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Introduction

Welcome to the fifth volume of the Patana Journal. I can hardly believe that it is five years since a small group of dedicated and passionate teachers at Bangkok Patana School first came together to discuss the possibility of starting a journal. The commitment shown then to enhance learning, share knowledge and work collaboratively has flourished. We had three wonderful contributions in our first edition and we have now grown to sharing eleven diverse and interesting articles in the current one. An incredible achievement! It is important to acknowledge at the outset all of the hard work of Cheryl Rego in completing the layout and design of the journal and Rob Brown, for the copious amounts of proofreading he has uncomplainingly completed.

One thing I have been particularly thrilled with is how, over the years, the journal has piqued the interest of so many different groups of people in our Bangkok Patana Community. From alumni to parents to students to librarians to teachers to Senior Leaders we have had many contributors to it.

In this edition, Teacher Assistants (TAs) Pasinee Irving, Kwansiri Supho and Patcharee Pibankhan write reflectively on their experiences of presenting at a teachers' networking meeting held at Shrewsbury School in October 2015. They warmly explore the doubts they had and nervousness they felt about presenting, before eloquently sharing the benefits they gained from taking part in such an experience.

I had no idea of everything that our wonderful TAs do at Bangkok Patana until I had the pleasure of reading Erin Tantivirasut and Kuntaya Intarakeha's paper, humorously entitled 'A Life in the Day of a Teaching Assistant'. Anyone who believes that TAs are simply 'helpers' is badly mistaken. Throughout the article, the TAs' phenomenal knowledge of how children learn and how actively they are involved in helping every single child fulfil their potential is clearly shown.

Creativity abounds in Bridget Green's paper. As part of a research project, Bridget explores how she can help Secondary students overcome any potential obstacles which may limit

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their understanding of the function of Art in Society. A serious and very pertinent topic to Bangkok Patana, but written in letter form in a wonderfully whimsical tone to a student participant in her project. It is not only hugely informative but also a delight to read.

The case study approach in Rachel Stead's paper is very interesting. Rachel successfully highlights the main issues surrounding choice and self-efficacy and explores how educators can best use choice as a positive tool for student learning. This mixed method study focuses on the experiences of Year 5 students as they undertake a real life musical challenge taken from their planned scheme of learning.

Andy Roff's article also draws on the experiences of our own Patana students and will genuinely influence and affect future decisions and practice at Bangkok Patana. Using research for the purpose of improving student attainment is a commendable goal and one that he has executed brilliantly. This is Andy's second paper exploring students achieving their potential at IB. In this paper he openly and honestly explores strategies that have worked well and not so well in order to inform future planning. We look forward to his review of the success of changes made to the monitoring of student progress in the next issue.

Andy is not our only teacher who has contributed to more than one edition of our journal. Michelle Brinn has contributed to every single volume! In this paper, Michelle and Jo Rice, an ex-Patana teacher, explore the advantages of having a critical friend, in this case, Michelle, visit a school and appraise an initiative being worked on. It was fantastic to read Michelle's paper exploring global learning communities across schools.

Lisa Cody-Sehmar is another longstanding member of our group who has always engaged in wonderful collaborative discussion and writing. Previously Lisa has explored ethics in educational research, specifically looking at its relevance. This was sure to be a solid foundation for her to use when completing her recent research exploring how we can change 20th century classrooms into 21st century learning environments through the embracing of digital technology.

Innovation is something that our group is constantly exploring in our meetings and Lizzy West and Gemma Pomfret write a fascinating article on how Social Stories can be used to support our students through the complexities of our social world. Starting with an explanation of what Social Stories are and who they can be used with and how, this is a fascinating insight into a strategy that is probably underused in many schools.

Innovation is also close to the heart of Nick Goligher who has explored in detail, not only what exactly innovation means in schools, but how and why it can succeed or fail. Drawing on the current research available in this field, Nick leaves the readers with much to reflect on and consider within their own particular educational contexts.

