware, software





and applications increases, we need to shift our emphasis to the quality of use and how it can best be harnessed to support learning and development, rather than merely on the basic competencies required to use various tools, which themselves may soon become obsolete or outdated.

#### **The need to take action**

The need to take action is why an increasing number of international organisations now consider digital literacy as one of a number of core, interrelated skills for learning and life in the 21st century. The most effective training programmes are those designed specifically to help practitioners and school leaders gain a better understanding of what digital literacy is, highlight how it might be developed among students and staff alike, and which support teachers to conduct their own interventions and enquiries in their own specific and unique contexts. As digital literacy has no single or precise definition, for the concept to have power and meaning, it has to be co-created and implemented. This helps convey the nature of its meaning through

tangible changes in actions and practice. Moreover, digital literacy should be viewed as an evolving social practice whereby learners, and staff, seek to develop new skills, artefacts and outcomes from their learning, and where practices change regularly to best utilise new technological developments. This is why better training programmes emphasise the development of individual interventions or enquiries suited to the specific context of the teacher and school. 'One size fits all' approaches would not be appropriate, given the wide variations in technology, knowledge and approaches between schools and across different national and local contexts. Instead, the emphasis is on changing teaching and professional development practices by empowering teachers to become leaders and deliver change in their own schools. There is a need, therefore, for training and resources that help practitioners gain an understanding of digital literacy from theory to practice, and which help develop a greater awareness of how digital literacy is related to wider skills for life and learning in the

21st century. Similarly, there is a need for training programmes and projects that also seek to challenge practitioners' current thinking and practice, through a process of understanding, planning, implementing, reviewing and reflecting, communicating and refining and developing new practices, so that they become active and powerful change agents in their own contexts.

In considering digital literacy in its broadest sense, we can better understand the key skills teachers need to help students develop, and which can be applied in various knowledge, subject, and skills areas. The active, creative and constructive nature of learning and teaching are central to digital literacy. In many cases, digital literacy can be viewed as a means of challenging existing thinking and practice, leading to more innovative, creative, and, in some cases, transformational learning.



**'One size fits all' approaches would not be appropriate, given the wide variations in technology, knowledge and approaches between schools and across different national and local contexts.**

# Case study

## Enhancing learning through digital literacy

by Bhanu Ahamed, Gyanodaya Residential School, Lalitpur, Nepal

Gyanodaya Residential School provides high-quality education to boys and girls aged six to 16 in the Lalitpur district of Nepal, in the Kathmandu Valley.

### Why we wanted to improve core skills

We wanted to embed digital literacy into the curriculum in order to:

- enhance our pupils' learning experiences
- enable pupils to use the most up-to-date digital tools to locate, evaluate and create information.

### What we did

Two teachers attended core skills development training and, back in school, trained eight more teachers to integrate digital literacy into the curriculum.

We organised workshops, seminars and presentations to share up-to-date information and practical know-how, focusing in particular on digital literacy in mathematics, social studies and environment studies.

In total, 180 pupils aged 11 to 16 were given the space, time and facilities to work individually and in groups using ICT for research-based learning. They accessed materials online and began to learn visually as well as through text and talk. Pupils were encouraged to look for information

about the same topic from multiple sources and to critically analyse, compare and contrast the information they found. In particular, they made the most of new opportunities to work together on PowerPoint presentations, communicating and collaborating in groups and giving presentations with growing confidence.

For example, in mathematics, 14 year old pupils who had already used paper folding, cutting and pasting to verify Pythagoras' Theorem were challenged to use the internet to find different methods of verification, to analyse how these worked and then to present the different solutions using PowerPoint.

### What we have achieved so far

Pupils are enjoying school more and they are more enthusiastic about learning. They are growing in confidence as a result of using new technology and are developing skills in communication, collaboration and leadership. One pupil said *'We are extremely grateful for the introduction of digital literacy into our curriculum; our classes have become more interactive, progressive and enjoyable.'*

They understand concepts more easily. A mathematics teacher noted that *'Using digital literacy I found my students more eager and interested to learn and it seemed that concepts were grasped more easily and enjoyably.'*

There is a new excitement and positivity in school. Teachers are accessing educational resources online and learning from others, meaning they are spending less time preparing lesson plans. The Founder Principal stated that *'The introduction of digital literacy into the curriculum has brought about a new and energetic atmosphere here at Gyanodaya.'*





“

This training taught me that every student has hidden leadership skills and we should provide them with a supportive atmosphere that will create confidence in them.

Pandit Patil, Zilla Parishad High School Kausadi, Parbhani, India

# Student leadership and personal development

## Student leadership: actively engaging students as partners

Nicholas Garrick



Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

Attributed to Margaret Mead

The future of a global society is dependent on those who lead it, and whilst it might sound dramatic, the students of today are the leaders of that unknown future world.

Although we cannot predict the future with any great accuracy, what we can say for certain is that the world is continuing to change at an exponential rate, with many adults being left behind either through their engagement with education or their access to technologies.

The new, connected world is transforming education, argues Brown-Martin<sup>82</sup> not the other way round. Technological changes have obviously had a visible influence and enable the world to communicate in previously unimagined ways. This has resulted in a divide between those that can access new technologies and those that cannot. In addition to this, social and political boundaries have expanded and blurred to the point that many schools in the world have as many non-native language speakers as home-grown students. This blend of ethnicities, cultures and faiths also brings with it a mixing pot of expectations and attitudes to previously isolated micro communities.

The future world, according to some, may therefore go one of two ways: total integration both physically and digitally, or, increased isolation as new communities are formed with new ideals and traditional cultural values.<sup>83</sup> Whichever future prevails, for the first time in history, our children will have a greater awareness and knowledge of the world than their parents; the balance has shifted and this brings opportunities as well as challenges.

Fletcher believes that the ethical imperative of teaching in a democratic global society demands educators actively engage students as partners and therefore the need for teachers to be deliverers or conduits of information is slowly becoming redundant.<sup>84</sup> Students have as much access to information, if not more, than teachers and communicate in multiple ways simultaneously, leading to an awareness of different viewpoints of the same world. The grouping of students, or digital natives – the generation born during or after the rise of digital technologies, and teachers, or digital immigrants – people born before the advent of digital technology, refers to more than just the use of technology. According to DeGraff,<sup>85</sup> the real issue is that the two world views of digital natives and digital immigrants, and the content that defines them, are so different. The digital immigrants value legacy content; information and skills passed down through generations, whilst digital natives value future content, i.e. legacy content which can affect the future.

