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IN SEARCH OF PERFECT PEDAGOGY…

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INTRODUCTION

It is only in relatively recent times that we have accepted that teachers and their teaching vary. The ancient public schools set the tone and when state schooling began in 1870 it was generally accepted that any shortcomings in learning were the fault of the pupil. School reports to parents, dunces' caps, corrections and flogging were among the devices that put any blame on the pupil. But that some teachers enjoyed more success than others was always obvious, as was the fact that some leaners learned more. The search for effective pedagogy has fascinated for different reasons: scientific, professional, political and pragmatic.

This paper explores some of the complexity of, and influences upon, pedagogy in English schools. It examines some examples of pedagogic development, the apparent random development over time and the ways the teaching profession responds. The paper concludes with a call to greater professional influence and proposals for building and capitalising upon expertise.

STEERING A COURSE THROUGH LEARNING

Teachers, like the early explorers navigating the vast seas of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, are guided by different stars that appear at different times. Government changes curriculum expectations or inspection focuses upon a new dimension and our course changes. The move to the 'knowledge driven' curriculum promoted by Michael Gove (DFE. 2012)[1] has led to a dominance in pedagogic approach where the teacher 'delivers' content. While Nick Gibb as Schools' Minister, drove forward the agenda for the centralisation of initial teacher education and training around an ever-narrowing group of providers, there is a clarity of direction based upon a premise of centralisation producing consistency, and hence quality, rather than diversity.

The principle of basing the practices of schooling around what the best schools do sounds logical, as long as we are sure about how we measure the best schools and that the measurement of them is accurate. However, Ofsted has been the agency determining which are the best schools for a long time now and practices have not transferred effectively to those described as failing. The reality is that the

[1] DfE, (2012) *The National Curriculum*, HMSO

determination of the best is based to a large extent upon exam and test results that are norm-referenced and success is relative: it is not possible for all to succeed. Even in the one national school test which is criterion referenced, phonics at Year 1, there is a tail of schools that cannot achieve the baseline. Is it only the teaching that has impact?

PEDAGOGY OVER TIME

The development of pedagogic effectiveness has always been haphazard. Learning takes place in a wide range of contexts, often driven by the learners themselves. One of those contexts is schools which attempt to instil or inflict selected learning. Outside schools, learners avail themselves of a range of pedagogies depending upon what they wish to learn and who is available to teach them. Within schools, teachers have always tried to teach effectively; the more their pupils learn successfully, the less their pupils cause them difficulty directly or indirectly.

Yet learning is incredibly complex. Most adults have learnt to make music, however informally, but few can play formal instrumental pieces or read musical notation. Many of those who can do this are unable to speak a foreign language. Many who can speak languages and play instruments cannot cook or build a wall. Some adults cannot read and it is hard to believe that they do not regret it. Exploring the reasons why some become proficient and others fail and in turn how the teacher can have greater effect are at the heart of pedagogic development. Caplan (Caplan. B, 2018)[2] argues that the primary function of education is not to enhance students' skills but to certify their intelligence, conscientiousness and conformity—attributes that are valued by employers. He estimates that approximately 80% of individuals' return from education is the result of signalling, with the remainder due to the accumulation of human capital. If he is right, then the role and impact of the teacher are limited.

The move from the reliance on philosophical beliefs to the use of psychological theories about learning coincided with the establishment of a state schooling system. Our caricatures of Victorian classrooms abound with pedagogy based on the psychological theories and experiments of the time. The phenomenon of learning has always excited psychologists and considerable pedagogic practice in schools today emanates from the work on early classical conditioning established by Pavlov and the later instrumental conditioning theories of Skinner. Notions of reward and punishment underpin many aspects of classroom pedagogy, especially in terms of conformity in behaviour: the stickers, red and green cards, assertive discipline regimes. Piaget's work on child development influences the work of early years practitioners to some extent in practices derived, for instance, from the Montessori or Regio Emilia approaches, but recedes quickly as children meet primary school.

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[2] Caplan. B, (2018) *The Case Against Education: Why the Education System Is a Waste of Time and Money*, Princetown University Press.

The challenge for schools is always to transfer the understanding of learning in the individual to the process of enabling learning for large numbers of learners at one time in an organisation called a school. Helping an individual to learn to trim a hedge, write an essay, drive a car or pass an exam is different from trying to achieve the same thing with a crowd. Of course, only one of that short list is the traditional fare of a school which is concerned with enabling our young to grasp and use a curriculum of knowledge and understanding, usually with related skills. While schools also attempt to enable learning in terms of personal characteristics and attributes, very few 'craft skills' are found on our curriculum beyond some basic needlecraft, fabric, wood, plastic and metal work, performance, cooking and sport.

Until fifty years ago, pupils left school at the age of fifteen unless they were among the 20% who were going to sit exams. Many who left found themselves in unskilled, low wage employment but some were able to secure an apprenticeship. This meant working alongside a carpenter, cook, mechanic or engineer to learn 'on the job' and for a day a week attending college to take a course of study in the specific employment area leading to a qualification. The college course was often referred to as 'day release' where the practical work of gardening, brewing or roofing was underpinned with theoretic perspectives on a structured course. This balance of learning alongside a proficient exponent in real situations and supplementing this experience by learning from a proficient teacher in formal but abstract situations was generally well regarded and qualification from the City and Guilds Institute much valued.