Helping students succeed in all aspects of school life is central to what we do at Patana. Hannah Marshall's article explores the positive impact that participating in physical activity has on students' academic success. A detailed review of current literature, the paper is an excellent reminder about how important it is to have a broad and balanced school curriculum.

At Patana, I think it is fair to say that one of our strengths is our constant desire to innovate and improve in all aspects of our school life. This is clearly shown in James Penstone's paper which reflects on what interculturalism is and how and why it can be embraced in schools. James' article is a thoughtful piece leaving the reader excited to learn more about what we can do in our own school to further meet the needs of our third and fourth culture kids.

The depth and breadth of the topics explored in this edition is phenomenal. I hope you enjoy reading the articles in it as much as I have.

Warm regards,
Sally Flint
Editor

Personal Reflections on Presenting at the Bangkok Teachers' Network

By Pasinee Irving, Kwansiri Supho and Patcharee Pibankhan

Dr Dylan William states, "Every teacher needs to improve, not because they are not good enough, but because they can be even better." (Appleby, 2015)

In June 2015, a number of Teaching Assistants (TA) were asked if they would be prepared to present a workshop at the upcoming Bangkok Teachers' Network (BTN) event at Shrewsbury School in October 2015. From this, two workshops were offered by volunteers from Bangkok Patana School: 'Supporting Small Group Phonics in Early Years Foundation Stage' and 'Signing for Learners in Early Years'. This article will give our personal reflections on our preparations for the event, the benefits of having presented at BTN and some advice for potential future presenters.

Supporting Small Group Phonics in Early Years Foundation Stage

We volunteered to present at BTN, thinking that it might be interesting as well as personally and professionally developmental. Initially, we felt nervous about what to do. Why should other TAs listen to what we have to say? Do we have anything worthwhile to present? We were given lots of support and advice from our teaching colleagues which gave us the confidence to continue researching some possible topics for the workshop. After gathering many ideas and activities from various people, we decided on a title for the workshop which would fit around the activities we believed would be useful to share with other TAs from across the city. We decided to present on phonics in small groups because we use phonics on a daily basis and can clearly see how this technique enhances student progress. Additionally, we are all very familiar with phonics and are comfortable talking about it with others.

We began by discussing the overall structure of the workshop before pinning down the fine details of what we were each going to do. We asked advice from a number of teachers and TAs who were very keen to offer suggestions for activities which might be useful for sharing. We then used this structure and the various activities to produce a PowerPoint presentation for the workshop. We felt it was important not to appear to lecture our colleagues, but to take part in an active workshop in which participants would hopefully take away with them a number of novel ideas, activities and games to help them in their daily interactions with children. We made sure that the workshop activities changed every few minutes to make good use of everyone's time and also that the grouping of the participants was random to help mix the group up - just like we do with students!

On the day itself, we were surprised to welcome many more participants than we had expected. Our session had proved to be very popular; perhaps we did have something to say that people were interested in hearing! The session seemed to pass very quickly with lots of audience participation, discussion and sharing of good practice within the group. We believe this is partly thanks to the large amount of thought and preparation we did prior to the workshop.

The feedback we received was very positive. It was obvious that the workshop participants had enjoyed the session and had taken away a number of ideas and activities to their own schools. One of the many pieces of feedback we received said, '*Thank you so much for your email and the pictures you sent us. I absolutely enjoyed your phonics training session. It was fun and useful for a newbie in phonics teaching like me. I hope we have more opportunity to do something like this again in the future. Also, I appreciated the links you sent us - thank you.'* Despite all of the hard work, receiving positive feedback such as this made the experience all that much more worthwhile!

We felt that there were a number of benefits to having prepared and delivered a workshop:

- The sharing of good practice, different perspectives and issues related to the topic from TAs from across the

city
- Meeting and networking with different colleagues
- Improving communication and presentation skills
- Being challenged, taking risks and stepping out of our comfort zones has improved our confidence in our own abilities
- It demonstrated to ourselves and others the potential in the TAs from Bangkok Patana

Signing for Learners for Early Years

We chose to present on 'Signing for Learners for Early Years' because signing is so beneficial to students who have not yet gained sufficient language skills to communicate orally. We use this technique on a daily basis with the students.