82. Brown-Martin, G (2014) *Learning (Re)imagined*. Bloomsbury: London.

83. Brown-Martin, G (2014) *Learning (Re)imagined*. Bloomsbury: London. Gerver, R (2010) *Creating Tomorrow's Schools Today*. Continuum: London. Robinson, K (1999) *All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education* NACCE: London. Available online at: <http://sirkenrobinson.com/pdf/allourfutures.pdf>

84. Fletcher, A (2011) *Shout Out: What is Student Voice About?* Available online at: [www.soundout.org](http://www.soundout.org)

85. DeGraff, J (2015) *Digital Natives vs. Digital Immigrants*. Available online at: [www.huffingtonpost.com/jeff-degraff/digital-natives-vs-digital-immigrants\\_b\\_5499606.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jeff-degraff/digital-natives-vs-digital-immigrants_b_5499606.html)





As Prensky points out:

*'Legacy' content includes reading, writing, arithmetic, logical thinking, understanding the writings and ideas of the past, etc. – all of our 'traditional' curriculum. It is of course still important, but it is from a different era. Some of it (such as logical thinking) will continue to be important, but some (perhaps like Euclidean geometry) will become less so...*

*'Future' content is to a large extent, not surprisingly, digital and technological. But while it includes software, hardware, robotics, nanotechnology, genomics, etc. it also includes the ethics, politics, sociology, languages and other things that go with them. This 'Future' content is extremely interesting to today's students. But how many digital immigrants are prepared to teach it? Someone once suggested to me that kids should only be allowed to use computers in school that they have built themselves. It's a brilliant idea that is very doable from the point of view of the students' capabilities. But who could teach it?'<sup>86</sup>*

In order to mitigate the potential friction in viewpoints, today's educators of tomorrow's leaders need to demonstrate authenticity, appreciation, affiliation, animation and altruism according to Reed and colleagues,<sup>87</sup> and embrace the process of leading future as opposed to delivering legacy.

*Leaders in the next decade will not just be leading organisations they will be leading life.<sup>88</sup>*

This requires adventurous leadership from educators both in terms of how they teach and also how they lead students in becoming adventurous leaders themselves of this unknown, integrated, global life. Educators need to provide situations whereby they balance absorption of legacy content through experiences of self-awareness, altruism and adventure. Educators need to both model adventurous leadership as well as use it as a vehicle to enable leadership skills to flourish in students. Students need to discover the importance of purposeful, real and moral teamwork in leadership, and be able to differentiate between being a hero and a role model.

It is also important to distinguish between student voice and student leadership. Whilst student voice activities are important in creating more confident and democratic school communities, student leadership is more than that, it is what happens to the voice and how this is taken further, the 'so what?' It cannot be assumed that just providing students with conduits to express thoughts will organically develop future leaders. Therefore educators have to resist the temptation to identify individual and articulate future leaders, investing heavily in just them, and instead awaken leadership and enhance the self-awareness of all students.

Self-awareness, as suggested by the The Campaign for Learning, could be framed as 'what knowledge, skills and attitudes should a learning to learn approach develop?' In answer to this question the Campaign has developed five Rs for a lifelong learning model. The Campaign's belief is that by using learning to learn approaches to develop the Rs in all their pupils or students, schools can achieve their core purpose, namely preparing young people so that they can and will continue learning effectively throughout their lives.

**Readiness** – being prepared, aware of what is needed, able to respond to change.

**Resourcefulness** – knowing who and what to draw on when required, and how to do this in an appropriate manner.

**Resilience** – keeping going in the face of apparent adversity or negativity.

**Responsibility** – taking ownership of learning and mistakes, and working with others.

**Reflectiveness** – asking questions, reviewing learning, and practicing techniques.

So, if self-aware student leaders are so imperative to the development of a democratic global society, and have specific competencies that enable them to be adventurous and achieve extraordinary things, how can schools develop them?



Much research focuses on developing student leaders within higher and further education, but many believe that the foundations, skills and attitudes can, and should, be embedded from early years and even pre-school stages. In addition to the age of leadership exposure, student leadership is about more than simply extracurricular activities for those that choose to engage in them. Using only extracurricular time to develop leaders can exclude hidden or secret leaders who may choose not to be identified. Therefore, educators need to consider how they can teach legacy content whilst also enhancing students' confidence, negotiation skills, responsibility, problem solving and teamwork, as well as their planning, management and decision making skills.

In their most basic forms educational settings could help young leaders foster the five Rs by providing time and space to actively reflect upon leadership whilst engaged in leadership acts – metacognition – during lesson time. It does not necessarily require additional time or materials, but by using the apposite terminology during

normal activities teachers can help students 'tag' leadership acts as being, for example resourceful or resilient in nature. This will in turn help them to identify, build and enhance their understanding of leadership. Imagine what a student might be capable of, if they not only learned about a specific event in history, but also reflected on how the leaders at the time enacted the five Rs, whilst considering how this might be possible in the present day.

Therefore, in order to develop future global leaders who will be part of an interconnected and blended global society, we need to consider students as 'People that live in places, that form communities, that seek change, which leads to innovation, that calls for sustainability, and ultimately, equality.'<sup>89</sup> This has to be intelligently planned for and carefully mapped into and across school curricula, as well as organically grown. No one said it was going to be easy, and that is what makes it all the more interesting. As Facer puts it:

*It [needs to] start from the premise that the challenge isn't to figure out how to predict the future. The challenge is to figure out how to live well, how to uncover the creative possibilities of the present because we don't know the future.<sup>90</sup>*

86. Prensky, M (2001) *Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants* From MCB University Press, (Vol. 9 No. 5, October 2001) Available online: [www.marcprensky.com/writing/Prensky%20-%20Digital%20Natives,%20Digital%20Immigrants%20-%20Part1.pdf](http://www.marcprensky.com/writing/Prensky%20-%20Digital%20Natives,%20Digital%20Immigrants%20-%20Part1.pdf)

87. Reed, J and colleagues (2012) *The Adventurous School*. Institute of Education: London

88. Johansen, B (2010) *Leaders Make The Future*. Berrett-Koehler: San Francisco

89. Garrick, N and Weaver, S (2015) *The Tree: Learning and Life at Wallscourt Farm Academy*. Available online at: <http://wallscourtfarmacademy.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/CurriculumTreeOfLearningForLifeWFA.pdf>

90. Facer, K cited in Brown-Martin, G (2014) *Learning (Re)imagined*. Bloomsbury: London.

Groves, M (2003) *Exploring the potential for student leadership to contribute to school transformation*. From Exchanges: the Warwick Research Journal 1/1: October 2013. Available online at: [https://www.google.co.uk/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=Exchanges:+the+Warwick+Research+Journal+Volume+1,+Issue+1,+October+2013&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&gfe\\_rd=cr&ei=VnVgVa\\_RBvLt8wfy14DQDg](https://www.google.co.uk/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=Exchanges:+the+Warwick+Research+Journal+Volume+1,+Issue+1,+October+2013&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&gfe_rd=cr&ei=VnVgVa_RBvLt8wfy14DQDg)

# Case study

## Creating opportunities for students to lead

by Bipasha Biswas, Newtown School, Kolkata, India

The Newtown School in the city of Kolkata, West Bengal, was founded in 2015 to cater for boys and girls from nursery through to the age of 13.