Today we have pupils remaining at school until much later in their life, yet their experience of learning is largely desk bound. In the year 2017–2018, the number of pupils permanently excluded from secondary school was 7,894 and 438,265 fixed term exclusions took place. 35% of these exclusions in both categories arose from persistent disruptive behaviour. Could there be a link between these figures and the expectations upon these young adults in our schools? Permanent exclusions rise by a factor of three between Years 6 and 7 and are nine times higher than primary schools by Year 11. Timson (2019)[3]. Is it all to do with adolescence? Are we simply seeing the modern-day version of the Victorian inability to secure learning for all?

DO SCHOOLS MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Only in relatively recent times have the outcomes of schooling been seen to be significantly affected by what happens in the school itself rather than simply the consequence of the pupils who attend. Michael Rutter's '*Fifteen thousand hours*'

[3] Timpson Review of School Exclusion, DfE, (2019) HMSO

(Rutter 1979)[4] in 1979 illustrated what seemed to be the features which influenced comparative success in secondary schools and the Peter Mortimore's '*School Matters'* (1981)[5] did the same for primary schools. Prior to that, most studies and research had looked at teachers and their approaches as entities in themselves, separate from a school effect, the implication being that the best schools simply had more of the best pupils. Neville Bennett's small-scale study of primary schools, 'Teaching Styles and Pupil Progress' (1976)[6] caught the mood of the time by questioning whether 'progressive' methods were effective in improving outcomes.

After Rutter and Mortimore created excitement about a 'school effect', it took more than a dozen years for national policy makers to catch up with the significance of this research in drawing attention to what came to be seen as consideration of 'school effectiveness' and eventually as the need for 'school improvement'. Baker's reforms[7], (Education Anct 1988) particularly the introduction of national testing of pupils, exposed the differences in outcomes between schools and nuanced analysis of data over time has highlighted contributory factors. Since 1992, one of the effects of Ofsted inspection has been to articulate an informal national agenda of aspects of pedagogy that pass through their spotlight. Successive governments have attempted to mitigate against some of the factors affecting pupil performance through social, health, housing and economic policies and, frustrated with the teaching profession's capacity to improve itself, has intervened to secure effective teaching.

GOVERNMENT INFLUENCE

With the national strategies for literacy and numeracy came, for the first time, a government intervention on pedagogy. Again, the focus was on reducing the variables. By providing a 'standard' lesson format, producing materials and plans for teachers and ensuring consistent training for teachers in how to use them, a 'canned' pedagogy was available. While, in both of these examples, outcomes rose along with a concurrent rising GCSE trend there are still school failures and many who do not make it to the end of their school career. One explanation could be the norm referenced exam and test system that precludes success for a given proportion meaning that teachers' pedagogy is being measured against others

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[4] Rutter, M et al (1979) '*Fifteen Thousand Hours: Secondary Schools and their effects on children*', Harvard

[5] Mortimore, P et al. (1981) 'School Matters', London

[6] Bennett N, (1976) *Teaching Styles and Pupil Progress*, Open Books

[7] The Education Act 1988 crafted by Kenneth Baker, introduced for the first time a prescribed National Curriculum and freedom for schools to spend their own budgets as they wished.

rather than a criterion. Even where criterion referenced tests are used, the impact of consistent pedagogy varies. For example, each June in England, all Year 1 children are subject to a 'phonics screening check'. This is not a test where children pass or fail but there is an expected standard. For the past few years, the expected standard has been 32 out of 40 which might display a certain level of under-expectation, or is it realism? The government validates a limited number of programmes for the teaching of systematic, synthetic phonics for schools to use. Even with this control over pedagogy, over 15% of the pupils fall below the national expectation (DFE 2020)[8] and in some segments of the data, variation is very marked. Why do all pupils not do well? Variables: while the programme is specified, there remain variables concerned with the pupils, the teachers and the settings that break down into a multitude of sub-variables, each potentially interacting with each other. Effective pedagogy is far more complex than many, especially politicians, propose.

Yet politicians use reference to pedagogy in their assertions about schooling. As secretary of state, Gavin Williamson was certain. '*We know much more now about what works best: evidence-backed, traditional teacher-led lessons with children seated facing the expert at the front of the class are powerful tools for enabling a structured learning environment where everyone flourishes.*' (Williamson, G. 2021)[9] This is an example of political spin: it appeals to the 'traditional' with the images of 'powerful tools' implying that these could be supplemented with others in appropriate circumstances.

Schools and, to an extent, systems seem to have difficulty in finding balance. The tendency to polarity of argument dominates discourse for all but the most positive. Teachers who try to provide learning which is engaging and accessible can be described as 'progressive' and 'dumbing down' learning and those who provide a didactic approach are described as 'traditional' and 'Gradgrind'. Degrees of flexibility are portrayed as either a bell-bound or casual organisation of time, depending upon the which contrasting polarity is being used. Rigour and strict battle with discipline and firm. Scholarly battles with dull academia and practical with 'hands on' and each with each other. Streaming opposed mixed ability. As each polarity dismisses the other the risk of missed opportunity abounds.