The skills required to present at BTN included:
- being very organised
- managing time well
- arranging various meetings with colleagues after work
- prioritising what needed to be done and when

Amongst the benefits of having delivered a session include gaining more confidence. I felt quite nervous standing in front of people even though I knew what I had to do. I also learned how to prepare everything professionally prior to the workshop. I feel thankful to my colleagues for inviting me to join them in presenting at the Bangkok Teachers' Network. Working collaboratively with a colleague, we shared the tasks fairly and decided who was going to present which aspect of the topic being discussed.

The presenters received very good feedback. At the end of the session, we had people come and talk to us about how useful using signs was. We explained that we don't just use signs in isolation but also use them in conjunction with words to help children understand more. We use the signs with every child, not only EAL or students with special needs.

In conclusion, taking an active part in presenting workshops at BTN had a number of positive outcomes which included:
- Improving self-confidence. Take the risk!
- Helping other TAs become open-minded to new ideas which will help support their students' learning
- Sharing CPD opportunities with TAs from other schools
- Sharing new ideas, activities and experiences that TAs can use to improve their effectiveness and potential for the benefit of the children in their classroom
- Increasing knowledge through networking; learning from others is more powerful than learning from books

Here is some advice for potential future presenters:
- Working collaboratively as a team with the support of colleagues is vital
- Good preparation prevents a poor performance and helps confidence on the day
- Be yourself and be confident to share the knowledge or experience you have. Others will learn from you and you will learn from them through the discussions you have during the day

Echoing Dr William's quote, we presented and attended sessions at BTN, not because the TAs aren't good enough, but because we want to be even better.

Finally, we would like to thank all of our colleagues who helped, supported and guided us in our preparation and delivery of the workshops. Without you, our success would have been impossible.

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A Day in the Life of Nursery Teaching Assistants

By Erin Tantivirasut and Kuntaya Intarakeha
Nursery Teaching Assistants Bangkok Patana School

Have you ever wondered what children do in Nursery? What does a 3-year-old human learn every day? Do they just come to school and play? Actually, the learning starts as soon as children walk through the Nursery gate. All the children know what needs to get done once they arrive. Their routine begins immediately. First, they have to take out their 'Red Book' from their school bag and put it on their name on the mat. Then, they transfer the bag to the cupboard and put their hat on. After that, children complete self-registration by finding their name and sticking it under a number on the wall. Last but not least, they will not forget to use the toilet before starting any play! This is where the morning routine begins. During this process, Teaching Assistants will be around to motivate the children to complete these tasks independently.

But who are teaching assistants exactly? You may have often heard of Teaching Assistants, or TAs for short, and would probably think of people who do general administrative work, prepare materials for lessons, and check home-learning. Surprisingly, the role of Teaching Assistant goes beyond that. According to the National Careers Service in the UK, Teaching Assistants support children with their learning activities in the classroom and work closely with teachers to make sure pupils enjoy learning in a safe and caring setting. Therefore, in this article, we are going to walk you through what we as Nursery Teaching Assistants do in a day to develop the children's learning.

Children are naturally inquisitive and curious about the world around them, so after our morning routine, children always start their day in the garden. There are so many activities for the young learners to explore. Riding a bike, climbing across the a-frame, sliding down the slide or balancing on the tracks are great ways to warm up bodies and stretch muscles. These exercises prepare the children to explore the natural world outside the classroom. If you have a chance to walk around the Nursery garden, you will meet a lot of young independent learners being scientists, engineers, chefs, musicians and many more! What about TAs? The TAs' responsibilities are to ask and encourage the children to talk about their learning in the activity they are participating in. The more conversation we hear from our children, the more imaginative is their thinking process.