### Why we wanted to improve core skills

We focused on the core skill of student leadership and personal development because we want to develop students who:

- are confident in their ability to lead and who are able and willing to take on responsibilities
- are able to identify problems and challenges and seek creative solutions
- are able to communicate and collaborate effectively and build successful teams.

This work reinforces our ethos and vision of preparing pupils for their future life.

### What we did

The central concept for our project was based on the idea that in order to be effective leaders, students need to be able to identify and solve problems. They need to do this by:

- critically analysing issues
- adopting an open mind
- seeking information from multiple sources and considering a number of solutions
- developing trust within their teams
- communicating effectively.

Six teachers, including two who had attended core skills training, worked together to design an action plan using the golden circle model – why, how and what. Forty pupils from Grade 4 (age nine) took part in the project.

The activities focused on the statement, 'If I were to become a leader of my school I would like to change...!'. Pupils used the PMI – plus, minus, interesting – technique to identify problems faced by the school before brainstorming and clustering in groups to agree on issues to resolve. They set ground rules for their team, shared them with the rest of the class and displayed them in the classroom.

They created a 'wonder wall' of questions, issues and comments to help find solutions. To develop this work, they produced slogans and posters in different languages, and explored how they could use the medium of street play to communicate messages. They went on to create a play to raise awareness and educate the whole school about the issue they were addressing and their proposed solutions.

Throughout the project, a range of approaches were used to support the development of core skills. Pupils watched videos of leaders working towards problem solving, identified leaders in their own lives, reflected on their qualities and carried out a SWOT analysis of their own leadership skills. They took part in inside/

outside circle discussions to share problems and solutions. They used graffiti board techniques to develop their thinking, talking and writing about pictures. At the end of the project, they used the 'six thinking hats' process to reflect on their solutions.

### What we have achieved so far

Pupils are more enthusiastic, creative and collaborative in their learning. They look forward to these classes and are engaged, active and reflective. They have grown in confidence and are happier to voice their opinions, take charge of their learning and go outside their comfort zone.

They have taken the first steps towards becoming leaders. One pupil said '*As student leaders, it gave us the opportunity to identify what qualities we possess and how we can build on these, developing skills that will prepare us for success in school, college and life.*'

Teachers are delivering learning in a more holistic way, integrating different subjects. They have enjoyed sharing a learning journey with pupils, for example learning about collaboration and teamwork together. Teachers are also more knowledgeable about tools and strategies that can be used in class, such as PMI, SWOT and roleplay.



# Teacher as researcher

## Innovation from within: the power of appreciation in comparative studies

Barrie Joy and Stephen Hull

Careful comparative studies can provide educators with rich insights and understanding of educational practices in other contexts, whether these are located internationally, nationally, locally or within the same school. When conducted rigorously, they can help confirm, or challenge powerfully, the appropriateness of our own particular educational provision and practices.

In order to gain optimal benefit from such studies, it is important that we try to come fresh to an unfamiliar situation. As Gubrium and Holstein explain, such analysis enables us not only to understand 'how teachers and students give meaning to their lived worlds in light of the social and cultural forms they reflect and help produce', it also helps us understand the 'ambiguous process by which education initiates us into *our* culture'.<sup>91</sup>

### Learning to recognise complexity

It would be naïve to assume that educational ideas and practices, however successful and attractive in one context, will necessarily thrive if simply transplanted elsewhere. For example, let's say a particular country has excellent results in mathematics, so you attempt to mirror its methods of teacher training, the number of mathematics lessons pupils have and how much homework pupils are given. You assume

that controllable variables, if replicated, will result in improved mathematics in another context. However, this information is deeply limited in value and policies are not transplantable without an in-depth understanding of other associated factors. What about the value placed on mathematics in society; whether the students do additional practice; the ethos of lessons; teacher motivation; and the dynamics of student–teacher relationships?

We need to understand from an insider's perspective how practices have developed within their unique context over time. Their success is critically dependent on the culturally nuanced understandings and assumptions of those directly involved. We must be determined to understand – as thoroughly as possible – the detailed differences and similarities between contexts in order to accurately determine the potential for successful exchange.

Rigorous, comparative studies in education involve accessing and reflecting on the dynamic multiple realities of other cultures and of unique individuals operating in those cultures. Only through first understanding them can we begin to consider the implications and possibilities for our own practices. A variety of theories and methods are now available to the teacher as individual researcher or as a member of a research learning community wishing to undertake comparative studies. They are informed by their particular *ontology* (what there is to be found out) and their *epistemology* (how it can be found out).

Introductory texts often contrast positivist and interpretive approaches: in the former, empirical truths are sought by identifying causes and effects; in the latter, the researcher adopts an open, exploratory orientation in order to understand the beliefs, intentions and circumstances behind behaviour in a given situation. Fundamentally, interpretivism recognises the continuous construction, reimagining and appropriation of social norms by individuals and institutions. In education, interpretivist research can engage practitioners in critical discourse about practice and provision and shine new light on complex and ambiguous phenomena.

So, if subjective, emergent realities exist across cultures, what kind of observations do we need to make, if we are to understand them? Because other teachers' and students' realities differ from our own, we can best make judgements by discovering the underlying patterns and principles through the careful, in-depth analysis of the host cultures that empathic, interpretive dialogue facilitates. Constructing in advance a set list of questions relative to your own policy context with which to interrogate another educational context would not necessarily produce useful findings. This approach is problematic because it imposes a way of seeing things without considering whether it is appropriate for what you are looking at. Such pitfalls can easily distort what we see and hear and consequently prevent us from experiencing and therefore appreciating how insiders perceive and experience things.

91. Gubrium, J and Holstein, J (2000) *Analyzing interpretive practice*, in Denzin, N and Lincoln, Y (eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2nd edition. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications Ltd.