The search for a rubric for pedagogy continues. Those that venture into new arenas following new stars are criticised by those who want to hold firm to what we have while they are, in turn, criticised for wishing to remain entrenched within a system with obvious shortcomings. What are the hallmarks of effective teachers? If we knew that and could determine their pedagogy, we could then ensure all teachers were franked and all would be well. All pupils would be successful.

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[8] Phonics results for 5 to 7 year olds, DfE, 2020

[9] Gavin Williamson speech to FED Summit, March 2021

THE PROBLEMS OF PEDAGOGY

One of the problems is that pedagogy is a multi-faceted domain with each facet influenced by so many factors. Teaching the discipline of art might be different from teaching the disciplines of science or history. Teaching pupils in the early years of schooling is recognisably different from teaching teenagers yet whether that difference is real or whether it is a difference that emerges because of assumptions about appropriate pedagogy is questionable. Might teenagers respond better to a pedagogy that puts decisions with them, allows for flexibility of time or starts from their interests?

The early psychologists who studied how an individual learns rarely studied how the individual learns when in a group of thirty. Yet that seems to be our preferred model with an acceptance that schools should push as many as they can, rather than everyone to success. Our system implies an acceptance of built-in failure. This is encouraged by government policy that incentivises competition, norm referenced examinations and tests, an inspection system that defines quality based on limited aspects of teaching.

While there is a constant focus upon the daily (or even hourly) life of the teacher's work, a sort of micro-pedagogy, the teacher can only work in a wider pedagogic context, a macro-pedagogy.

Consideration of macro pedagogy includes issues such as the way schools are organised: the length or terms, patterns of the year, week or day, the grouping of pupils by age cohorts, the timetable, allocation of teachers and others, classrooms and resources. All of these set preconditions are based often on our historic outlooks on learning. There still prevails a view that good leadership at school level and beyond will set firm conditions within which teachers can practise.

The Building Schools for the Future[10] programme, intended to rebuild or refurbish every secondary school in the country but scrapped by Michael Gove in 2010, set out to transform learning and make it fit for the twenty first century. Schools struggle to break out of tradition, however. Groups of thirty pupils prevail when the format of a 'standard' lesson could easily work for four times that number. The timetable still sees Year 7 pupils being taught by the teachers with an hour to spare at the end of departmental demands. Subject disciplines have to be split into one-hour tablets of learning to be swallowed on a regular, though often infrequent basis. Pupils engage in few long term, self-managed projects deciding for themselves on the mode of presentation of findings, solutions or ideas. Instead, the prevailing climate encourages teachers to offer stylised responses to satisfy examiners in a robotic approach to

[10] Building Schools for the Future involved 96 Local Authorities in the rebuild or refurbishment of secondary schools between 2005 and 2009.

learning. Ironically, as concern grows about the effect of robots on the labour market, we are encouraged to treat our young as robots. We built some new schools but is what goes on inside them an image of the future or a polish of the past?

In a similar vein. when open plan primary schools were built in the early 1970s to enable the growing practice of 'informal approaches' and team teaching, many teachers were quick to construct makeshift walls from furniture or other paraphernalia to recreate the feel of their previous classrooms.

As long as they provide the bare minimum of essentials of stylised pedagogy, few of our schools are told in inspection that they are not exploiting their physical and human resources effectively. Indeed, observation of teaching records 'lessons' and, if that's what the inspector wants to see, that's what happens.

Hattie (2012)[11] has developed the notion of 'effect size', determining through meta-analysis the positive or negative impact that a set of more than 250 influences have on learning outcomes. In effect, he is articulating the benefit to be gained from a particular strategy or practice balanced against the side effects. His studies found that the average effect size was 0.4, so he uses this as a 'hinge point'. Most influential is collective teacher efficacy, while high effect size is credited to influences such as self-reported grades, Piagetian programmes and micro-teaching and video review of lessons. The extreme negative influences relate mainly to pupil disposition to learning and 'technology in distant education' is below the hinge point (although perhaps this has changed as teachers responded to the pandemic with remote learning). Hattie also challenges some of the long-held assumptions such as the value of homework, the importance of uniform, reduced class size or intervention practices.

Perhaps more important than the list of 'effect size', is Hattie's claim that learning becomes visible when teachers are also learners (i.e. evaluators of their own teaching) helping pupils to become their own teachers (through metacognitive strategies, feedback and reciprocal teaching). Hattie's view is that pedagogy is not solely the teacher's domain and that pupils are influential in enabling success, not simply in doing as they are asked but in driving the learning process in partnership with their teachers.

THE PROFESSION'S ATTITUDES TO PEDAGOGY?

It is not long ago that teachers would describe their own teaching style in the way that a restaurateur or an architect might describe their approach. They would not describe their teaching as chic, bohemian, fusion or contemporary but tended to place themselves on a continuum between 'progressive' and 'traditional'. Terms

[11] Hattie, J. (2012) *Visible Learning for Teachers*, Routledge

used to elaborate would include 'chalk and talk', 'group work', 'strict', 'flexible', 'didactic', 'pupil centred', 'direct', 'integrated', 'formal' and 'informal'. The traditional end of the continuum was well recognised being the image of media from Dickens' 'Hard Times' through to 'Bash Street Kids' and countless films. The progressive end of the continuum was harder to define and always contained an element of suspicion based on a fear that it would fail our nation which had succeeded through a traditional approach where at least the right people rose to the top. Hence, to call oneself a 'traditional' teacher would require little explanation while the progressive would struggle to be understood.