Activities are many and varied. At times we take a nature walk, collecting and counting the number of rocks, leaves or pebbles. Then TAs will have the children sort, examine and describe the objects in as many ways as possible. As a daily surprise on their learning journey, the children may find a snail, which makes them curious about this new creature they have just found. They might want to be a scientist on that day to learn how a snail lives in our environment. The next day, they might also find a baby bird living in a nest, and become inquisitive about how the tiny bird grows bigger. This kind of situation is a great way to introduce our children to what living things need to live and grow. This opportunity for learning enables the children to gain a deeper understanding of the world of living creatures. The more they know about the world around them, the easier it is for them to express new information, ideas and communicate this knowledge.

In the Nursery garden, imaginative play turns our young learners into little, bright engineers in the construction area, or talented chefs at the mud kitchen. What can a young, bright engineer do? He or she, with friends, can learn to build their own house with blocks and planks. Or a little chef can cook a meal for their friends using several kinds of culinary tools. This is definitely a great chance for TAs to include mathematics knowledge in the play. For instance, TAs can ask the children to count how many planks or blocks they have used or what the shape of the house they made was. While children are cooking, they are also learning about measurements: "Are those pots full, empty or half full?" Or opening up a conversation, "Can you tell me about what you're building?" We always engage the

children in conversation by asking open-ended questions to get them to describe different shapes, sizes, patterns and textures of the objects being used. The more language they use, the more critical thinking they engage in and vocabulary they develop.

Throughout the day, our young learners are always immersed in nursery rhymes and signs for learning. Teachers and TAs have been trained by 'Luton Learning Resource Centre' to use sign language along with spoken words. The reason why both rhymes and sign language play a huge role in Nursery is that when we sing or sign the language, not only do the children develop listening and speaking skills, but they also effectively build and increase new vocabulary. There are several nursery rhymes we sing during an activity, which help our children to stay focused when doing classroom activities. This is because they make a meaningful connection between the lines and the learning process. We find the children enjoy the rhymes and Signs for Learning very much, and we are actually very proud of them every time they sing the rhymes or use sign language.

Numerous learning opportunities happen everywhere. That means indoor learning is as important as outdoor learning. TAs always realise that each child is unique and has different personal interests; therefore, the free-flow learning allows them to choose an activity they find interesting by themselves. This provides the opportunity to make the children become independent learners from their own interests, and at the same time they are learning to collaborate with each other.

There is plenty of learning inside the classroom such as reading, painting and mark-making. Some of our young learners are real bookworms and story tellers. They love spending time in the book corner. TAs need to create a comfortable reading area. Combining books and toys in most areas will increase the chance of reading even more. Children are allowed to choose the books themselves and share reading experiences with peers.

In our painting and mark-making areas, our young artists can use a variety of materials, textures and tools for producing arts and developing their fine motor skills. TAs will model to the children how to try different kinds of tools such as brushes, staples, hole-punchers and tape-dispensers. Hence, children will learn to use and handle these tools correctly. However, the most important part of these two stations is not only practising their fine motor skills, but also sharing their ideas of the mark-making or painting they created.

Digital devices have become a part of our everyday lives and we use them to develop learning. Our young learners are provided with IT gadgets, such as a smartboards and iPads, for their learning. There are plenty of educational sites and apps for them to explore. We use iPads and smartboards in several activities as they produce interactive displays, so our children can experience using ICT.

Everything we do is linked to real life. Here comes snack time! TAs need to make sure our children learn to take care of personal hygiene before they can have milk and snacks. Thus, the children need to follow simple directions, to use the toilets and to wash their hands. After finishing their snacks, their duty is to wash their snack bowl themselves and fold the apron properly. This is a routine to help young children develop healthy habits early in life. Similarly, TAs encourage the children to always tidy up and put things away as they go. These behaviours are reinforced and practised on a daily basis so that the children know what to do after they have finished playing with their toys.

