



The Enquirer

The CANTARNET Journal - Summer 1998

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Editorial

We are delighted that in this issue the majority of the articles are written by teacher members of CANTARNET (Canterbury Action Research Network) so that the focus remains very much on schools, classrooms and teachers' professional concerns. There is a practical emphasis and an immediacy in the writing which challenges us to re-examine our practice, not only in terms of considering the way we act but also in digging deeper to explore the values and motives underlying what we do.

Teachers as Learners

Andy Hargreaves draws our attention to the importance of developing a culture within which learning is seen as essential and integral to the profession. He writes, *Pupils become good learners when they are in the classes of teachers who are good learners.... Teachers, more than anyone, are essential to the creation of a new learning society. They can scarcely help to create such a society if they are not good learners themselves.*

(Hargreaves, A., 1997, p.116) (Hargreaves, A., 1997, p.116)

Andrew Wright's painful experiences of inappropriate INSET offer a salutary lesson for those who aspire to the role of self-appointed experts, and lead us to question the ways in which effective professional learning is best supported. This is a key issue for us as the new Centre for Education Leadership and School Improvement (CELSI), based principally at Canterbury Christ Church College, begins to take shape. This exciting development offers opportunities to support school improvement through the wealth of expertise which already exists within schools as well as calling on those from outside. Crucial to all this is the establishment and nurturing of partnerships between schools and the College, through which schools can identify their needs and negotiate support from the Centre in order to meet those needs.

Focusing on teachers' concerns

Further to this, the work of CANTARNET demonstrates the value of professional learning which starts with individual teachers' needs and concerns, although it must be emphasised that this is set firmly within the context of school development priorities (see Frost, 1997). A clear view of the teacher as learner emerges through the pages of this issue. **Jill Oliphant-Robertson** allows her Year Nine students to express in their own words what they have learnt from their participation in a "Values Forum" but also feels that she herself has learnt alongside them. Through some recent work on the identification and analysis of critical incidents (Tripp, 1993), **Penny Skoyles** and **Jon Sparke** uncover the meanings and implications behind everyday classroom events. This has not only given them new insights as classroom teachers but has also demonstrated, through group discussion, the power and value of reflections shared. Our "Talking Head" this time is **Mike Head** who, as an ex-head teacher, is ideally qualified to give us a glimpse of the work of a practising head teacher

through his experience of workshadowing for a day, and in doing so, demonstrates the value of using another person's perspective to enhance reflective practice.

Many of you will remember John Elliott's inspiring keynote address at our first conference. David Frost has written a review of an important new book by John, and David's own book on reflective action planning is reviewed by Simon Clements. Michael Head's review of "The Learning Revolution" begins with a model account of productive professional networking as he describes the journey the book had made before reaching him.

Beyond the classroom: CANTARNET at the DfEE.

Understanding can be deepened by reflecting within our own professional situations but can also be broadened by extending experience. April 30th 1998 was an important day for CANTARNET as a group of representatives from across the network met with **Michael Barber** to share concerns and gain a central perspective of educational change. Gary Holden reports on this meeting and it is encouraging to see a note from Michael Barber in response; we hope that this has opened a channel of communication for the future.

Surfing and Salads

Meanwhile, **Penny Skoyles** has acquired a world-wide perspective through her exploration of the Internet and is now so committed to its value in supporting her practice and her research that the rest of her family find themselves excluded! Her article will convince both the terrified and the cynical, while old hands might like to check they have bookmarked her list of useful websites. **Diana MacAdie** questions whether her experience on a work placement with a salad packaging firm is being used effectively back in school and invites ideas and comments, particularly from those who have had similar encounters with the world beyond the classroom.

Passion and purpose

While much of the writing in this issue is eminently practical, offering ideas and strategies which are directly applicable, prepare also to be inspired. In particular, **Tom Hedger's** article, in which he explores his personal professional values as an art teacher, reminds us that teaching is "emotional work"; it is not simply a matter of competence, efficiency, possession of knowledge and development of technique, but involves "pleasure, passion, creativity, challenge and joy" (Hargreaves, 1997, p.110), and above all, *care for children*, whatever the national and institutional context, whatever the latest initiative, whatever the media message this week.

Collectively, the writing in this and previous editions of 'The Enquirer' is a refreshing antidote to the depressing national caricature of the profession which we seem to encounter daily. It testifies to the fact that passion and creativity have not been completely submerged under mounting paperwork or progressively dulled by disillusionment. We are reminded throughout of the core purpose of our individual and collaborative enquiry, reflection and action, which is clearly focused on children and their learning. Thankyou to all those who have taken the time and trouble to contribute, and we look forward to receiving contributions for the next issue - whatever interests you, inspires you or concerns you, please share it.

Judy Durrant

References:

Frost, D. (1997) *Reflective Action Planning for Teachers: a Guide to Teacher-led School and Professional Development*, London: David Fulton Publishers.

Tripp, D. (1993) *Critical Incidents in Teaching: Developing Professional Judgement*, London: Routledge.

Hargreaves, A. (1997) *From Reform to Renewal: A New Deal for a New Age*, in Hargreaves, A. and Evans, R., (eds), *Beyond Educational Reform: Bringing Teachers Back In*, Buckingham: Open University Press.

Happy Reading!

The Editors

What's New?

The column that informs and updates those engaged in enquiry and development work.

If YOU come across key items of widespread interest please send to me,

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It's no accident I'm sure that increasingly this column is concerned with telling you about web-sites that you might find interesting. It has also occurred to me that as more of us come 'on-line' there is probably a wealth of information about the internet and ways teachers can make use of it in both their teaching and enquiry work.

One easy and potentially effective way to share some of this information would be to put it onto the bulletin board on the CANTARNET web-site. The CANTARNET site is worth a visit in its own right not only for the on-line edition of the Enquirer, but also for the excellent links Phil Poole and the TITLE Unit have put on. I'm particularly grateful for the work Phil has done on this as when I recently typed "teacher research" into my search engine, it came up with 2599 "hits" - far too many to even scratch the surface of!

Over the last term or so the three web-sites I have made most use of are the TES site (www.tes.co.uk), the Virtual Teachers' Centre (vtc.ngfl.gov.uk/vtc/index.html) and the DfEE page (open.gov.uk/dfee).

These sites are invaluable if you are wanting to include up to the minute information in your portfolios or dissertations. I have found the 'hot news' section in the TES page very useful in giving a day by day account of the most recent developments or policy initiatives, the number and frequency of which remains disturbingly high. Similarly, it's a good idea to keep a regular check on the virtual teachers' centre, not least on the Standards and Effectiveness Unit page which gives brief

summaries of the latest documents emanating from Michael Barber's team. It's important that we all keep in touch with what is happening in the SEU, as, according to the TES recently, Michael Barber and his team of 70 officials work very closely with, and have a great deal of influence over, David Blunkett.