Classroom teaching had moved on from the largely traditional methodology of the post war years influenced by two significant reports. first the Newsom Report on secondary schooling in 1963 which examined provision for 'Half Our Future'(1967), those pupils who were deemed of average and less than average ability. This recommended that 'teacher training should be reviewed to ensure that a substantial proportion of teachers in the secondary schools receive a training of the 'concurrent' type (in which the personal higher education of the student is combined with pedagogical studies)[12]. In 1967, the Plowden Report looked at primary schooling and encouraged the shift in practice that was underway suggesting that an 'approach might be to draw up a list of danger signs, which would indicate that something has gone wrong in a school: fragmented knowledge, no changes in the past decade, creative work very limited, much time spent on teaching, few questions from children, too many exercises, too many rules, frequent punishments, and concentration on tests' as 'an invitation to thought and argument and not simply to compliance.'[13]

By 1978 though, an HMI report 'The Primary Survey' showed that less than a quarter of teachers were using 'exploratory' methods and by far the greater majority favoured 'didactic' approaches, though the most effective teachers *'in about one fifth of the classes teachers employed an appropriate combination of didactic and exploratory methods, varying their approach according to the nature of the task in hand, and could not be said to incline to either approach.'*[14]

Not that these urgings to teachers to make their teaching more effective through a form of diversification of pedagogy made significant impact. Bennett's influential study of the effect of teaching styles upon pupil outcomes in 1976[15] had struggled to identify any teachers in their sample who could be described as using 'progressive' methods. Though seriously undermining the validity of the research, the images on

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[12] Half Our Future, *Newsom Report*, (1963) CACE, HMSO

[13] Children and Their Primary Schools, *Plowden Report*, (1967) para 503, HMSO, 1967

[14] Primary Education in England, (1978) Para .3.20 HMSO

[15] ibid, 6

a Panorama programme were sufficient to cement traditional approaches as being the better teaching model and played into the growing concerns of the time.

In 1980s, the ORACLE[16] study highlighted five teaching styles to be found in primary classrooms and these were related to the progress being made by pupils, using standardised tests. The most common style, the 'individual monitor' was deemed to be least effective. The search for individualised teaching had produced the least economic approach with the teacher being pursued by a conga of children and pupils spending longer in queues to see their teacher than actually working. The 'infrequent changers' were the most effective teachers, varying their approach between group, individual and whole class work. However, their approach was highly sophisticated and complex and those using it were dubbed 'super teachers'. Other approaches such as 'rotating changers' or 'class enquirers' were more formulaic and deemed to be at least more successful than the 'habitual changers' who, as the descriptor suggests, were less polished in their decision making in the classroom.

As often has happened, the profession responded, not by aiming for the most effective but by compromising on the most accessible approach. This regression to the mean and willingness to follow the least disruptive course of action has consistently limited teaching as a profession.

Since the introduction of inspection in 1992, reports on individual schools have had a significant influence on the pedagogy of teachers in the classrooms. Over time teachers have been encouraged to see the answer to the pedagogic challenge variously in 'planning', 'plenaries', 'assessment', 'marking', 'feedback', 'questioning', 'mastery', 'long term memory', 'instruction', 'quizzing' and more recently 'sticky knowledge'. These features have flowed through the system, along with others, 'on the wave'. Such is the pressure of the accountability system that, mentioned positively in an inspection report on an outstanding school, a practice will appear in schools just ahead of the inspection curve.

At the same time, rockpools remain with schools still paddling, wading or dipping their toes in the water of a waves long receded. Depending upon their age, teachers will remember De Bono's Hats (1980)[17] Reggio Emilia approaches (1997)[18]

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[16] Galton, M. (1980) *Inside the primary classroom*, Law Books

[17] Edward De Bono (1864–1944) promoted ideas on lateral thinking were used by business to improve management communication. The principle of his hats was that each participant in a discussion wore a different coloured hat to make specific positive contributions. This was translated into the school setting during the 1980s.

[18] Emanating from a small town in Italy following the work of Loris Malaguzzi who opened a pre-school in 1963 where early years practitioners have visited and brought back principles and practice exploring the 'Hundred languages of children.'

Gardner's learning styles (1993),[19] Bloom's taxonomy (1956)[20] Dweck's mind sets (2006),[21] metacognition (Flavell, J.H. 1979)[22] or Rosenshine's 1982[23]) principles of instruction which is the cresting the wave currently. All of these have some validity based in neuroscience and pedagogy but can become a trend used well or poorly.

For teachers, the task of interrogating available research and being discerning to know what practices to adopt or dismiss is a challenging one. The system is influenced by these trends depending upon where endorsement comes from, the credibility of the endorser or the attractiveness of published materials to support their use. On the one hand the expectations of school can over-programme the teachers while on the other hand they find themselves in a minefield of undifferentiated advice. Does a teacher making a potential adjustment to pedagogy solve an immediate problem, satisfy onlookers, go with the flow, or to seek further refined effectiveness? The sources of advice, recommendation and descriptions of developing practice are so abundant that, for the individual teacher, there is often a serendipitous approach to their own development. Yet the proportion that engage in higher level or extended study or in-depth, and informed debate, is slight.