After the whole learning day, lunchtime is another important learning journey before going home. The children take an active role in preparing lunch tables for themselves and their friends. In this process, they learn about self-caring, handling and controlling plates, cups, and spoons. They also learn about caring for others, which is as important as self-caring. At lunch time it is essential for TAs to model good eating habits and follow a meal schedule. Moreover, we teach the children to take small amounts of food at first, and demonstrate respectful and polite vo-

cabulary when they need more food. During lunchtime, the children are encouraged to try a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables with lots of different colours to help their bodies grow and be healthy.

After finishing their lunch, the children's duty is to tidy up their plate and cup themselves. In this process, they learn to queue up and wait in line to put their plates in the proper area. TAs monitor their behaviour and see how well they can do the jobs independently. After that, they pack up their bags and put their 'Red Book' in it. Then, they get a 'shape' and sit down waiting for the teachers to say goodbye. TAs need to make sure that the children are able to follow the tasks step by step, then send the children to their parents.

Every moment is a chance to learn — whether the children are playing in or outside the classroom. TAs are fully aware of the importance of high quality settings because it provides the children with varied opportunities to discover, experience, and apply their learning. We call this 'child-initiated play'. Therefore, designing the best classroom environment is a crucial part of what we do. It is necessary to create a positive learning environment in order to provide great opportunities for children to choose an activity, create an imaginative play and share their learning with friends. The children are also taught about responsible behaviours in caring for classroom materials. And every day we make sure classroom materials are accessible and labelled so the children can use them independently and return them to a designated location.

Children learning to 'share' and 'take turns' is a meaningful way of building relationships. TAs will first observe how a child verbally and non-verbally interacts with others then model to them appropriate ways to use words to communicate their needs and feelings, and to help them share with others. Furthermore, TAs will demonstrate positive ways to make friends, ask to join others in play, and take turns in games. Social problem-solving skills are also emphasised such as using simple negotiation skills to solve conflicts. In this situation, communication is key. TAs help equip the children with the skills to communicate effectively.

Another important role of TAs is to challenge children's learning in every activity they do. Using open-ended questions — who, what, where, when, why, and how — allows the children to express their feelings and ideas, develop critical thinking skills, brainstorm good solutions and talk about what they found out. Most importantly, collaborating with each other and starting a conversation among children are crucial for young children's social development.

All of these are significant ways in which TAs encourage and motivate daily learning in Nursery. TAs need to be ready to support new interests from our young learners because we will never know what is going to happen in each day. There are always new learning opportunities just waiting to happen.

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Understanding 'Understanding' in the Visual Arts Curriculum

How can I, a teacher of Visual Arts, help my students overcome the obstacles limiting their understanding of the function of art in society?

By Bridget Green, Art Teacher

This paper aims to record one aspect of a small-scale Action Research project undertaken by me, a teacher-researcher, in my own classroom at Bangkok Patana School (BPS). This study was recently completed as part of my Master's Degree. In attempting to grasp my students' understanding of the function of art in society, I have discovered that what I considered to be careless habits of thought and minor misconceptions actually represent wide-reaching and resilient ideologies. There are many common and unquestioned approaches that constitute 'normal' Art teaching. I would argue that we, the BPS Art Department, should be challenging these methods and seeking better alternatives or we risk allowing or indeed encouraging a strangely meaningless technical practice in our students. The danger lies in expecting them to suspend their curiosity about why art is made and to concentrate only on how it is made. Through this project I have tried to raise my students' awareness of these issues, challenge some of their simplistic views and disrupt what sometimes appears to be complacency. In the process of my research, I became engulfed in a shifting and ambiguous post-qualitative world where theory is visceral; understanding, an event; data becomes endlessly problematic; and the lines are blurred between academic writing and fiction. In order to honour the complexity of my subject and explore the validity and ambiguity of representing even myself, I have used the narrative device of a series of letters to various, possibly imagined, 'participants' in the study.