For example, currently there is a three page article on school improvement (open.gov.uk/dfce/seu/cycle), a rather more mechanistic model than the one most of us would recognise. However, it is vital that we are aware that while the current government might use concepts, words and phrases we feel more comfortable with than under the Conservatives, our understandings of these ideas may be very different.

Elsewhere, the TES of 22 May carried an enticing invitation to "education researchers" to send in 750 word summaries of what they have been doing with a view to publication in the TES. I think we would all agree that what teachers in CANTARNET are engaged in is very much education research and I think it would be admirable chutzpah on your part to send in some accounts of your practitioner research to: David Budge Research Editor The TES Admiral House 66-68 East Smithfield London E1 9XY tel.: 0171 782 3276 Happy surfing, until the next edition of the Enquirer.

TALKING HEAD

Michael Head

Yesterday I shadowed a headteacher in a secondary school on the other side of the Thames estuary and the day before I was interviewing a headteacher from a Primary School on this side of the Estuary. What these two experiences have in common, apart from throwing up notions of good leadership, I don't yet know as the filtration of these experiences will occupy me over the coming weeks. What was immediately apparent was that I was revisiting my past of headship over 23 years and having the opportunity to see it in a new and more critical light.

At the secondary school the head dealt with 30 incidents/experiences before 10-0 am.

They covered:

- readmittance to the school following a fixed term exclusion,
- a discussion with a teacher who is planning to change educational sectors for career development and needed reassurance and clarification over mismatching resignation dates,
- a philosophical discussion with a senior teacher who is responsible for value added developments in the school,
- an assembly,
- a focused scan of the local paper looking for items to do with pupils or the school before it went to reprographics to be copied.

In amongst all these were

- three replenished in-trays,
- an interview with a girl over dress code, picked up on the daily walk around the school,
- an unplanned meeting with two year seven pupils who wanted to set up a sponsored run
- numerous telephone calls from chairman of governors to local primary school to parent.

The morning walk around the whole school had also produced arrangements for a couple of meetings with staff. There was a progress view of Success Maker installation, an IT based programme for improving levels of literacy and numeracy, a visit to an internal supervised location for current problem pupils, and a meeting in the new reprographic facilities of the school.

His next event was an hour long meeting with Senior Staff on raising literacy levels in the school and giving access to primary schools to Success Maker.

The following hour, after another appearance by the head on duty at breaktime, was taken up with responding to an individual departmental development plan, finalising briefly for processing the whole school draft plan for next year, reading through a broadsheet due for publication the next day and preparing in part for a long management team meeting from 3-45 to 6-0 pm.

During the lunch hour the head walked and talked around the school . A particular problem parent who had threatened a revisit to the school provided the early focus of the duty but no-one appeared. I lost track of the number of professional transactions that took place in the seven hours up to the end of lunch and marvelled at the inclusion of transformational meetings, which were to put in place strategy for the school, as well as the intensity of operational activity. During the afternoon I was able, while the head continued tying up a long agenda for the later meeting, to look at ongoing strategic planning in the form of a bid for Literacy Summer School monies There was a restructuring document which was still to be finally implemented and a breakdown of tasks and roles of all the Senior Team with the most recent appointment having only just been made.

I left at five. Did I do that to emphasise my freedom? The head had a two and a half hour management meeting which started at 4 - 0 pm As I said at the beginning, my previous day had been concerned with interviewing, over two and a half hours, a Primary headteacher, looking at a number of experiences in which he was directly involved and influential as Head. Here were distillations of action both operational and strategic: recollections in tranquility. Perhaps they would lack the colour of the shadowing experience and perhaps they would be rationalisations of headteacherly action.

Far from it. What was captivating was that the same whiff of complex, human, professional relationships came through, the same perception of intense activity with precious opportunities for reflection and strategic decision making carved out of the day, the week, the term. This latter experience is part of a larger piece of research which is being organised by Hugh Lawlor and there will be more about it in future Enquirers.

What I have enjoyed in these experiences was capturing the dynamics of a leader in a school again and taking the liberty of being the 'Talking Head ' in this issue.

When I showed the Headteacher my account of his day he was surprised that there had been so much going on. He also said he was amazed that there appeared to be substantial events in the day where he had been able to aid colleagues to develop strategic positions for the school.

Michael Head will be giving up his direct involvement in school based Diploma work at the end of this academic year to develop the Partnership between Canterbury Christ Church College and schools.

Backlash!

Wanted: Decent Staff Trainers!

Andrew Wright

As a Head of Science

In a grant-maintained secondary school, professional development is a subject close to my heart. In my role as faculty manager I am responsible for ensuring that science staff get quality in-service training and over the years I've had my fingers burnt a few times. I offer below brief character profiles of two training providers of whom I have had bitter personal experience and hope that the time I have wasted at the hands of these self-appointed experts (SEAs) may spare others the excruciating awfulness of such occurrences.

Self-appointed Expert (1) The Bearded Bumpers.

These people have a permanently baffled expression and start by apologising for being late. They are usually male in which case they always have a beard. They dress casually and appear unperturbed that the school caretaker is better turned out. Such speakers seem rarely, if ever, to get to the point, and I am being generous here in assuming they have one in the first place. They may hail from the voluntary sector, from one amongst the plethora of small, very well-meaning educational charities. On paper their ideas are wonderful, but they have little experience of putting them into practice or, for that matter, communicating them to large audiences. The links such speakers have with education are oblique at best, something like their best friend's aunt's brother's mother once went to school for a visit. They are also infuriatingly thick-skinned and seem oblivious to the catatonic state of their long-suffering audience. Such speakers can be summed up in the standard SAE equation: the depth of their passion and intention to do good is inversely proportional to their ability to achieve an actual realisation of that good.

Self-appointed Expert (2) Slick Jims.

These people appear very slick. They wear suits, carry briefcases and own and even know how to work mobile phones. They may well approach the school initially and ask for some time to talk to staff about their project. They speak in pseudo-educational jargon and seem to know what they are talking about. Often they are piloting a training programme and come offering a free sample, but contrary to that popular dictum about the best things in life, they will let you down big-time. The most pernicious aspect of Slick Jims is the way their smiles, suits and requests for a flipchart lull you into a false sense of security. And then they start. Slick Jims' presentations are built around a disastrous misapprehension concerning the relevance of their ideas to education. They will have, without exception, a vision for schools, which they want to share with you.

Our particular Slick Jim was into meditation and the folk psychology of self-esteem and spent two hours talking us through a post-mortem of his thinking on such topics. Everything he said could have been summarised on a page of A4 and that's being generous. As with Bearded Bumpers, Slick Jims have little awareness of how utterly irrelevant and out-of-touch their message is, their only saving grace being that they're slightly more pleasant to look at.

I have been necessarily general in the profiles above, but both caricatures are based on actual experiences. The pain of these experiences still haunts me today. No-one likes to be duped, particularly when the cost is measured in teachers' precious time and enthusiasm. Little money was paid in either instance - in the first case we negotiated a drastically reduced fee and in the second, the tortuous experience was offered to staff for free. Like the truth in the X Files, Bumbler and Slick are still out there somewhere and I offer these cautionary tales in the hope that their like will not darken your doors and curdle the goodwill and tempers of your hard-working staff.