Fortunately, the researcher now has a variety of interpretivist approaches that can be used to powerful effect in comparative study visits. One such approach is appreciative inquiry, which, in marked contrast to problem-based approaches, focuses on the positive energy present in the education system, the principles and drivers underpinning what is working positively, how these can be built upon and, where appropriate, nurtured selectively in other areas. This is not to deny that human systems have problems or that these problems have to be acknowledged and sometimes addressed as a matter of urgency. Put simply, appreciative inquiry focuses on the positive successes already achieved with a view to building on these with an energising virtuous spiral. Problem-based analyses seek to leave less of what is unwanted, but importantly, the very focus on problems frequently mires in a language and spiral of negativity.

It follows that we should visit and act as genuinely appreciative inquirers – as learners, not tellers or judges. Bear in mind Bob Dylan’s warning: ‘don’t criticize what you don’t understand!’<sup>92</sup> Rather, our primary aim should be to seek to

understand why, what and how our hosts do what they do – in the words of Novalis ‘to make the strange familiar and the familiar strange’. We will learn most by appreciating and importantly, making sure that we are seen to be appreciative of the opportunity and of our hosts’ assistance in helping us to see things as they see them. As the pioneers of appreciative inquiry explain, ‘we are more effective the longer we can retain the spirit of inquiry of the everlasting beginner’.<sup>93</sup> This will require us to become versed in the essential foundation of appreciative inquiry – the asking of genuinely unconditional positive questions of a non-invasive and non-judgemental kind that invite, encourage and sustain positive and energising relationships based on openness, mutual respect, trust, candour and collaboration. By encouraging them to tell us about the positive – their underpinning philosophies, their aspirations, their successes and their future plans – we are more likely to elicit more numerous and richer accounts, upon the basis of which we can subsequently reflect, distil collaboratively the essences of successful practices and ‘seed’ these, where appropriate, in our own educational contexts.

### Unlocking the potential

Through this critical, reflective process, teachers can experience the transformative, reimagine accepted norms, and truly innovate. Educators themselves are empowered and responsible for democratic processes of intellectual reasoning in their local, national and international contexts of educational content and policies. As Kincheloe argues, ‘only by engaging in complex, critical research will teachers rediscover their professional status, empower their practice in the classroom and improve the quality of education for their pupils’.<sup>94</sup>

92. Dylan, B (1965) The Times They Are a-Changin’ (Lyric) Columbia Studios, New York.

93. Cooperrider, DL and Whitney, D (2005) *A Positive Revolution in Change: Appreciative Inquiry*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

94. Kincheloe, JL (2012, classic edition) *Teachers as Researchers: Qualitative Inquiry as a Path to Empowerment*. Abingdon: Routledge.

# Inclusive pedagogies

## Access and engagement: core skills for all

Susan Douglas

The two statements ‘all children have an entitlement to education’ and ‘all children have the capacity to make progress’ are easy ones to make and to secure agreement on.

But whilst these fundamental beliefs are common, the building blocks that create our educational landscapes – policies, infrastructure, teaching practices, societal values and resources often mean that fully achieving such aspirations can be at best challenging and in the worst cases, almost impossible.

In 2015, the World Education Forum adopted the Incheon Declaration committing to:

*‘A single, renewed education agenda that is holistic, ambitious and aspirational, leaving no one behind’. The declaration continues ‘Inclusion and equity in and through education is the cornerstone of a transformative education agenda, and we therefore commit to addressing all forms of exclusion and marginalisation, disparities and inequalities in access, participation and learning outcomes. No education target should be considered met unless met by all.’*

The British Council believes that the inclusion of children and young people into the regular education systems of their respective countries is an entitlement and a fundamental human right regardless of their gender, ethnicity, ability, socioeconomic background, health or medical condition.

If the inclusion of all children and young people is to be successful and sustainable then it must be predicated on an approach that is achievable, empowering, and based upon a thorough and sensitive understanding of the current context of the particular school and education system. The commitment to developing inclusive practice therefore requires a multi-tiered response that addresses policy, practice and culture at all levels within the education system.

### Access and engagement

The basic starting principles to consider in developing more inclusive education are those of access and engagement.

**Access** is related to pupils being able to freely attend school regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, ability or health needs. Access therefore focuses mainly on policies and structures.

**Engagement** is about ensuring that what pupils experience when they do access their school is relevant, meaningful, empowering and beneficial. Engagement is therefore focused on practice and pedagogy.

Without access, an engaging curriculum is of no relevance. Without engagement, access is simply about being there rather than about learning and achieving. These two things cannot be achieved without a culture that supports and expects high standards for all.

Of course, in order to secure changes in policy, practice and culture, the people that work within the system need to be both empowered and enabled to make those changes.

**Empowerment** is about giving practitioners not only the permission but also the encouragement and incentives to change, as people are far more likely to put in the time and effort if they feel there is an agreed direction of travel to follow and that they have the authority to act.

**Enablement** is about supporting our practitioners to develop the skills and knowledge they need to teach children with a wide range of needs and from a wide diversity of backgrounds effectively.

Successful inclusive practice will only be secured by change at all levels within the system. While there have been significant gains in expanding access to education over the last 15 years, there is still a long way to go. However, schools and teachers can still positively effect change for students by altering and improving their experiences, the expectations that surround them, and by creating supportive and enabling environments. Simply put, teachers can improve engagement.

The rest of this paper therefore concentrates on how a consideration of theoretical models can empower a practitioner to look at issues from a fresh perspective, allowing the development of new ways of thinking and finding new solutions to some old challenges.



### Fresh perspectives

There is a fundamental difference between equality – where everyone is treated the same, and equitability – where everyone is treated according to their own needs. Inclusion is not about treating everyone the same, it is about demonstrating the skills and awareness as a teacher of how to identify and respond to the diverse needs of any group of pupils.

To help teachers to acquire and hone these skills, consideration of the following three theoretical models is useful.

#### 1. Social relations and gender equality

Inclusion in society and education is affected by many factors, both externally from the environment and internally from our attitudes and beliefs. Some of these factors are explicit and easily seen whilst some may be hidden or unrecognised.

The social relations framework originated with academics led by Naila Kabeer at the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex and explores how, in any organisation or society, exclusion and poverty arise out of unequal social relations, i.e. an unequal distribution of power, resources and opportunities among certain groups, based on gender or other characteristics such as class, disability, caste or ethnicity. The research shows that it is the people who make the rules and distribute the rewards who are

the decision makers and who ultimately hold the resources and the power.<sup>95</sup>

Social relations theory is interested in looking at five aspects of institutions.