The teacher today is expected to 'extend their professionalism' (Hoyle, 1975). They are expected to expand their knowledge by examining and evaluating theory and practice, collaborate with colleagues by developing, sharing and extending good practice, contribute to school policy-making and liaise with all manner of external agencies, including parents. All this, while providing an effective series of teaching sessions on a daily basis.

That's the theory. The reality for many teachers is an intensive and concentrated round of teaching sessions addressing a prescribed curriculum and responding to ever more centralised government demands. On top of this, the bureaucratic

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[19] Howard Gardner's (1993) book *Frames of Mind*, Basic Books advanced a theory of multiple intelligences which gathered pace in English classrooms from the mid-1990s.

[20] Benjamin Bloom et als produced a '*Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The classification of educational goals.* David McKay Company (1956) which offered a classification of questions to denote complexity of cognitive challenge. His taxonomy appears in charts used in classrooms today, though not so often in the discourse between teachers and taught.

[21] Carol Dweck's work on 'fixed and growth mindsets' became influential in English classrooms from 2010 onwards. Dweck, C. S. (2006) *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success.* Random House.

[22] Flavell, J. H.. *Metacognition and Cognitive Monitoring: A New Area in Cognitive Developmental Inquiry.* Harvard. 1979

[23] Barak Rosenshine's principles, first expounded in *Teaching Functions in Instructional Programs*, 1982, have been promoted by the wave of advice following the emphasis upon knowledge accumulation and retention since 2010.

demands of an increasingly managerial and accountable outlook lead to many teachers being treated, or seeing themselves, as 'operatives' working to head teachers who themselves are treated as 'branch managers'.

Currently, it is important for teachers to remember to quote Ebbinghaus' forgetting curve (2018). His series of limited and incomplete experiments on memory is used to validate quizzing within lessons as a form of low stakes test. Apparently, this process moves learned content into the 'long term memory', employing Baddeley's 'maintenance rehearsal' principles through 'spaced repetition'. In order to make them more memorable, Rosenshine reduced his 'Principles of Instruction' to ten from seventeen just at the moment when our 'knowledge rich' curriculum was coming to the fore.

So many schools now expect model lessons using Rosenshine's principles from 1938 and emphasising the forgetting curve from 1885. In subject disciplines such as history, pupils in Year 7 then wait a further fourteen days and 49 lessons for their next hour of input. Presumably, this is because schools are using and distorting the findings of Mischel's (1989)[24] famous marshmallow experiment on delayed gratification: if they really enjoy learning history make them wait.

This need to be 'ahead of the curve' and on message is part of the growth mindset to which the profession knows it should aspire. Dweck's emphasis on the importance of praising effort rather than intelligence to help learners through Nottingham's 'learning pit' (2007)[25] was prevalent just a few years ago and supported by Quigley's (2018)[26] 'three pillars' of vocabulary teaching' which helped teachers to move away from mentioning Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives first developed in 1955.

The teaching profession has a tendency to name drop research rather than fully enact it, partly because the over managerial behaviours of the last thirty years have focused upon the occurrence of practice rather than the impact of it.

Charles Handy (1995)[27], a 'management guru' of the recent past. is referenced to promote the concept of the sigmoid curve and the three key phases of developing practice: the learning, growth and decline phases. Leaders are urged to 're-invent' development before the 'decline' phase begins in order to 'refresh' the development and maintain momentum. With teaching it is usually the case that re-invention occurs before the learning phase has passed and practice has become established. For teachers, being cajoled into believing they are part of a profession engaged in

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[24] Mischel et als (1989). Delay of gratification in children. *Science*, 244

[25] James Nottingham created the 'Learning Pit' (2007) as a lesson planning tool.

[26] Quigley, A. (2018) Closing the Vocabulary Gap, Routledge

[27] Handy, C. (1995) *The Age of Paradox*, Harvard.

the constant search for Gladwell's Tipping Point (2002)[28] means seeking marginal gains by relying on Johnson's 'chunking' (1967)[29] (promoted by Syedd (2011)[30] during their lessons to keep leadership satisfied when they next observe a lesson.

One of the most promising developments in recent times has been the development of 'dialogic teaching'. Developed thoroughly by Robin Alexander (2019) and colleagues over nearly twenty years, dialogic teaching harnesses the power of talk to engage interest, stimulate thinking, advance understanding, expand ideas, and build and evaluate arguments, empowering students for lifelong learning and democratic engagement. It also helps teachers: by encouraging students to share their thinking it enables teachers to diagnose needs, devise learning tasks, enhance understanding, assess progress, and guide students through the challenges they encounter. Yet as defined by Alexander – though not by some others in the field – dialogic teaching is both talk and more than talk, for it enacts a distinctively dialogic stance on knowledge, learning, social relations and education itself.

