

Blogging elsewhere from January 2017

This is a note to say that this blog is now suspended in terms of new content. I will continue to blog on my company blog [here](#).

This blog will remain here as an archive of materials, including [research articles and book chapters](#) that are not available elsewhere.

Over the years, I've been particularly critical of [Teach First](#), [free schools](#) and [school-centered approaches to initial teacher education](#) (such as Schools Direct).

I've also blogged a lot about music education, arts, general education issues and technology.

You can also [download my PhD from 2004](#) which I know folk enjoy reading 😊

I'll look forward to seeing you all over on the [UCan Play site](#).

Next round of music education hub spending delayed to end of November at the very

earliest

Last week, I made an enquiry to Arts Council England about the future of music education hub funding. As many will know, the existing round of funding comes to an end at the end of March 2016.

I received a reply today. It's not that surprising but it does confirm that any decision about future spending on music education hubs will have to wait until after the announcements surrounding the spending review (that's on the 25th November 2015).

The official response was as follows:

I can now confirm that information regarding the funding for music education hubs will not be available until after the spending review announcement on 25th November 2015. Following this however, unfortunately we are unable to guarantee a specific date when we can send out definitive funding information to music education hubs.

Two great job opportunities at the Love Music Trust

The [Love Music Trust](#) is looking to appoint a new business director and a new administrator. These two vacancies are exciting opportunities for individuals to help shape and develop the work of the Trust in new directions. Full details can be found [here](#). Please pass these details onto folk who are looking for an exciting new job in the worlds of education and music.

Desperate tactics as Schools Direct continues to flounder

Here's a copy of an email that the DfE has sent to anyone registered on the School Direct (SD) applications portal. It is encouraging those who might already have applied for a mainstream PGCE to switch towards SD in an desperate bid to fill the many outstanding places on this untried, untested programme.

Dear xxx

You may have already applied for a PGCE by now, but have you thought about applying for School Direct?

Competition for training places is very high. So applying for a second training programme is a great way to ensure you can start your teaching career this year.

Why you should apply for School Direct.

School Direct is different. That's because you're part of a school team from day one, where you can train as a teacher with the expectation of a job once you qualify. And you could receive a bursary of up to £20,000* or even be paid a salary.

It's free to apply. Simple too.

There is still time to get a place starting this year if you act quickly. [Search and apply for a School Direct place](#) by location and subject, or check out some schools which are still keen to recruit in your area on our [new vacancies](#) page. Applying is free and you can even start your application and finish it off at a later date. And if you've already applied for your PGCE, you'll be able to use a lot of the same information again.

This email has caused quite a stir in the ITT community. It seems like a deliberate attempt to poach students from PGCE routes for Gove's favoured SD route. It also contains many inaccuracies:

'Competition for training places is high'. No! Not for a Schools Direct place. In fact, when asked a parliamentary question on the 24th April 2013 about how many students had been recruited, Mr Laws' best answer was, "The National College for Teaching and Learning will be publishing data on how many applicants there have been for Schools Direct places starting in September 2013 shortly". In private meetings, DfE officials have been pushed to provide this information and but

have refused on countless occasions. It seems clear that they have massively under-recruited but do not want this news getting out at this point; it would clearly be detrimental to those students considering this route. But the key question is, of course, why is the programme under-recruiting?

'You can train as a teacher with an expectation of a job once you qualify'. No! You can expect whatever you want, but all the schools I have been in touch with are not offering any SD student a job following their training. Many schools have been put off from partaking in this programme because of this DfE-inspired myth.

'You could receive a bursary of up to £20,000!' No! Only if you teach one of a very few shortage subjects.

'Or even be paid a salary'. No! I've yet to hear of one school offering a training salary of the type that the old style GTP offered.

All this is very sad. The UK had a very high quality programme of HEI-led of initial teacher education delivered in partnership with schools. This has slowly been dismantled by Gove for ideological, not educational, reasons. Anyone who has been following this blog will have read the views of other significant people in the educational community who are warning of a crisis in teacher training if this continues. Recently, Professor Sir Robert Burgess, Vice Chancellor of the University of Leicester, has [written directly to Michael Gove about his concerns](#).