Book Reviews

[The Hungry Spirit](#) - Charles Handy (1997)

London: Hutchinson. Reviewed by Judy Durrant

[Research Interviewing](#) - Elliot Mischler (1986)

London: Harvard University Press. Reviewed by Jane Young

[Values in Education & Education in Values](#) - J. Mark Halstead & Monica J. Taylor (eds) (1996)

London: Falmer Press Reviewed by Jill Oliphant-Robertson

[The Moral Animal](#) - Robert Wright (1994)

London: Little Brown Reviewed by Andrew Wright

[How the Mind Works](#) - Steven Pinker, (1998)

London: Penguin Books Reviewed by Andrew Wright

'The Hungry Spirit'

by

Charles Handy (1997)

Published by London: Hutchinson.

Reviewed by Judy Durrant

I had previously encountered Charles Handy only through soundbites, and pearls of wisdom contained within other people's arguments, so I approached this book with the intention of finding out more about the man and his ideas. I am used to reading selectively of necessity, seeking extracts and articles which suit my purposes, but this I read from cover to cover, which in itself was a liberating experience.

I find the book both comfortable and uncomfortable. I am comforted by the fact that I agree with what he is saying but I am challenged by his ideas, because he believes that responsibility for change rests with individuals working out their own values and purposes, which he calls 'proper selfishness'. He argues that in the future we need to base our society on more sustainable values; that money provides the means of life but not the meaning of life. He has a strong belief in the need

to build up relationships between people, in basing organisations and society on trust and in concentrating on effectiveness (operating in a way that is helpful and useful for people) rather than efficiency (which can overlook people's real needs).

In his chapter on education, Handy draws on the work of Howard Gardner and Daniel Goleman in developing his own list of types of intelligence. He makes some propositions to guide schools so as to educate for work and for life, in which children are seen as individuals with multiple abilities, and achievement is celebrated in all its different forms. He highlights the importance of the "where, how and why" as well as the "what" and suggests that life is a journey in which the goal is not to win but to better the standards we set ourselves. He finishes this section with the proposition that "Learning is experience understood in tranquility", emphasising the need for times and places to reflect.

I find that the book gives me access to a world-wide view built up over a lifetime of experience. Handy peppers the text with anecdotes and examples which fix ideas in reality so that the text is eminently readable and can easily be identified with. Incidents and conversations are used as triggers to thought and woven into the argument. Somehow, while the ideas come thick and fast, the book gives me space to think. I imagine that I will return to it many times and that it will inform my thinking more than I yet realise.

'Research Interviewing'

by

Elliot Mischler (1986)

Published by London: Harvard University Press,

Reviewed by Jane Young

An important book which can help direct an understanding of the researcher as interviewer.

A step by step approach is taken in the five chapters which allows Mischler to undertake a critical review of research on interviewing.

His analysis and debate presents an alternative model to positivism by advocating an hermeneutic approach to research interviewing. He draws the reader's attention to the importance of narrative analysis and of understanding meanings through discourse. Mischler argues that questioning and answering are ways of speaking which are grounded on culturally shared and often tacit assumptions about how to express and understand beliefs, experiences, feelings and intentions. Mischler refers to this as 'ordinary language competence', a critical precondition for effective research practice.

His suggestion to treat interviewee responses as an opportunity to tell stories allows the researcher to blend the qualities of life-history and focused interviewing. This can open up many complex analytical problems adding a qualitative dimension to the researcher's work.

The book has a useful conclusion on the prospects for critical research and the appendix suggests further readings in narrative analysis.

Values in Education & Education in Values

by

J. Mark Halstead & Monica J. Taylor (eds) (1996)

London: Falmer Press

Reviewed by Jill Oliphant-Robertson

I read this book with interest as it concerns not only the importance of values in education but also the meaning and nature of values, the developing of an understanding of values among the students and a discussion about which values we as teachers are justified in conveying to our students. I have already written an article on one way in which this was put into practice in my classroom and how the students responded (see p.6). This book raised some of the same questions I had grappled with on previous occasions: whether it is possible to have common values in a pluralistic society, what my role is as an RE teacher and whether we as teachers impose our values on the students or whether our role is to enable them to develop their own values.

Through the research done in my own classroom, I realised that it was not a question of dreaming up a list of desirable values or using somebody else's list but that each school and each teacher must try to articulate their values and develop some clarity of vision if they wish to help their students to develop their own understanding of values.

There was so much in this book that inspired me, that made sense of my own ideas and practice and also that depressed me when I saw the enormous gap between the ideal and the practice, as is illustrated in the chapter by Monica Taylor which gives the students a voice and allows us to hear how they experience values in school. For me, one of the most inspirational chapters was that of Mary Warnock where she argues that teachers cannot duck the responsibility they have for teaching values and transmitting them to the next generation so that we can counteract the cynicism that dominates so much of our society. Far from resulting in a nation of boring conservative conformers, we will in fact be changing the status quo for the next generation and the changes will stem from a belief in moral values that are shared; greed and self-interest will not be the dominant values in the future.

The Moral Animal

by

Robert Wright (1994) (1996)

London: Little Brown

Reviewed by Andrew Wright

If you're interested in deep answers to deep questions underpinning human interaction in our modern world, this is the text for you. The book gives an over-view of the burgeoning science of evolutionary psychology and the title should be said with a sarcastic lilt. Evolutionary psychology approaches the human condition and human behaviour from the stand-point of natural selection. The premise of the book is that the answers to some of the big questions about human nature and

predilections begin and end with an understanding of the social environment of our hominid ancestors. The book explores the power of this approach to psychology through the story of Charles Darwin's life, which creates a compelling narrative. As an exploration of the backdrop to our day-to-day interactions with students and colleagues in schools, this book helps put a great deal in perspective. Robert Wright argues convincingly that we are baboons in clothes and that almost all of our drives and passions are derived from adaptations to the environment which saw the genesis of our species around 7 million years ago. A book not for the faint-hearted, but a revelation in terms of the way you will view the world.

How the Mind Works

by

Steven Pinker, (1998)

London: Penguin Books

Reviewed by Andrew Wright

The title certainly does not beat about the bush and neither does the text. This book gives a powerful and incisive overview into the latest thinking about the human mind. The narrative is written in an accessible and engaging style and the book explores key issues relating to human consciousness. Steven Pinker presents convincing arguments, summarising his own and others' research which firmly puts the lid on woolly notions about the human mind being unexplainable by modern science. The mind, he argues, is as much the result of natural selection as the human eye - there is no designer, in fact he explains convincingly how we might actually be predisposed by our genes to postulate the existence of God. A book from the cutting edge of science which offers a powerful perspective for educationalists on where neuroscience is leading us and it will leave you asking questions about your practice in the classroom.

Look out for your Valuables

Angley School's Values Forum

Jill Oliphant-Robertson

Angley School

Schools and teachers have influence in developing the values of young people. Schools reflect and embody the value of society. So what then are values?