- Rules – who makes them? They usually prescribe how things get done – what is done, how it is done, who will do it and who will benefit.
- Activities – what is done and by whom? For example, certain tasks often get assigned to certain social groups such as women caring for the young, sick and elderly. The rewards for this type of work are often much smaller than for other types of work.
- Resources – what is used and what is produced? Including human resources such as labour or education, physical material like food, assets and capital, or intangible resources, for instance goodwill, information or networks.
- People – who is in and who is out? This refers to the question of who is allowed in and who is excluded from institutions as well as who is allowed into the higher offices and positions.
- Power – who decides and whose interests are served? Who loses power if social relations change? Who gains it?

These social relations are not fixed, however, and can change through time and with commitment from the people and institutions in a society.

#### 2. Unconscious bias

We all tend to have unconscious biases which we have developed over time about certain groups of people – usually those that are different from us. Unconscious bias is defined as ‘an inflexible positive or negative prejudgement about the nature, character and abilities of an individual, based on a generalised idea about the group to which the person belongs.’<sup>96</sup>

Left unchallenged, these unconscious biases, which are influenced by background, cultural environment and personal experience can have a significant impact on our decisions, actions and behaviours without us realising. Importantly, in an educational setting, this can mean a practitioner having significantly lower expectations of one or more groups of pupils within their context.

95. Kabeer, N (1994) *Reversed realities*. London: Verso.

96. Thiederman, S (2003) *Making diversity work*. Chicago: Dearborn.





### 3. Social model of disability

What is posing the problem – the wheelchair or the stairs?



© iStockPhoto – Boguslaw Mazur

The social model of disability moves away from a deficit-focused approach to disability where the differences of the individual are seen as a personal inadequacy or abnormality. This medical model of thinking requires that the individual is 'mended' or 'cured' and then supported to enable them to fit in. Social models of disability turn the medical model around. It is the school or the organisation that carries the responsibility to change, not the individual. Barriers to inclusion are social not personal. If steps are an issue for a physically disabled child then a ramp must be provided, if a child's intellectual abilities are too high or too low for the current curriculum offer, then the curriculum must be developed or extended.

All three of these theoretical models are useful to explore in terms of inclusion and can challenge our thinking. Who makes the policies and promotes best practice in relation to inclusion? Are we as a school and as practitioners actively challenging our unconscious biases and prejudices? To what extent are we currently adopting social or medical models of disability in our policies and practices?

#### Fresh approaches

All learners flourish in well-managed classrooms. When teachers discuss and communicate basic rules and understandings with their learners, classrooms become places to learn pro-social behaviour. Teachers have the opportunity to model and demonstrate pro-social behaviour daily in how they speak and act. This is important with regard to the inclusion of all learners. Learning to behave in a pro-social and inclusive way is of benefit to the learners, their peers, the school community and the wider society as a whole.

In creating an inclusive classroom, teachers will need to consider not only how they teach and what they teach but also how inclusive values such as respect, co-operation, collaboration, helpfulness and empathy demonstrably underpin the culture, ethos and relationships within the classroom. This need not be complicated but must be explicit and is often seen in class-generated rules or contracts for behaviour.

Equally there are many simple but effective techniques that can support a more inclusive pedagogy. Using a variety of strategies for choosing which child should answer a question, such as pose, pause, pounce, bounce (PPPB), hot seating, or random draws would be a good example, as would be learning more about other methods of differentiating effectively.

As we develop our self-awareness and reflect on our practice, our techniques and pedagogies will undoubtedly become more sophisticated. Successful inclusion, without doubt, relies on a continual process of reflection, adjustment and planning but maybe, above all else, it relies on our educators having an unwavering commitment to and belief in the Incheon ambition that 'No education target should be considered met unless met by all.' There is no more important an ambition – education is essential for peace, tolerance, human fulfilment and sustainable development. It is the key to achieving full employment and poverty eradication and we cannot afford therefore to have any child left behind.



# Case study

## Becoming a more inclusive school

by Reem Al-Hout, The American Academy of Beirut, Beirut, Lebanon

The American Academy of Beirut (AAB) is a co-educational day school for students from Nursery to Grade 12 attracting pupils and teachers both locally and internationally.

### Why we wanted to improve core skills

The school believes that all young people should have access to high-quality, inclusive education regardless of their gender, ethnicity, ability, background, health or medical condition. It is now described as one of the most inclusive schools in a country which is still in the early stages of developing its inclusion policy and practices. AAB has been closely involved with British Council programmes since 2008 and recently participated in a course on inclusive pedagogies.

### What we did

Building on our learning from the British Council's Inclusive Pedagogies course, we decided that an important element of improving our inclusive practice would be to develop a strategy for working with the broader school community and specifically with our pupils' families. We decided to do this in two ways: firstly, through providing outreach support from our therapists, and secondly by finding ways to inspire our parents to have high aspirations for their children whatever challenges they may face.

Faculty members in our AAB Learning Center held group therapy sessions for parents which proved to be very successful. They gave parents the opportunity to meet other parents who were facing similar challenges

and provided a safe space in which to share some of those challenges and discuss possible solutions. The sessions also allowed parents to access advice and support from our staff and an educational psychologist.

We also invited parents to a presentation by a young lady who was paralysed in a car accident when she was 14 but who had gone on to gain a degree in Business Studies and establish a successful career. By sharing her experiences, she inspired parents and teachers, and provided a fascinating example of how a person can overcome barriers and meet challenges. We felt that it was particularly important to promote high aspirations for pupils with special educational needs because in Lebanon society sometimes assumes that these pupils are always limited and constrained by their disability.

### What we have achieved so far

The group therapy sessions equipped parents with a better understanding of their children's needs and some skills to help solve some of the challenges they face. Parents were introduced to each other to extend their support networks. One positive example of the impact of these discussions was that some parents made adaptations to their home environments to provide more positive stimuli for their children. Many reported

having a better understanding of the social model of inclusion applied at school and were therefore reinforcing this at home.

During school celebrations and special events, it is now an expectation that our pupils with special needs are integrated into the performances – we have wheelchair dancers, for example. This takes a great deal of preparation and planning but is breathtaking to watch and contributes to our school community accepting differences, appreciating abilities and celebrating inclusion throughout the whole school.

### What we plan to do in the future

We aim to spread our principles of integration, appreciation and acceptance of children with special needs and disabilities outside the school, to extended communities. We plan to invite further guest speakers to share their special educational needs and disability (SEND) experiences and success stories, and our experts will give presentations providing further advice to parents and teachers.

We want to involve the community in helping to educate our SEND pupils, and to expose them to vocational opportunities and further community-wide inclusion. We aim to train staff to enhance their skills in differentiation so that they can meet a range of needs in the classroom.

# Curriculum mapping

## Bridging tradition and innovation in curriculum design

Artur Taevere

From Australia to Uganda, school systems around the world have revised curriculum requirements to ensure they are better preparing students for a more complex world.