Deeply studied and evaluated, dialogic teaching is gradually building momentum without, so far, being swept by a wave of enthusiasm for the new. Since the national curriculum was first established, speaking and listening has been present but overlooked as a requirement because what gets tested, gets taught. Classrooms that employ a dialogic pedagogy are being shown to make noticeable difference and are not necessarily at odds with the 'monologic' teaching of the standard lessons that so many pupils experience as the daily diet and so many teachers feel compelled to deliver. Alexander proposes that, 'We should avoid treating dialogue and monologue as mutually exclusive. Epistemic and pedagogical dimensions transect; boundaries may be blurred. No less important than the overall balance of teacher and student voice is the matter of vocal equity among students themselves, but re-casting equity as voice underlines its complexity.'[31]

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[28] Gladwell, M. (2002) *The Tipping Point*, Abacus.

[29] Johnson, S. C. (1967) *Hierarchical clustering schemes.* Psychometrika. Theoretic perspectives such as this and Glanzer and Cinnitz 1966 experiments on primacy and recency effect are proffered as supporting learning and pedagogical approaches.

[30] Syedd, M. (2011) *Bounce*, Fourth Estate, Matthew Syedd, an Olympian, broadcaster, journalist and author who advises government on public service improvement, is often engaged for education conferences to bring 'wider improvement' thinking into schooling.

[31] Alexander. R, (2019) Dialogic Pedagogy: An International Online Journal | https://dpj.pitt.edu DOI: 10.5195/dpj.2019.268 | Vol. 7; Brighouse, T and Waters, M, (2021) *About Our Schools.* Independent Thinking; Burnage. M (2019) *'The Teachers' standards; a think Piece'* Carnegie School of Education, Leeds Beckett University Collective ED working Papers Vol 7)

TEACHERS LEARNING ABOUT PEDAGOGY

Instead of being trained in pedagogy, teachers are being trained to work in certain prescribed frameworks and, as government centralises this even more through Teaching School Hubs, they will draw the pedagogy towards a uniformity rather than promoting transferable and flexible teachers.

The risk of a deskilling of the system is real. Recently some Multi Academy Trusts have begun to provide scripted lessons for teachers with accompanying scripted lessons for the pupils. While this may work well at a basic level, it diminishes a teaching profession to 'operative' and risks reducing manoeuvrability and flexibility. Again, it factors out the pupils' differences and environmental factors and reduces the variables to three: teachers, lesson structure and resources… and randomises all other factors. It is not a big step from post war years when the prevalent pedagogy of working though textbooks overcame the teacher's lack of knowledge and supported their classroom practice. These recent moves imply that the system has gone backwards with teachers needing not just the resource but the instructions on how to teach.

The French educationalist, Philippe Meirieu[32], develops the concept of 'Frankenstein Pedagogue' 'the myth of education as manufacturing' (*le mythe de l'education comme fabrication*). It is this effort to 'manufacture' children into a pre-determined 'product' that is underway, perhaps inadvertently.

Gert Biesta, in 'The Beautiful Risk of Education'[33] which explores the impossibility of making education predictable and risk-free, summarises Meirieu's views: 'He argues that to think that education can be put under total control denies the fact that the world is not simply at our disposal. It denies the fact that other human beings have their own ways of being and thinking, their own reasons and motivations that may well be very different from ours. To wish all this away is a denial of the fact that what and who are other are precisely that: other.'

Whatever the cause of the impetus, we risk exposing our young to the dangers of unrelenting central control over our schooling system and increasingly upon pedagogy, at present manifesting itself in outcomes our society might regret:

- an educationally under-nourished society,
- too great a proportion of young people seeing qualifications as an end in themselves,
- too great a proportion of our young people being alienated from learning and, at worst being damaged by their experience of it,

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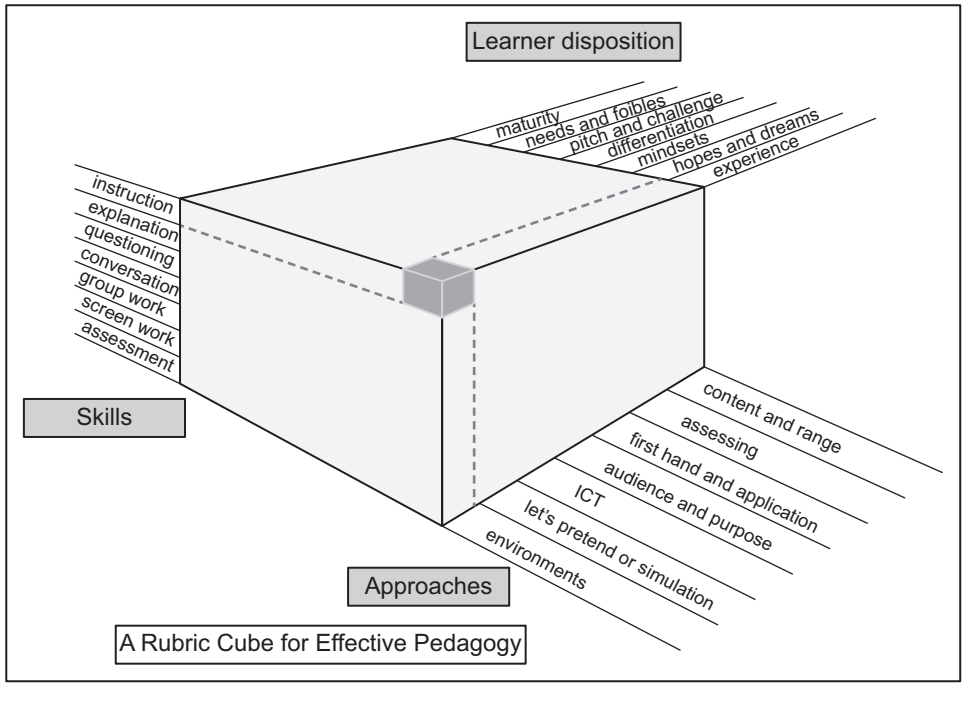
[32] Meirieu, P. (2017) *Frankenstein Pedagogue*, ESF