- Ideals?
- Standards?
- Guides to behaviour?
- Worth - or rather the criteria by which we make value judgments?
- Are they subjective? Objective? Relative or absolute?

I wondered whether, in spite of the emphasis placed by OFSTED, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students should be subject to official inspection. It raised for me a lot of questions about values education:

- Is it appropriate in a pluralistic society?
- Is it the job of RE?
- Should schools teach or impose values in students or help them to develop their own?
- Are values about “shoulds”?
- Are we to have a top-down model of change for individuals and their life stances?
- The state pays our wages but should it write the music we play and the song we sing?
- What about discovering meaning and purpose in life?
- What about personal autonomy and self determination?
- Whose values and which values will predominate?

However these questions were not exactly reflected in my practice and I agreed with Mary Warnock (1996, p.53) that teachers cannot duck the responsibility they have for teaching values. So I was particularly interested to read in the Autumn 1997 edition of RE Today an article on a pupil simulation of the SCAA Values Forum (Blaylock & Vias, 1997). The original work at Ysgol Bryn Offa school in Wrexham took six to eight lessons. As my year nine classes at Angley School in Kent were studying a unit entitled “Values and Belief” it seemed an ideal time to introduce something similar, although as I only have one lesson a week with year nine I decided to adapt the idea to take up less time.

The students in all my three classes were asked to arrange themselves into groups of mixed sex, mixed ability and mixed skills. They were told about the Values Forum and the issues which the adults debated and how their aim was not only to discuss what values should be passed on to the next generation and how teachers could provide for moral and spiritual development, but also to present their results in a readable, exciting way accessible to all in the school. Every group decided to go for large posters, except one which made a leaflet, and they employed a variety of skills including collage, photographs and IT all displayed on vivid and eye-catching card which filled the entire stairwell leading up to the Humanities faculty.

Each group decided on their own opening point; some looked at “Top Ten” values; some looked at the type of lessons or teachers that helped them develop values to live by; some considered values they thought were neglected or ones they would like to pass on to their children and one group included a letter to the headteacher stating how they wanted to see values in the school developing.

Though the classes are of mixed ability there was no cynicism or slacking and everyone contributed, except in one group where two members did not do the homework set by the group and so were ‘sacked’ and forced to set up a mini group of two. One of these boys later wrote:

"This experience made me realise that what I did wasn't acceptable by showing me how I should have worked and how I'll work in a group in the future. I learnt a lot about other people's values and how not to lie, cheat or hurt other people's feelings, to be trustworthy and to accept other people's opinions."

James White

One of the classes had their last lesson disrupted by a fire practice and when I finally returned to the classroom there was hardly anybody there, but far from abandoning their work some were doing last minute headings in the computer room, some were already stapling work to the walls and the

rest were clearing up. Maybe I am cynical but I was amazed at how responsibly the students approached these three lessons, how enthusiastic they were to present their work and their thoughts to the rest of the school and how once it was on display they bullied staff to come and look at it and give their opinions - this was work they owned and they were proud of it.

The students were honest in their discussions and shared openly with each other. In their evaluations many of the students made comments about the actual work and their groups:

"We helped each other and shared out the work"

Rachel Burgess

"I learnt how to present my work neatly and make it look good and noticeable."

Tom Austen

"The group worked together well, we all had our jobs to do and as soon as we got into the room we got on with it."

Tracy Chapman

Interestingly the school's values of Respect, Excellence and Determination, prominently displayed inside and outside the school, featured a lot in their own displays and they appreciated the efforts of teachers to instill these values. Students were aware of how different subjects as diverse as French and RE helped people to respect the values of others and how interactions with different teachers enabled them to develop their own personal sense of values.

"Values are inherent in teaching. Teachers are by the nature of their profession 'moral agents' who imply values by the way they address pupils and each other, the way they dress, the language they use and the effort they put into their work."

(National Curriculum Council, 1992)

Certainly for three year nine classes their values forum helped them to be more morally aware:

"I have learnt that values matter and they are something that cannot be taken away from you."

Andrew Chapman

"I have learnt about other people's values and to respect them.... I feel some values are wrong in our world. My friends would respect my values but sometimes you are in situations when other people (you think) are talking about wrong values but you have to live with them and respect them which can be difficult."

Stephen Knott

"This work has made me think whether or not I carry out my top ten values all the time How many people have I hurt because of this?"

Sally Andrews

"The discussions helped me to look at different aspects of life from a different point of view, I feel this could be an excellent value to have."

Adam Pryor

"These discussions made a big difference to me. I found values deep down I never knew I had. Not only did I find my values, I also found how to explain them and why I had them in the first place."

Stephen Watts

"I have learnt to listen to what other people believe in"
Emily Thompson

"Values are very important to me because in life that is what matters."
Catherine Mayers

This values forum has been a two-way process as I have found as a teacher that I have learnt so much from the students themselves, they have learnt from each other and they have shown that they have learnt from the school values and show that they want to put these into practice. Halstead (1996, p.9) points out that whatever form values education takes, there is a major debate about whether schools should instill values in children or teach them to explore and develop their own values. The experience of the Angley values forum among year nine students showed that this division is unnecessary. Perhaps it is the quality of the exchange between students and teacher that is essential and helps the students make the connection between the impersonal and the personal and so grow as morally aware people.

Perhaps the most enlightening statement came from the girl who wrote:

"I think what value is most neglected is an important issue. After talking with Mrs Robertson I realised that being against racism is a very neglected value. When someone used to tell me a joke about a 'paki' or a 'nigger' I always used to laugh and say "aww don't that's really cruel but its funny", now I ask them why they tell such horrible jokes - I tell them they're racist."
Lydia Spearink

This shows that lessons do affect students' behaviour, however difficult that may seem as Hume observed long ago: "It is one thing to know virtue, another to conform the will to it." (1740, bk 3, part 1, section 1). I don't even remember the conversation she mentions but the experiment in devoting three weeks of a small amount of curriculum time to this question has proved to be most valuable and one that I will certainly now build into the year nine scheme of work and perhaps allow more time for in the future.

"In the current educational climate, the curriculum debate focuses on time, assessment, league tables, funding, core and foundation subjects, but it needs also to be about values, processes, relationships, community, coherence and cohesion of the whole curriculum."
(Edwards 1996 p.178)

I think there needs to be a permeation of the values shared by both school and students throughout the whole curriculum. It is valid to argue that spiritual and moral education is too important to be left to the individual and perhaps top-down and grassroots are not mutually exclusive - future progress in schools may lie in the development of consensual values which can only be defined by the school, as a community, in dialogue with the wider community. But how a community is identified and how it identifies itself isn't always clear as rapid change seems to have led to a decline in people's sense of community. So is a consensus of values an impossible vision in a world which is increasingly polarised in terms of the opposing tendencies towards globalisation and tribalisation (small because of technological advances leading to an increasing awareness of global interdependence and yet increasingly nationalistic)? Year nine showed that such pessimism is unwarranted.