This means that in addition to ensuring that students have a sound knowledge base, core skills like critical thinking and student leadership are taught to enable students to fulfil their potential, better meet the needs of the labour market and ensure they can contribute to society both locally and globally.

In some countries, relatively minor changes have been made to curriculum requirements. Elsewhere, curriculum standards, as well as teaching materials and the professional development of teachers, have been comprehensively adapted. How far-reaching should the changes be? This depends on a number of factors: firstly, which core skills we choose to prioritise; secondly, the current practice of teaching these high-priority core skills; and thirdly, the capacity of the school system to implement the changes.

### Option one: minor changes to the official curriculum, textbooks and exams

For example, collaboration and communication can be taught without

significantly altering curriculum requirements or textbooks. To implement this effectively teachers need support on how to teach these skills well, such as how to promote more high-quality dialogue and greater discussion among peers. Collaborative learning, for example, can be a very effective teaching strategy. The Education Endowment Foundation defines collaborative learning as 'learning tasks or activities where students work together in a group small enough for everyone to participate in a collective task that has been clearly assigned'.<sup>97</sup> This strategy has been found to have consistently positive effects on learning outcomes – an effect size of 0.4, which means an additional five months of learning for students. However, the impact depends on how exactly it is implemented, it is therefore clear that teachers need high-quality professional development to use collaborative learning effectively.

Looking at another example, the Central Board of Secondary Education, overseeing the curriculum throughout India, has created a Life Skills framework. This curriculum framework supports the development of skills such as self-awareness, empathy, creative thinking, and coping with stress. One way of teaching Life Skills is by using Design for Change (DFC).<sup>98</sup> The DFC curriculum originated from the Riverside School in Ahmedabad and is now used in more than 4,000 schools across India. DFC involves

students designing their own community projects. Using a simple, four-step design process – feel, imagine, do, share – children and young people learn that they can drive change in their community. This is an effective way to support core skills without changing existing curriculum requirements or textbooks.

### Option two: more comprehensive changes to the curriculum, textbooks and exams

There are numerous examples of comprehensive curriculum reform around the world, where core skills have been prioritised. Supporting the development of problem solving in Singapore is one notable example.

When Singapore became independent in 1965, most people were illiterate and unskilled.<sup>99</sup> Over the next few decades, the government pursued a focused and comprehensive education reform agenda. The aspiration was to develop a world-class mathematics and science curriculum, which would enable the transformation of Singapore's economy. By 1995, students in Singapore were indeed among the top performers in the world in maths and science, according to the international TIMSS study. Problem solving has been one of the most important skills within the mathematics and science curricula in Singapore. Textbooks are designed to support problem solving in addition

97. Education Endowment Foundation (2016) *Collaborative learning | Toolkit Strand | Education Endowment Foundation*. Available online at: <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/collaborative-learning/>

98. Design for Change: [www.dfcworld.com/](http://www.dfcworld.com/)

99. OECD (2010) *Strong Performers and Successful Reformers in Education*. Available online at: <https://www.oecd.org/countries/singapore/46581101.pdf>



to other core skills, exams have been revised to assess this, and teachers are supported with effective professional development programmes.

The comprehensive integration of core skills requires a greater investment of time and resources. However, if done well, the results are significant. According to the international PISA tests of 15 year olds, very few students in Singapore are low performers in problem solving and 40 per cent are top performers.<sup>100</sup> Notably, students with a disadvantaged socioeconomic background in Singapore perform far better in mathematical problem solving than disadvantaged students internationally – the gap is roughly equivalent to two years of learning.<sup>101</sup>

So how do we decide whether to pursue a limited or a more comprehensive approach for integrating core skills?

### Step one, setting priorities

Although all core skills are important, it is necessary to prioritise. Without clear priorities which are understood and supported by political leaders, education leaders and the community, meaningful change is unlikely to happen. As Fenton Whelan writes, 'Prioritisation is the single most important factor determining the success of delivery'.<sup>102</sup> Without clear priorities, what should teachers and school administrators focus on? With a long list of requirements to be met, teachers and administrators are likely to feel overwhelmed, but with clear priorities firmly in place, there is a focus that motivates people to accomplish what needs to be done.

When thinking through which core skills are most important in any given context, it is worth considering both the needs of society and the needs of the labour market. In Punjab, Pakistan, it was felt that communication and collaboration should be the top priority. The premise for this decision was that if students could master this, then it would help address a number of important social and economic challenges that the country is currently facing. In Singapore, the priorities were largely determined by the need to transform the economy. In the 1970s and 1980s, the shift was to skill-intensive manufacturing; from the mid-1990s, Singapore made another leap to research and innovation-intensive industries and services.<sup>103</sup> Problem solving in mathematics and science has been of central importance in enabling this economic transformation. There is now a focus on creativity and innovation, in order to better meet the complex needs of today's labour market and society whilst ensuring that the solid basis of problem solving in mathematics and science isn't lost.

### Step two, reviewing current practice

Having decided which core skills are most important, the next step is to review how these high-priority skills are currently taught. To what extent are these skills already included in curriculum requirements? Are the skills explicitly included in textbooks for various subjects? Do teachers have the time and skills to teach them? Are the core skills assessed in exams? Questions like this can help to identify the strengths and weaknesses of current practice.

One important distinction to make is between what is stated in the curriculum and what happens in classrooms across the country. It may be the case that whilst some things are stated on paper in curriculum requirements, there is little evidence that they get taught in classrooms. For example, mathematical problem solving is included in the curriculum requirements in many countries, but evidence from PISA test results suggests that few students are able to solve moderately complex problems using their knowledge of mathematics. There may be various reasons: perhaps teachers feel the need to focus on the content that is assessed in exams; maybe they do not have the resources such as textbooks or other materials to support the teaching and learning of core skills; maybe teachers have not had access to professional development focused on how to teach these skills. All of these components are necessary. Teachers need to have the motivation but also the tools – textbooks and other learning resources – and the skills – through training programmes – to teach core skills.

### Step three, assessing and building capacity to implement change

Having set the priorities concerning which core skills to focus on and considered current practice around how well they are already taught, it is important to reflect on the capacity to implement change. Even if we want to see significant changes in learning outcomes, this does not mean that the school system has the capacity to change. What does this depend on?





Some of the key aspects of capacity are the following:

- Teaching materials – do we have the capacity to revise textbooks and other teaching materials so that they are designed to support the teaching of core skills?
- Coaching and support – do we have the capacity to coach and support teachers, as they learn how to teach core skills?
- Accountability – do we have the capacity to hold teachers to account in relation to their teaching of core skills, for example by revising exams or using external observers and reviewers?