[33] Biesta G. (2014) *Beautiful Risk of Education*, Routledge

- a growing inability of too many people to cope with challenges to their well-being with consequent significant problems for themselves, their families and society,
- a future generation of parents with insufficient awareness of a joyous experience of childhood,
- an economy unable to benefit from the innovative and creative skills necessary to fully participate in the developing world.

Pedagogy is as complex as ever, probably more so. The classroom setting contains so many variables that, rather than a finding the rubric, the challenge of teaching successfully mirrors the challenge of the Rubik cube. The teacher works on at least three dimensions: the pupils and their dispositions, approaches and methodologies, techniques. Each of these breaks down into a myriad of sub-divisions and teaching can hinge on any one being effective or not so and distorting the whole puzzle. It is the solving of the near insolvable puzzle to the maximum benefit of pupils which drives most teachers and that exhilaration when a glimpse of the solution appears. The diagram below shows just some of the consideration of a teacher in action in the classroom with thirty pupils. Any twist on a face of the cube will right that face but at the same time disrupt another.



The Rubik cube of micro-pedagogy is as complex as ever. For now, the focus of debate about practice has moved away from the pupils, yet as they enter the classroom, the effectiveness of pedagogy depends upon them and decisions made about them. Any class of thirty will contain different maturities and accompanying different needs and foibles. The range will be significant. In a class of eight-year-olds, one child can be 12.5% younger than the oldest. There will be different backgrounds and family circumstances, some being the youngest, oldest or only child. They will have varying concepts of aspiration, hopes, dreams and beliefs. The good teacher will have a range of organisational approaches and methods and will turn easily to the appropriate part of their repertoire of pedagogic skills… and still there may be pupils whose demeanour, success or struggle demand another twist to secure their learning. This complexity makes the pedagogy of the classroom an uncertain rather than formulaic environment. Ginot's[34] quote about the teacher creating the weather rings true, though those beyond in the macro-pedagogic world have created the climate affecting the chances of the teacher making good weather.

Oddly, there is little training available to teachers in terms of developing pedagogy or evaluation of emerging developments. The system risks falling prey to persuasive rhetoric, the flow of the tide of perceived innovation. Just as the Teaching School Hubs and the providers of programmes to them are being run by Multi Academy Trusts (MATs), so the anticipation is that the Institute of Teaching will also be driven by an organisation dependent on MATs and in turn dependent on the private sector. For many there is the concern that this is one further and significant step towards central control within a market context. For others, the concern is that this represents a central control of the content of what teachers meet as their own 'curriculum' along their professional pathway. Some see the hand of Nick Gibb controlling pedagogy and reducing discourse, while others see it as the tenacity and determination to act upon the conviction that success lies in knowing what works for children and making sure teachers know how to do it.

At present the EEF is emerging as the central agency for researching practice. While universities engage with educational research, in general they find it hard to get traction behind their findings unless they catch the breeze of government priorities if the time. They also tend to be ponderous with an inward focus, seeking to sustain their 'Research' (REF')[35] rating to secure future funding on a circuit of

[34] Hamm Ginott was a psychologist and parent educator (1922–73).

[35] The Research Excellence Framework (REF) is a research impact evaluation of British higher education institutions. It is the successor to the Research Assessment Exercise. It aims

mutually supporting dissemination activities about the research itself. That the research will make a wide impact on pedagogy or the experience and outcomes for learners is hope rather than design.

The Education Endowment Fund (EEF) has offered teachers an evidence-based analysis of various aspects of pedagogy. This is much needed. The reports are evidence led and results offered for professional consideration. While a welcome development, there are three major questions hanging over the EEF studies. First, the measures of effectiveness in terms of progress or impact, are often made against suspect exam results and Ofsted gradings. Second, two approaches, for example to the teaching of reading, are measured comparatively without necessarily saying that neither is effective. Third, reports do not assert or suggest that a new approach should supersede specific previous practice. Given the stage of its development, this might be a reasonable next step.

What is needed is for the EEF, which is independent of government, to continue to take as its model the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) which endorses and sanctions approved clinical procedures or Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) which approves the use of medicines and identifies side effects.

THE FUTURE OF PEDAGOGY… WHO DECIDES?