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Analysis of Critical Incidents

testing a framework for developing professional judgement and improving practice through reflection.

Jon Sparke and Penny Skoyles

with an introduction by

Judith Durrant.

St. Gregory's and Bennett Memorial Action Research Group.

At the end of the March 1998 CANTARNET conference, James Learmonth provoked us with this question from Chris Woodhead:

"Put bluntly, do we want reflective practitioners, or do we want teachers who can teach children to read?"

(Woodhead, 1998)

The glib answer, of course, is that reflection improves practice, but we have to ensure that the process does not become self-indulgent and inward looking, creating a cocoon within which we can find ways of making ourselves feel more comfortable by manipulating our own thoughts, either consciously or subconsciously. My own experience and my understanding from listening to teachers talk about reflection within a systematic framework for enquiry contrasts with this view - reflection can be extremely challenging. It might unearth hidden feelings, values and agendas and it usually increases understanding of the self in relation to the wider political, social and institutional context within which professional action takes place.

Smyth (1991) contrasts the everyday meaning of reflection (*"passive deliberation or contemplation"*) with notions of an *"active and militant"* approach which can lead to changes in practice. While he acknowledges the importance of Schon's ideas (Schon, 1983), he urges that we need to recognise that we operate in a politicised world and should place our reflections within that context rather than turning inwards. He cites Fay (1977) who sketches the characteristics of groups which might offer a collaborative framework for this kind of reflection, characteristics with which CANTARNET groups can probably identify:

"...groups that are relatively small, relatively egalitarian ... relatively free of recrimination between members, relatively committed to rationally discussing ... members' situations and experiences, and relatively insistent that ... members take responsibility for whatever claims, decisions or actions they undertake to make."

(Fay, 1977, in Smyth, 1991, p. 108)

Smyth draws attention to the potentially subversive nature of such activities, which can bring about *"authentic, liberating change"* as people are supported in breaking out of their current situations through discussion based on *"rational reflection"* (ibid).

While we might acknowledge that reflection can be a powerful tool in enhancing our understanding of our actions within professional situations, it is difficult sometimes to know where to begin and how to proceed on an individual level. All teachers think about their practice, whether in the form of general musings on the way home from school or for the purpose of seeking to influence their future actions (Schon, 1983), but focusing reflections, injecting criticality and challenging oneself in order to effect change, requires a disciplined approach and conscious attention to the process itself.

David Tripp has developed an approach to the investigation of practice and the enhancement of professional judgement through identification and analysis of significant episodes or *"critical incidents"* (Tripp, 1993). He writes:

"People often ask what a critical incident is and how to recognise one. The answer is, of course, that critical incidents are not 'things' which exist independently of an observer and are awaiting discovery like gold nuggets or desert islands, but like all data, critical incidents are created. Incidents happen but critical incidents are produced by the way we look at a situation: a critical incident is an interpretation of the significance of an event. To take something as a critical incident is a value judgement we make, and the basis of the judgement is the significance we attach to the meaning of the incident."

(Tripp, 1993, p.8)

He suggests that by focusing their attentions on such incidents in a structured and analytical way, teachers can develop their own grounded theory, theorising about aspects of their practice rather than trying to apply academic theory to their experience. This approach could be used to gain awareness of a particular aspect of practice by consciously focusing on it so as to identify and record relevant critical incidents. Alternatively a series of incidents (perhaps recorded in a journal) could be collected and analysed together to see if patterns emerge, in order to find a focus for action research. The approach relies heavily on individual commitment and could become very insular although Tripp does suggest that it can be used collaboratively. It could be a powerful technique particularly if reinforced by the processes of action research, (data gathering, wider reflection, action and evaluation), in order to develop increased understanding and control over professional judgements.

We decided to test this approach as a group, each person choosing a significant incident from classroom practice and using the following summary of Tripp's guidelines in order to analyse it in detail and consider the implications:

Analysis of a Critical Incident:

1. Describe an incident from your recent professional experience. It could be something which happened in your classroom, an interchange between yourself and a student or colleague, a moment at a meeting. Choose something interesting, annoying, inspiring, thought-provoking or typical.
2. Suggest an explanation within the immediate context.
3. Ask questions which delve deeper into the meanings behind the incident, e.g. different ways of thinking about it, keep asking why, explore your dilemma, consider personal theories and values that influence judgement.
4. What implications does this have for your future practice?

As we reported the outcomes of the exercise, the power of channelled reflection and analysis was evident and we discovered that the process was helpful not only in influencing the thinking and actions of the individuals concerned but also in raising issues for the whole group to consider. The two examples below speak for themselves:

"Miss...I know you haven't taught me before...."

by Penny Skoyles

St. Gregory's R. C. Comprehensive School

The class lined up quietly outside the room. As they entered I gave my usual instructions about where to sit, getting out folders and homework etc.

I stood in front of the class and explained what I hoped they would achieve by the end of the lesson. I then referred to the homework, and how this would be preparation for the next design topic.

As I began to explain the next task, a small boy put up his hand. I continued to complete what I was explaining, and then stopped to ask him what he wanted.

"I'm not sure whether I was away last week Miss, I don't think so, but I know you haven't taught me before, and I don't remember doing all the work you've just been talking about."

I then realised that I had been on a course the previous week, and this was the first experience of a Food Technology lesson for this particular class. I had left detailed notes sellotaped to the desk for whoever took the class and several sets of worksheets for the students. Having apologised to the students for not having introduced myself and my assumption that I had taught them the previous week. I delved further as to what they had actually completed in my absence. A *"posh lady with blonde hair"* taught them, (I'm not sure what this makes me!), and she did a lot of talking and asked a lot of questions about safety and accidents the students had experience of, and Tom told her about his kitchen catching on fire. The lady was a regular supply teacher, who it appeared had got so involved with the first bit of the lesson on safety that she had not covered a large proportion of the

work set. Consequently the students had not been given the homework or covered the work I had assumed they would.

A fairly typical incident but.....

- Why did the pupils take so long to ask me who I was? Had I been particularly fierce before they started the lesson? Were my usual set of requirements on entering the room, e.g. bags on floor, coats off, folders out, stop and listen, delivered in such a way as to worry them about asking questions?
- How long could I have continued talking without asking the boy what he wanted, not knowing the class were confused about me and the work I was talking about?
- Should I have been more explicit in my instructions about how much work I expected the students to complete with a note to inform the students where I was?
- Is it wrong for a supply teacher to add their own experience to enhance a lesson? Or should they just relay information as it is written by the teacher?
- Was it unwise to go on a course on the first lesson of a new group?
- Why did I not remember that I had not taught this group the week before?

Implications

- I need to look at my lesson notes before I start a lesson, even if I think I am repeating a lesson with a second group, and call the register before starting to talk to the group, as I always make a note on the register of what was covered in the previous lesson.
- I need to have a brief question and answer session to recap on what was covered in the previous lesson.
- I need to consider the consequences of my absence from the classroom.
- I should not assume that work left for students will be completed, or delivered as I would expect it to be as if I was in the room.
- I should have requested a report on the class, explaining what had been completed and any problems encountered by the supply teacher.