Schools Direct is the latest ill-thought through, hastily implemented, and pretty much unworkable idea that Gove and his new crony, Charlie Taylor, have come up with. Anyone with an ounce of common sense and knowledge in this area will know that it is bound to fail. Yet in another parliamentary question asked to Mr Laws on the 24th April 2013 he couldn't even confirm that a formal external evaluation of Schools

Direct would be commissioned.

Interestingly, of course, the email didn't encourage students who had applied for Teach First to also apply and transfer for the Schools Direct programme. Funny that.

What should the leaders of our Faculties of Education do in response to this? Well, UCET did issue a response to this email (although today this seems to have been withdrawn from their website). My view is that **all** universities that are involved in Schools Direct should withdraw their staff and other resources from it immediately. We are only shooting ourselves in the foot by engaging with this scheming and manipulative approach to teacher training.

Whilst they are at it, **all** universities should refuse to cooperate with Ofsted until the obvious political bias of and influence on their work has been examined and removed. They are not an independent watchdog anymore and their judgements cannot be trusted.

Gove, Wilshaw and Taylor. What a damning testament to the state of initial teacher education in this country.

[ISM urge Ministers to think again on the EBacc](#)

It's great to see one of our national music education organisations fighting back against the hastily imposed EBacc. The ISM is reported by the BBC today to have written to Nick Gibb on this matter. You can find the BBC report [here](#) and the ISM present their own report [here](#). I've written to Deborah Annetts today to make her aware of some of the stories that

you have kindly sent in. I'm sure she will find them interesting.

In the meantime, if you haven't found time to contact your local MP on this matter – what are you waiting for! As I wrote about [here](#), it is a simple job to send them an email and outline your concerns. Please fight for the future of music education in this country.

Are you good at thinking ahead?

What's in store for education over the next fifteen to twenty years? We were asked to consider this question – albeit put across in a more eloquent way – during our Division day at the Institute of Education yesterday.

As usual, it made me wonder about the nature of individual subjects, curriculum development and various recent political announcements. It prompted me to write the following which I shared on our Division wiki and repeat here for any of you out there who may be interested.

Following on from yesterday, I felt that I should say a little bit more about how I see the role of subjects within school and the positives and negatives of using them as a building block in the curriculum.

Firstly, I don't want anything to think that my view is that subjects are not important. They are. The knowledge, skills and understanding that each subject has developed over time are vital. We must respect and value each of our subject cultures and not trample all over them. But just because

subjects have been taught and organised in the way that they have been in our schools doesn't mean, in my view, that they need continue to be done in that way.

So, my second point is that I think that subjects often present barriers to student engagement because of their artificiality. Within school, they are often slow to change and develop (perhaps for good reasons). This propensity to stagnate, along with a qualifications framework that reinforces their hierarchy, means that it is very difficult for teachers (and us) to conceive of alternatives. The same is true for curriculum managers and headteachers.

But, if we are to rise to this challenge to think differently, I believe it is important to consider other organising principles for teaching and learning within the school (which, as we seemed to agree, is going to be a location for teaching and learning for some time to come). What might these alternative principles be? Discuss!

Perhaps discrete subjects will remain the preferred option? The coalition government believe them to be the right way to organise the curriculum. However, in an age where schools (and in particular Headteachers) have sole and absolute power to make decisions about nearly every aspect of their work, a 'slimmed down' National Curriculum means, to me at least, that many subjects (I would guess including music, art, history, geography, etc) may well become at best optional and at worst potentially ignored in some schools. Certainly, the principle of a broad and balanced curriculum entitlement for all students seems questionable. In what may be a classic political trick, the coalition government may espouse the value of this type of curriculum, but ultimately be able to assert (blame?) individual schools or headteachers when they don't enact their values. Either way, the National Curriculum as we know it may not contain that common entitlement in a year or so from now. In relation to this point, we have much to learn from John Rainer about how drama has remained within

many schools despite being outside of the formal National Curriculum framework.

Perhaps these changing notions of subjects within the curriculum will create the conditions where a cross-curricular or inter-disciplinary approach to the curriculum will be fostered? But recent history does not bode well in this respect either. I doubt it will given recent pronouncements by Gove et al.