We can zoom into the second aspect – coaching and support – to explain why building capacity is crucial. Researchers now have a fairly good understanding of what kind of professional development is most effective for teachers. It needs to be sustained over time – meaning that one- or two-day standalone training initiatives have limited impact – teachers need to actively try new practices and reflect on their effectiveness.<sup>104, 105</sup> However, in some systems few teachers have access to

effective professional learning opportunities. This is probably one of the main reasons why in many countries, an increase in funding for education has not automatically translated into better learning outcomes. Giving teachers the tools and skills to improve their teaching, and holding them accountable is difficult, but necessary if we want to improve learning outcomes.

Building capacity for core skills can be especially challenging if the true priorities of the school system are elsewhere. Imagine a learning environment where basic school facilities – including toilets and drinking water – are still lacking. In such a context, it would make sense to focus on the basics first. Another example might be where the true priority of the school system is to improve basic literacy and numeracy outcomes, if this is the case, then this needs to be the main focus. Perhaps, in this case, a light touch approach might work, it is possible to teach one or two core skills in a way that directly improves literacy and numeracy. For example, collaborative learning can support better literacy and numeracy, and citizenship topics can be easily integrated into the learning of literacy and numeracy.

The quality of the implementation of the curriculum is what matters the most.<sup>106</sup> Having established clear priorities and assessed the current practice, one can be visionary and optimistic about the changes that are needed. However, one also needs to be realistic and pay attention to the capacity of the school system to implement changes. Whether we want to pursue a limited or a more comprehensive integration of core skills, it is important to build the capacity of the school system to actually implement change.

100. OECD (2014) *PISA 2012 Results: What Students Know and Can Do (Volume I, Revised edition, February 2014): Student Performance in Mathematics, Reading and Science*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris. Available online at: [www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/pisa-2012-results-what-students-know-and-can-do-volume-i-revised-edition-february-2014\\_9789264208780-en](http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/pisa-2012-results-what-students-know-and-can-do-volume-i-revised-edition-february-2014_9789264208780-en)

101. OECD (2013) *PISA 2012 Results: Excellence through Equity (Volume II): Giving Every Student the Chance to Succeed*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris. Available online at: [www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/pisa-2012-results-excellence-through-equity-volume-ii\\_9789264201132-en](http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/pisa-2012-results-excellence-through-equity-volume-ii_9789264201132-en)

102. Whelan, F (2014) *The Learning Challenge*. Available online at: [www.acasus.com/report/the-learning-challenge/](http://www.acasus.com/report/the-learning-challenge/)

103. OECD (2010) *Strong Performers and Successful Reformers in Education*. Available online at: <https://www.oecd.org/countries/singapore/46581101.pdf>

104. CUREE (2012) *Understanding What Enables High Quality Professional Learning*. Available online at: [www.curee.co.uk/publication/understanding-what-enables-high-quality-professional-learning](http://www.curee.co.uk/publication/understanding-what-enables-high-quality-professional-learning)

105. Coe, R (2013) *Improving Education: A triumph of hope over experience*. Available online at: [www.cem.org/attachments/publications/ImprovingEducation2013.pdf](http://www.cem.org/attachments/publications/ImprovingEducation2013.pdf)

106. OECD (2015) *Improving Schools in Scotland: An OECD Perspective*. Available online at: [www.oecd.org/edu/Improving-Schools-in-Scotland-An-OECD-Perspective.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/edu/Improving-Schools-in-Scotland-An-OECD-Perspective.pdf)



# Case study

## Supporting curriculum reform in Kenya

by Louisa Kadzo, British Council, Nairobi, Kenya

The government of Kenya is currently reviewing the curriculum with the aim of moving from a knowledge-based curriculum to one that is based on skills, competency and values. The Kenya Institute for Curriculum Development (KICD) is leading on this work, with the British Council playing an advisory role.

### Why we wanted to improve core skills

We wanted to embed core skills into the new Kenyan curriculum to:

- enable Kenya to achieve the goals and aspirations outlined in Vision 2030
- equip pupils with competencies and skills that will enable them to contribute to the local, national and international labour markets
- help to address issues such as radicalisation, terrorism, drugs and substance abuse
- support a shift in teaching and learning that supports both knowledge and skill creation.

### What we did

Our focus on core skills began in August 2015, when a British Council team introduced the newly launched Connecting Classrooms programme to the Ministry of Education. The Ministry prioritised three core skills for Kenya: critical thinking and problem solving, creativity and imagination and citizenship, with digital literacy offered alongside each.

In February 2016, the British Council and the Curriculum Reform Technical Committee met to discuss Kenya's education roadmap and to determine how to embed core skills, competencies and values into the curriculum.

This was then followed by a meeting where the aim was to:

- reflect on the entire curriculum reform process, from conceptualisation to implementation

- develop a draft vision for the pillars and principles which would underpin the curriculum reforms
- develop templates for the curriculum framework for basic education, the different levels of education and the learning areas and subjects.

The outcome of this was a draft curriculum framework, which was shared with the Education Cabinet Secretary in April. This framework identified seven core competencies that will form the backbone of Kenya's new curriculum, five of which are core skills – critical thinking and problem solving, creativity and imagination, citizenship, digital literacy, and communication and collaboration.

We went on to hold further meetings with the Curriculum Reform Technical Committee and the British Council to:

- edit and align the framework to reflect the skills and competencies we wish our students to achieve
- discuss embedding core skills and competencies across subject areas
- look at competency-based assessment structures.

### What we have achieved so far

We have made important progress on the first major reform of the Kenyan curriculum for 34 years.

With the support of the British Council, we have designed a competency-based curriculum where core skills are embedded across all subjects and disciplines and reinforced through assessment.

Our curriculum developers have grown in knowledge, skills and confidence.

*'The meetings have enabled us at the KICD to have an open mind as we think of what kind of values, knowledge, attitudes and attributes we need to embed in the curriculum as we think of the future of our learners.'* Deputy Director, Basic Education KICD.

We have developed a valuable relationship with the British Council, which has built trust and understanding with the Kenyan Ministry of Education and other education bodies.

### What we plan to do in the future

We will develop a longer-term structured support plan for curriculum reform with the British Council, including support for curriculum design and teacher capacity development.

We will hold workshops to help Connecting Classrooms 3 trainers understand our vision for curriculum reform and the direction of the new curriculum. This will enable them to be aligned with the new curriculum as they facilitate core skills workshops with teachers.

Through the British Council, we hope to engage other private and international stakeholders to work with us towards a wider intervention which will support the whole reform process to a level which will build teacher capacity.