Alice asks a question

by Jon Sparke

Bennett Memorial Diocesan School

Description:

The incident took place at the end of an 'A' level lesson as the students were leaving to take their lunch. Three of the students were slower in leaving than the others and one, Alice, asked the searching question, which whilst intimately connected with the lesson context was nonetheless unexpected, "*What is the difference between socialism and communism?*" What struck me as

important was both the context of the questioning and the willingness of all three students to then sit back down, listen and discuss my response.

Contextual Explanation:

The students are well motivated 'A' level candidates for whom understanding and being able to tell the difference between technical terms is naturally important. They would need to understand and deploy these terms in their exams. Clearly the terms had been used in the lesson and the students had not been clear on the precise meaning and were keen to have this clarified. It is exactly the pedagogic model we always harp on about at consultation evenings as advice to students who are struggling: "*They must learn to ask for help when they need it*" The student asking for knowledge and understanding from the '*expert*' teacher.

Wider Meanings:

1. Why had the student not asked the question within the context of the lesson?
2. How many other unasked questions remain left at the end of lessons?
3. How can I collect and make use of such questions?
4. Was the question important or was it the communication with the teacher that mattered more?
5. This last question led me further; upon reflection it occurred to me that the students who had remained were the less articulate ones whose voices were less prominent in lessons. They had also been the only students I had yet to ask to do some special preparation for an additional task. This then provoked further enquiry.
6. Why had I left these students to last?
7. Had this worried them?

Implications for practice:

The importance of valuing all potential student contributions seems to me paramount. Furthermore these students were those for whom 'A' Level History is very challenging: the opportunity to focus on their concerns seemed a moment which should not be ignored, above all because their voices are ones I rarely hear.

Clearly the first batch of issues raised suggests that I need to review lessons in order to develop more and perhaps more importantly better opportunities for such valuable questioning. Asking questions within the lesson context at present is clearly not possible for these students.

If I could collect some examples of types of 'unasked question' this could provide insight into the learning obstacles that never get addressed, potentially a fantastic diagnostic tool. Some 'A' Level students have their learning of concepts or techniques limited by assumptions the teacher makes about their contextual knowledge and understanding.

Finally I looked at the last questions and resolved that I needed to provide more opportunities for this type of work with these students. At present my 'A' Level lessons are not sufficiently differentiated to give me time within them to deal with these students' needs.

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Working With Work Experience

By Diana MacAdie

St. Gregory's R. C. School

In October 1997 I was selected to join a team of teachers to take part in a work placement with a packaging firm supplying salads to Marks and Spencers. At the time I realised that in return for the hands-on experience offering a fascinating insight into a dimension of food technology, I would be expected to contribute to a Key Stage 3 and 4 science investigation book based on my experience. My background degree was in nutrition and as a late entrant into teaching I also felt that I had experience to draw on from my work in the food industry as well as my life experiences including bringing up four children.

Immediately on my return to school I was engulfed in school work. This absence had been taken at a key time of great professional activity in the Autumn term and I had little time for reflection on how I might integrate my extra work experiences into my teaching programme. I was required to do some writing which I duly finished and I snatched odd moments to test out my ideas. With some relief I sent off the complete draft.

It is only now in the somewhat quieter months for secondary teachers of June and July that I can sit back and reflect on what more I might have done. I am a science teacher and I spent a week observing science in action - the employment of modified atmosphere packing to prolong the shelf life of salad vegetables. The place was awash with scientific principles found in the Key Stage 3 and 4 curriculum. I returned enthused and with reels of film to be developed. Of course, I have talked to my students about what I did, but I am left wondering what more I could do. In a school year that is already overloaded, what efficient and original ways are there of bringing these vital out-of-school experiences into the thinking of my students? I have yet to develop my experience fully and would be grateful for any supportive ideas from the network about how to make links and take advantage of my encounter with science in action at my work placement.

Centre for Education Leadership and School Improvement (CELSI)

by James Learmonth
Programme Director

The Government is keen for schools to be able to choose providers of Continuing Professional Development, or of support for school improvement, from a range of possibilities. Canterbury Christ Church College is keen to develop its range of services in this area, and the Principal has given the go-ahead to the setting up of a new Centre as part of the Education Department. The final version of the structure is not yet clear, as this is part of a college-wide reorganisation.

Part of the new Centre's work will be to develop its school-based provision for teachers. Here the Diploma/Master's in School Development, set up by David Frost, offers an excellent example of what can be done when a group of teachers meet regularly, reflect on their professional practice, and consider what lessons may be learnt from debate, wider reading, and the discipline of putting ideas and experiences down in a coherent and academic format. Some of the Centre's new work will be accredited - there are some really exciting prospects for the Diploma in Subject Leadership, designed for primary and secondary teachers, and to be taught in co-operation with an LEA. Other aspects of the work may not be accredited: training, evaluation, consultancy and support.

We hope, too, to offer a fuller service beyond the Canterbury area. We plan to carry on at the Christ Church campus - in new accommodation from Autumn 1998 - but also to develop provision at the Salomons Centre near Tunbridge Wells, and also in partnership with the Urban Learning Foundation in London's East End. So we will be able to work with schools across a wide region of south-east England, and, who knows, perhaps more widely still. These are certainly interesting times....

There was one piece of very good news recently, the Centre heard that it had been granted over £65,000 by the DfEE to develop training for teachers who wish to develop their skills in Study Support. There are lots of different definitions of Study Support, but the Government is taking a very broad line. Their definition in 'Extending opportunity: a national framework for study support' (DfEE 1998) is:

"learning activity outside normal lessons which young people take part in voluntarily....."

The Centre will open formally on Friday 16th October 1998 at the Salomons Centre. So while we're getting ready, please let us know what you think.... **We need to know!**

One Year On

Michael Barber, Head of the Standards and Effectiveness Unit at the DfEE, shares his views on the past year and looks ahead to the next five with members of CANTARNET.

It's a year since we first wrote to Michael Barber congratulating him on his new role as the Head of the Standards and Effectiveness Unit at the DfEE and looking forward to joining with him "*in imaginative thinking about the future*" (Barber, 1996) of the education service in the United Kingdom. In our original letters we set out our hopes and some of our fears for this future. We were unanimous, however, in asking that teachers be given more of a voice in what and how our children should be taught.

Wheels turn slowly, but thanks to Michael Head's persistence we received an invitation for a representative group of teachers involved in CANTARNET to have lunch with Michael Barber at the DfEE on 30 April. The date was an auspicious one: almost exactly one year since the General Election, and the day on which the Government unveiled its plans for '*Beacon Schools*.' In a sense, these two facts provided the agenda for our meeting.

The lunch was refreshingly informal and Michael Barber spoke with genuine passion for and enthusiasm about education. He also listened courteously to the points we raised and answered our questions with candour. We first of all raised with him our fear that the much quoted phrase '*zero tolerance of failure*' has a punitive ring to it. However, his response to this was that zero tolerance is merely the other side of 'success for all', an idea that we would all agree with: you can't have one without the other, he argued.