For us, in ITE, what happens in schools will have a major affect on how our courses should be structured and delivered. To be blunt, what's the point of a PGCE in Music when music isn't taught and part of a common curriculum entitlement in schools? I can see a time coming when we may be forced out of our subject boundaries into some kind of broader 'arts' or 'humanities' ITE roles. It would be better to develop the approaches to ITE in these new arenas along principled lines that we can all agree on, ensuring that subject cultures are respected and built upon, rather than be forced into rapid changes and dancing to another's tune and timeline (and can you dance to a timeline?).

Anyway, perhaps I've got this all wrong. Maybe we'll be doing the same sort of courses as we are doing now in 15 years time? But would we want that either? The challenges seem to me to be about a broader set of circumstances, issues and ideas that we should be engaging with to shape what we are doing today as well as how we plan for the future. For me, at least, a broader notion of cross-curricularity and inter-disciplinarity is essential because that is what is happening in the real musical world as I understand it. As a trite example, the visual impact of The Muse's concert last Saturday made as big an impression on me as the musical impact and certainly engaged the whole audience. The longer that we retreat into our subject and find comfort there, the more we will alienate young people and others from learning about it in school. Music has a dreadful legacy in this respect which can't be

allowed to, and shouldn't, continue for much longer.

[Estelle Morris in today's Guardian](#)

Estelle Morris has written an [excellent piece in today's Guardian](#) which I would highly recommend to all readers with an interest in the UK education system and, more generally, in curriculum development within educational policy.

She highlights a number of weaknesses in the Conservative party 'policy' (or should that be lack of policy, as we really are having to guess what precisely they are wanting to do) in respect to their policy on curriculum development and implementation. Her belief is that the QCDA may be the shortest lived quango of all time should the Tories come to power. But, worryingly given her political status and position in the educational world, she seems none the wiser than the rest of us about who might take responsibility for shaping future iterations of curriculum frameworks.

Let's briefly consider a couple of contexts. Firstly, the secondary curriculum. In the last three years the National Curriculum for Key Stage 3 has undergone a significant transformation. In my travels around schools and in my work as a National Subject Lead for Music, I have heard many positive stories about the changes that this has facilitated in our schools. It's not all good news (obviously), but the changes have been generally welcomed. Secondly, the primary curriculum. Here, things are far from clear. There have been several reviews (Rose, Cambridge Review, etc) and the QCDA have recently published a 'new' primary curriculum on their

website. But there is a considerably lack of clarity about what is going to change, how and when? Just go and talk with any primary school teacher, or primary teacher trainer. Why? I think it is because of direct political interference from all political parties. The primary curriculum reforms has become a political football and this is disgraceful. It is far too important for that.

So, the future of the QCDA is uncertain should the Tories get in. But the alternative on offer is no more certain either. Morris sketches out what she believes might happen. It sounds frightening and I'll let her words speak for themselves. But as she points out, little, if any, lessons seem to have been learnt from recent history about the process of curriculum development in Tory thinking. (The cynic in me wonders whether many of them really mind too much; after all, independent schools have always done their own thing – perhaps they are just extending that principle to the rest of us?).

Ultimately, I agree with Morris that there is a substantial lack of vision in what we can glean from the Tory proposals. The QCDA, for all its failings, has at least implemented a process of significant curriculum reform in the secondary curriculum and, given the opportunity, would have done the same for the primary curriculum. One can always argue over details of these reforms. But the big process for curriculum development, policy and implementation under a Tory Government leaves a massive amount to be desired. What do you think?

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Patti Lather, Ohio State University. 'The State of Qualitative Inquiry: Methodology 2.1'

Stephen Ball, Institute of Education, London. 'Challenges of Policy Analysis in Hard Times'

Erica Burman, MMU. 'Washing Dirty Linen in Public: Performing Gender, Generation and Class in Neoliberal Times'

Neil Mercer, University of Cambridge. 'Analysing Classroom Dialogue: Theory and Method'

Nick Lee, Warwick University. 'Researching Childhood, Growth and Change: Bio-politics, Affect and Attractors'

Maggie MacLure, MMU. 'The Offence of Theory'

Bridget Somekh, MMU. 'Localisation or Globalisation? The Dynamics of Action Research'

Lorna Roberts, MMU. 'Critical Race Theory'

Ian Parker, MMU. 'Psychoanalytic Theory'.

Rachel Holmes, Liz Jones, Maggie MacLure, Christina MacRae, MMU. 'Encounters with Art Theory'

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