## Susan Douglas

Since leaving headship in 2006, Susan has worked as a Senior Adviser at the British Council providing sector expertise and advice to a wide number of educational programmes involving ministries, school leaders, teachers and young people in around 60 countries worldwide.

Since 2012, she has also held the role of Chief Executive Officer of the Eden Academy Trust in West London, a multi-academy trust comprising five schools providing education for children aged three to 19 with a range of complex needs.



## Dr Björn Haßler

Dr Björn Haßler is a Senior Researcher at the University of Cambridge, working on open education, teacher professional development and mobile technology. This includes the OER4Schools teacher development programme across a range of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa; the Open Educational Resources Guidance for Schools; the Open Resource Bank on Interactive Teaching (ORBIT) for

teacher professional development; and applications of low-power computing for education and development, including work funded by the Raspberry Pi Foundation. He regularly consults for FTSE100 companies, professional societies and non-governmental organisations, and has recently produced a short film about 21st century learning in Zambia – see <http://bjohas.de>



## Artur Taevere

Artur Taevere is the Co-Founder and CEO of Beyond. Artur works with schools to foster students' ability to think critically and solve problems collaboratively, in England and internationally. This work usually involves two main strands: supporting teachers with practical professional learning programmes, and creating high-quality learning resources. Artur is a Governor of School 21, an innovative school

in London set up to prepare all its pupils for success in the 21st century. Before starting Beyond, Artur served on the leadership team of Teach For All, the global network to improve educational opportunity. He often wonders: 'what if all children fulfilled their potential and became positive contributors to the world?'



## Lynne Parmenter

Lynne Parmenter began her career teaching in schools, and then moved to faculty posts at Fukushima University and Waseda University in Japan, followed by Manchester Metropolitan University in the UK, and then Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan. She has a PhD in Education from the University of Durham (UK),

and over the past 18 years has taught, supervised graduate students and published on issues related to language education, intercultural education, citizenship education, teacher education, and education policy.



## Vicky Gough

Vicky Gough is Modern Foreign Languages Lead and Schools Adviser at the British Council in London. She also leads on the creation of resources for British Council Schools Online and has led on the development of many highly regarded resources with partners such as the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Premier League and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

The British Council brings an intercultural dimension to foreign language learning in the UK by running initiatives such as the language assistants' programme and through encouraging schools to make partnerships with schools overseas.

## Contributors



### Clive Belgeonne

Clive Belgeonne is an Education Adviser at the Development Education Centre South Yorkshire and one of the National Leaders of the Global Learning Programme (England). He is also Post-Graduate Citizenship Leader (teacher training) at Sheffield Hallam University. Clive was previously Cross-Curricular Co-ordinator

at a comprehensive (secondary) school in Oldham and also worked for the Development Education Project in Manchester. He has an Advanced Diploma as a Global Trainer and is an accredited Philosophy for Children trainer. He has facilitated training with educators in the UK, Europe and the Middle East.



### Helen Griffin

Former primary teacher, Helen Griffin (PGCE, MA Education) is an Education Adviser at the Development Education Centre South Yorkshire. She is an accredited trainer for Philosophy for Children and a validated trainer for Connecting

Classrooms and the Global Teachers Award. She has been training teachers and other education professionals for the last 20 years in both open courses and whole-school training.



### Rob Unwin

Former teacher Rob Unwin is a co-author of the British Council's current global citizenship materials. He currently works as an Education Adviser and International Trainer for the Development Education Centre South Yorkshire. He is a validated trainer for Connecting

Classrooms, Philosophy for Children and the Global Teachers Award and has delivered training across the world. He is also seconded, part-time, to the National Leaders with the Global Learning Programme (England). He has also worked as a mediator and founded REMEDI.



### Stephen Hull

Stephen is based at the British Council in London, where he is Senior Project Manager of the Connecting Classrooms programme in the UK. Before London he spent two years in Latin America, one at the British Council in Bogotá and one teaching at a vocational college in Santiago, Chile.

Stephen is also a trustee of Brent Specialist Academy Trust, a growing group of schools in London catering for children with special educational needs. He read languages at the University of Manchester, and recently completed a Postgraduate Diploma in Professional Studies in Education.



### Pat Cochrane

Pat Cochrane is the founding CEO of CapeUK, an independent research and development agency which specialises in supporting creativity and learning. Pat is involved in both practice and policy at regional, national and international level. She specialises in professional development in relation to pedagogy, reflective practice and leadership for creativity. Pat is a member of the

government's cultural education advisory group and was Creativity Advisor to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) between 2008 and 2010. Pat is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, Chair of the Brigshaw Trust and a Trustee of Yorkshire Artspace.





### Sara Bubb

Former primary teacher and local authority adviser, Dr Sara Bubb (BA, PGCE, MA, PhD) is an education consultant and senior lecturer at the University College London Institute of Education. She is an accredited UK leadership consultant and has worked with the British Council on the Connecting

Classrooms programme in the UK and around the world. Author of 15 books and hundreds of papers and articles, she has been training teachers, school leaders, policy makers and other education professionals for the last 20 years in the UK and internationally.



### Dr Tim Rudd

Dr Tim Rudd is founder of Livelab, a research and development organisation focusing on education and educational technology. Tim works on various educational research and development programmes, including the Whole School ICT Development project in Brunei, and Unbox 21, an exploration of the potential of computer games to support skills development. Other research interests include alternative

educational systems, critical perspectives on educational technology, radical digital literacy and the sociology of education. Tim also works at the Education Research Centre, University of Brighton. Previously he was a Senior Researcher at Futurelab, an educational technology charity, and Head of Evidence and Research at the British Educational and Communications Technology Agency (Becta).



### Nicholas Garrick

Nicholas Garrick is founder and Director of Lighting up Learning, an education, curriculum and change consultancy. Focusing his energies on empowering teachers, his work involves coaching executive principals, training master coaches, leading curriculum projects in the UK and consulting to ministries

of education overseas, particularly across South America and South-East Asia. He has taught for 15 years, and is a part-time primary school Assistant Principal in the UK as well as currently studying for an Educational Doctorate.



### Barrie Joy

Barrie Joy was formerly Director of Mentoring – Coaching and Senior Consultant in Leadership at the University of London Institute of Education. He has also held senior academic posts at the Universities of Manchester, Queensland, Munich and London.

Drawing on rigorous comparative educational studies, Barrie now works as an independent

international consultant with senior leaders, staff and governors in a variety of educational contexts. He has a special interest in helping leaders of learning develop in situ the key competencies and behaviours that enable them to excel in their work.







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