So what was his assessment of the 12 months since the new government assumed power? He felt that the last year had been one of rapid policy development, but conceded that there had been problems in communicating the vision which lies behind the policy effectively. The next three years, he believes, will be concerned with fleshing out these policy initiatives, in particular those concerned with raising standards of literacy and numeracy and the creation of Education Action Zones, and ensuring that they are implemented.

We wondered whether many of the initiatives we had read about in the last year, for example summer schools and homework centres, were not peripheral to the core business of schooling. Michael Barber did not agree with this at all, but saw the combination of in-school and out-of-school learning as a major lever in the drive to raise standards of education, and not simply a media friendly gimmick.

We expressed the concern that many of these proposals seem to reflect badly on what happens in school during the day. He recognised the need for success to be celebrated and cited the Beacon Schools initiative as an example of this. Each of the teachers present then had the opportunity to raise a specific issue.

Richard Hart asked him for his views on the damaging effect that competition for pupils has on schools serving the same geographical area. Michael Barber does not believe competition is any worse now than it ever was, but he sees the use of published, statistical data about schools'

performance as a positive step. He thinks that the combination of raw exam scores, value added data and an improvement index will form a powerful tool for both parents and schools themselves to assess how well they are doing.

Andrew Wright was keen to know Michael Barber's views on the General Teaching Council. MB is in favour, and reminded us that the very first resolution passed by the NUT at its first conference in 1870 was for the creation of a GTC, but he has some reservations about the remit of such a body. He sees the most valuable role for the GTC as being the dissemination of good practice, rather than that of a regulatory body.

Lyn Chalk and Elise Marlow pointed out that the current rhetoric surrounding the use of ITC in schools was not matched by the funding available. MB acknowledged that the provision of up-to-date communications technology was expensive, and pointed out that £100 million has so far been put into the National Grid for Learning project. The White Paper due out later this year will set out the Government's plans for the future development of ITC in schools.

Maggie Anwell's question related to the disservice that the emphasis on crude statistics, such as the number of pupils in a school who gain 5 A-C grades at GCSE, does to disadvantaged children and their teachers. Schools serving disadvantaged areas expend considerable energy creating a stable and caring atmosphere that many of the children do not get at home, but the very positive results of these efforts do not find their way into statistics. MB agreed that this is a potential danger, but pointed out that the Social Exclusion Unit has been set up precisely to advise on issues like this, and indeed, it has just published a report on truancy.

Vanessa Young is concerned about the effect of the reforms to the primary curriculum announced in January on the foundation subjects, particularly in the light of the often quoted need for the curriculum to be broad and balanced. MB said that while he agreed with Vanessa, the decision had received very wide support from the primary sector. He also pointed out that these reforms will only apply until the year 2000 when the revised national curriculum will come on stream. Brian Woods wanted to discuss the effects of increased prescription on the post 16 curriculum. While the detail of the curriculum is not in MB's remit, he did point out that teachers should make use of all the consultation and feedback channels available to them to express their views on the various reforms that are in train at the moment. The current Government, he said, is committed to consultation and dialogue with professionals.

Finally, we discussed the respective roles of external inspection such as that provided by OFSTED and school self-evaluation. MB believes that both have a place and the challenge for us all is to get the balance between the two right. We came away feeling that we had been listened to and at the same time had been given a valuable insight into current government thinking on a range of educational issues. We are grateful to Michael Barber for finding the time to meet us, and to Michael Head for making it possible.

Gary Holden

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The Art of Thinking

by Tom Hedger

Hugh Christie Technology College

I have for many years understood that I interact and make sense of my world in an artistic context, and that *'that way of knowing'* is as important to many other people. I believe very strongly that the arts have an essential role to play in the lives of *all* individuals. The arts have a pivotal role to play in schools.

Like many children I only thrived during my scholastic career due to the strong identity that an *'ability'* in art gave me. Only now do I realise the importance of this statement. I have been teaching now for four years and in that time I have become very aware that almost all individuals in a school environment struggle to create an identity for themselves. For me now, as a teacher, there is little more satisfying than supporting an individual in their growing understanding of the arts and the role it will play in their lives. (I feel it is important at this point to underline the fact that the arts are not exclusively for the gifted or privileged, in the same way that some kind of physical activity is not exclusively for the gold medal hopes of the nation. Neglecting either can do serious damage).

I was aware that the arts held some kind of value when I was at school, and that it was very important to have some kind of critical awareness (especially of music and fashion). Sadly the vocational nature of the arts has led to the perception of the arts as leisure activities, and this is in part due to the poor standards of art education in the past. The policy of educating for employment is still prevalent in schools. Many see education mainly as preparation for work, and believe that the arts are unimportant for children in schools, unless they intend to make a career in them. The arts have also seemed unimportant except for those academically

children. It is widely agreed that literacy, oracy and numeracy are an important part of education, but that they should not be mistaken for the whole of it. To see education mainly as a preparation for work is short sighted. Ted Wragg wrote in *'Alternative Educational Futures'*,

"By the mid 1990's recreation and education may represent the biggest industries in some countries, and will certainly be among the largest employers of labour. In such a society social and interpersonal skills would become extremely important, as would the capacity for imaginative and inventive thinking. Yet these aspects of education are still sorely neglected in those schools where teaching is narrowly didactic and questions asked of pupils require little more than simple recall . . . the unskilled school-leaver becomes more 'at risk' in our society than the premature baby, because the latter is carefully nurtured while the former is merely an embarrassment'."

(Wragg, 1984, p.4)

Little surprise that when I first read this book during my PGCE in 1993 I was excited to see that almost ten years previously Wragg had foreseen such things and identified the importance of involving pupils in learning. With levels of unemployment poised to reach new heights as we approach the 21st century, increased numbers of people sharing jobs, and with the advances in telecommunications, many people working from home, not only will school leavers be at an advantage if they have well developed social/interpersonal skills, and an ability to use their leisure time effectively, but school leavers will need to display capacity for imaginative and creative thinking, for the good of society. I want to embrace the new advances in education, even the 'techno

revolution', but can see it destroying the courage and curiosity of both young and old. It would be interesting to see just how much 'learning' pupils do using these new blooms of technology. By 'learning' I mean the acquisition of knowledge. Knowledge born out of experience, combined with the ability to apply it critically or practically (wisdom).