In a book to be published in early 2022, Tim Brighouse and I argue that the teaching profession has reached the point where it needs to be honest with itself about how it can most positively develop. If it does not, the prospect of a centrally driven and externally determined school system controlling all aspects of schooling including pedagogy is a very real prospect. While many in the system are crying out for greater involvement, the opportunity to engage in deep and purposeful consideration of how teaching can transform, is a minority activity. The vast majority of teachers cares about their work, their pupils and the effectiveness of their teaching. They are interested, enthusiastic and committed. Recently, terms such as ‘passionate’ have begun to be used in job advertisements and job descriptions and the risk is that this is ‘hyperbole’ that becomes the baseline for ‘doing a good job’.’ But involvement is not deep. There are 3,400 secondary schools in England and the National Association of Teachers of English has just 1700 members. The Association for Science Education has just under 700 ‘supporters’.

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to provide accountability for public investment in research, establish reputational yardstick, and thereby to achieve an efficient allocation of resources. Critics argue that the REF does more harm than good to higher education., a bit like league tables and inspection in schools.

While the Chartered College of Teaching is a relatively new organisation in its current form and its development very positive, just one in ten teachers in England are members of it.

The profession needs to be mature enough to recognise that there is a spread of enthusiasm for truly transformative engagement. There is a proportion of the profession that is satisfied with being business-like and efficient, committed to the aims of their school and best interests of the pupils they teach. This group also know that there is a proportion of the teaching profession that goes beyond that and is deeply interested, intrigued and committed to the pursuit of further understanding about the way teaching can be, the difference it can make and the ways it can be explored. These are the teachers who become a natural focus for their colleagues who respect their expertise, admire their skills and wonder at their capacity for depth.

It is these transformational professionals that can lift the profession and the pupils we serve to greater educational heights in the broadest sense. It is these in whom we should invest to help shape pedagogic effectiveness and development.

The business-like and efficient teachers recognise in others their proficiency in many aspects of pedagogy and turn to them for advice about assessment, paired teaching, group work, blended lessons and barriers to particular pupils' learning. These are the 'transformative' expert consultants – similar to the intention underlying the early tranches of Advanced Skill Teachers: they will be 'in it for the long term' and never believe they have 'arrived'. They are the ones who are restlessly seeking new ways of unlocking children's minds and, while doing so, are seeking out the next generation of transformative practitioners. They will be interested and engaged in research, they will be considering theory in the light of practice and they will be collaborating and writing the occasional paper for the Chartered College of Teaching about some aspect of the interplay between curriculum, pedagogy learning and assessment practices. They will be the leaders of pedagogy within a discipline or between disciplines and will be the leaders and at the heart of the four activities which mark out the department, phase and school which demonstrates in its activities the proof of Judith Little's aphorism that you know a good school because it is a place where:

- Teachers *talk* about teaching,
- Teachers *observe* each other teach,
- Teachers *plan, organise and evaluate* their teaching together,
- Teachers teach *each other.*

In short, Brighouse and I recommend that they should be **'expert consultant practitioners'** in school and fellows of the Chartered College as well as active and

informed of the latest findings of the EEF. They will be honorary members of the local or regional university's education faculty.

They would have a 'mastery of teaching' qualification, which would be earned through a combination of school-based research into an aspect of pedagogy with demonstration of their expert understanding and application of the various aspects of being a consultant expert teacher. This would be separate from the encouragement of all teachers to proceed to a masters degree as they complete their early career stage. Nor is the suggestion intended to cut across the expanding menu of NPQ courses for middle leaders which ironically at last gives reality to the recommendations of the James Committee of 1972. **Expert consultant teachers** will have followed the Early Career Framework but will have been impatient in that truly excellent teaching consists of more than the statements in that or other teaching standards. They know that their future lies with pedagogy, rather than 'management', where they take delight in being, but then moving beyond the effective business-like 'identikit' model which the various frameworks are in danger of creating as a ceiling for all teachers.

Such teachers are rare and precious and should be paid accordingly. They will each have a team of junior colleagues ambitious to follow the same course and they will liaise with colleagues and be seen as available for professional advice: an acknowledged expert who knows or knows 'someone who knows' where the latest thinking is on learning and teaching strategies which might help solve the presenting issues in the classrooms among the pupils – and seen as that expert by Heads of Department and senior school leadership as well as junior teaching colleagues, the business-like teachers and the para-professional teams in schools today.

Tim and I have seen and met such teachers frequently on our travels around schools. It is a matter of chance whether all pupils meet such teachers. In the interests of equity for all pupils we think that wrong and it is why we are advocating this change.

There should be a target to achieve an **expert consultant teacher**: pupil ratio of 1:120 working with a team of four teachers to spread and increase expertise. We believe that a combination of the Chartered College and the EEF should each play a part in developing and overseeing the new Mastery of Teaching idea which should be provided in Universities on a part-time basis.

This would create a challenge for the teaching profession and those within it. Many teachers are modest and self-effacing. There will be a need for those who thirst for professional challenge to step forward and for the profession as a whole to accept the different motivations within our schools. We believe that creating the

role of ***Expert Consultant Teacher*** will lift the status and effectiveness of the profession, galvanise schooling and increase immensely the life chances of children in our schools. We believe that the Expert Consultant Teacher would place the development of pedagogy where it properly belongs: in schools and classrooms guided by deep and convincing research and in the hands of the teaching profession.