I feel fortunate that the school I now teach in is very forward thinking in that it sees pupils as active participants and not passive recipients of education. To truly experience learning one has to be an active participant. Facts embedded in the context of experience are much more likely to be absorbed than facts acquired from text and teacher alone. In art education it is almost impossible not to be involved in what one is doing; pupils have little choice but to participate fully. The arts in education are not just about experience with techniques or materials, but also about being involved on many levels, spiritual, conceptual, investigative. Fredrick Palmer wrote,

"Art and design education is not only about acquiring skills, learning about perception, teaching about context and encouraging expression and critical awareness. It is about all these, but it is also about providing the opportunity for the understanding of concepts and formulating of opinions and ideas, enabling thinking and fostering a sense of wonder and curiosity which will enable students to make links and understand relationships in all they see."
(Palmer, 1988, p.143)

Upon leaving my PGCE I felt very enthusiastic about my new career. The course gave me a great deal of confidence and the vocabulary to voice opinions that I had held since school and developed during my degree. I wanted so much to communicate the value of the arts to all pupils, regardless of ability, and felt that I had the ideas, wisdom and enthusiasm to do so.

Many obstacles have stood in the way. I feel the primary obstacle has been the perception of the arts as a leisure activity, a perception which I feel is held by some within the school community in its broadest sense so that my department is not very influential. The ever increasing levels of bureaucracy and paperwork do not help. At times this problem is exacerbated by the fact that we are asked to perform the same tasks as other departments in providing information on pupils. In many cases I have seen a child no more than six times in a half term, whereas other subject staff, e.g. a science teacher will have seen that pupil more than twenty-four times. Yet the art department attempts to provide information on that pupil that has value. Those that receive that information will often get poor quality information from art if they get any at all. This again belittles the department.

I feel that an Art department, and the teaching staff in it, need to focus back on the subject, showing children that other language - a spiritual, emotional, reflective, critical, conceptual, opinionated, personal language. A language that, for those who have the mastery of it, can change people, influence people and communicate to everyone. I know very few educated people who do not have some use for this 'language'. In fact I know very few adults that don't use this 'language' daily. I'm also sure that the teachers of other subjects would want to point out that their subject uses a language that is the single most significant tool in life. We are all talking the same language, we're all talking about curiosity and understanding. We even sometimes use the same vocabulary - depth, balance, rhythm, tone, pattern. stress, chaos, and so on. What we need is courage, we need to take risks and develop a curriculum for children that encourages investigation and reflection on a personal level. There are many mathematical, scientific, historic and linguistic concepts, for example, that require creative understanding. Creativity is a skill. It is the 'art' of being inventive or imaginative. I want my children to have some mastery of *that* art.

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Using the Internet for Research - A Beginner's Experience.

by Penny Skoyles,

St. Gregory's R. C. Comprehensive School,
Tunbridge Wells.

Having decided to treat ourselves to a new computer for Christmas 1997, the children suggested the Internet would be very useful for those difficult homeworks where I usually ended up driving to the town library for information. More expense, I thought, but perhaps it would be useful for my M.A. work.

The computer was installed and Boxing Day was taken up with "getting on line". Every visitor to the house over Christmas tried "surfing the net". I barely got a look in. Having seen a brief demonstration of how to use the Internet at school (looking for garages that sold spares for Triumph Spitfires!) I expected to find it confusing and difficult to use.

In a quiet moment at home I discovered a wealth of information was at my finger tips. I initially searched using Yahoo! or AltaVista search engines; this was very easy following the instructions on the screen and I quickly learnt to refine the search and access very interesting (if not always relevant) information from around the world. A search on bear baiting in Medieval times, for one of those difficult homeworks, led me to discover that bear baiting in Canada is still carried out to entice wild bears to sites so that they can be photographed! Refining the search to focus on Medieval England solved the problem and the homework.

I quickly learnt how to use web-sites and found the CANTARNET site a very good starting point, enabling free access to the Times Educational Supplement. Through this, I discovered many articles relating to vocational education, which will provide useful and current references for my M.A. work.

Further time spent browsing the net led me to find, through AltaVista and then Education, the DfEE, where summaries of recent documentation can be found and printed off for later use. I have also found the Government Information Service which provides information from OFSTED and White Papers, and the new Virtual Teacher Centre which provides an opportunity to discuss current issues with other on-line teachers. The QCA web site has supplied me with information on vocational education, as has the "Further Education Resources for Learning" site. Several of these educational sites include e-mail addresses for people involved in connected fields of research. Contact with such people has been very productive, providing further routes to information via e-mail or "snail mail"

(the post!). Access to universities is also easy and can lead to students, staff or departments who may help with individual research work.

Having been very sceptical about using the Internet at first, I am now a regular user. Although initially a lot of time is wasted searching for information, time is used more profitably as you become increasingly proficient in refining how you search. I have printed out information that would have taken several trips to Christ Church College library or a lot of letter writing to achieve the same end. I have the added benefit of several very useful e-mail contacts that will assist my M.A. work and support my professional practice as a teacher.

Have a go! Try out the web sites below:

References

Canterbury Action Research Network

<http://www.cant.ac.uk/depts/acad/teached/cantarnet/cantarnet.htm>

CCTA Government Information Service

<http://www.open.gov.uk>

The QCA

<http://www.crownbc.com/qca/menu.htm>

Virtual Teacher Centre

<http://vtc.ngfl.gov.uk/vtc/index.html>

Further Education Resources for Learning (FERL)

<http://ferl.becta.org.uk/>

e-mail: Pskoyles@which.net

Accessing the Internet

What's in it for me?

Almost anything you want. The Internet's World Wide Web spans more than 100 million pages of information, ranging from children's books to official government publications, and from light-bulb jokes to advanced astrophysics.

Why is it called a Web?

All the pages are linked together. Almost every web page has one or more 'hot spots'. Clicking your mouse-pointer over a link will then 'open' the web page.

Keeping Track

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Sowing Seeds

In previous issues of The Enquirer we have reported the activities of the ESACS Project (Evaluating a School-based, Award-bearing Curriculum Development Scheme), a collaborative action research project involving tutors from the scheme investigating their own practice through case studies in a small number of schools. Next year the ESACS team will be publishing a full account of their work over the past few years.

The crucial role of the ESACS Project in planning, implementing and evaluating our development work, in particular the birth of CANTARNET and this journal but also supporting change and development more generally, has led us to the view that an enquiry-based approach is integral to this scheme. A new research group has therefore been established:

THE CANTARNET 'SEED' PROJECT (support . enquiry . evaluation . development)

The group comprises Judy Durrant, Mike Head, Gary Holden, James Learmonth and Patrick Sills, all currently working as tutors or associate tutors. We are collaborating with David Frost who is investigating different forms of school-based development work based at University of Cambridge School of Education. There are three strands to our research:

- Investigating the impact of the scheme on teaching and learning;
- Exploring and developing the role of the tutor;
- Exploring the possibilities for teacher networking through I.C.T.

We will be building on the ESACS Project research and investigating each of these themes across all the CANTARNET schools. We would like to draw others into the dialogue, e.g. participants in the school-based groups; pupils who might have a perspective on the change agency of their teachers; the whole tutor team; others in schools who might have a perspective. We hope to visit each of the school-based groups in the autumn term of 1998 and look forward to investigating further the range of activities throughout the network. The intention is to find out the extent to which the scheme makes a difference to teaching and learning in schools and to feed back into the planning of future developments, thereby improving support for teachers and tutors involved in the scheme.