The form of my dissertation makes overt the issues of audience with regard to academic writing. The named recipients of my correspondence are both real people and metaphors. Thus, I have tried to position myself ontologically. Creswell (2013, p.20) states, "When researchers conduct qualitative research, they are embracing the idea of multiple realities. Different researchers embrace different realities, as do the individuals being studied and the readers of the qualitative study." Scholars in the field are, literally, an audience I seek to address (the like-minded and also those I hope to persuade to change their views), but as a currently practising teacher, engaged in a democratically motivated project, my students must also be, on some level, the desired benefactors of my new wisdom. I have tried, in the section reproduced here, to address the student participants who contributed to my study. This letter to Ben is perhaps a final statement in a stumbling dialogue that proved challenging beyond my expectations but both frustrating and revealing in equal measure. The actions in this project have all been motivated with this demanding audience in mind.

Chapter Three – Where are Chapter 1 and 2?

Dear Ben,
You signed that letter of consent (Appendix) in the first term of Year 12 and you know I've been recording some of our lessons as part of this research project I'm doing, but I suspect you're not especially interested in the results. I imagine I could let it peter out and you wouldn't feel you'd been neglected in any way. Maybe you never thought of yourself as a 'participant' as such, more like a member of the public completing a survey or perhaps a laboratory rat with electrodes attached. I set out to 'explore and develop my students' understanding of the function of art in society.' I have been studying all of you but I have also been studyingmyself, the relationships between us and whatever kinds of new knowledge we might have constructed over the past year.

I'm a 'culturalist' in that I recognise Bruner's model of mind. He says, "the meaning-making of the culturalist, unlike the information processing of the computationalist, is in principle interpretive, fraught with ambiguity, sensitive to

the occasion, and often after the fact" (2009, p.163). So I am trying to understand better what goes on in my classroom, mostly through watching and guessing and reflecting, and hoping for moments of insight on the way.

According to Bruner, culturalism asks, "what function 'education' serves in the culture and what role it plays in the lives of those who operate within it" (2009, p.166). It is not my aim to simply measure your understanding of the subject, although at the start I did think I might try. I am also asking why this understanding is of benefit to you and to the various social communities in which you live. I am formulating value-judgements about why this learning is important.

When I was planning this project I made a list of possible indicators that you, my students, might be developing deeper understanding of the function of art in society. Because the subject is so complex, it couldn't be assessed with a quiz or a survey. I was looking for signs of doubt, confusion, curiosity, and a willingness to engage with the complexity of multiple meanings and cultural influences. These descriptors were part of a table that I made in preparation for my investigation:

- Artists seen as influenced by context
- Artists decision-making seen as influenced by tradition (including reacting against traditional models) and issues of patronage
- Comments suggest that meaning is open to interpretation and not therefore fixed but may include notions of 'better' or 'worse' interpretations
- Artists and therefore artworks seen as 'constructed'; a product of context
- Artists seen as culturally rooted and also ideologically constrained
- Artists seen as socially powerful and socially responsible" (Green, 2012, appendix).

The type of research I chose to undertake is called Action Research. I chose it because it is democratic and respectful of all participants. It usually generates qualitative data, rather than statistics, which seemed more appropriate for a complex subject like 'understanding,' and it involves a lot of critical reflection and I love thinking about complicated problems.

Carr and Kemmis (1986, p.162) describe it like this: "Action research is simply a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices, and the situations in which the practices are carried out." When I was planning the project I wrote in response: "I must confess I do not always see the simplicity of what I am hoping to undertake but if I can cope with the uncertainty of the process, if I can face with courage the ethical dilemmas that emerge, then perhaps I can improve as a teacher, help to empower my students in their arts practice and encourage my peers to reconsider a problematic and undervalued area of the visual arts curriculum" (Green, 2012, p.8).

I should also put my cards on the table here and confess I have a slightly bigger agenda than just teaching more effectively. Malone (2003, p.813) records that, "Peshkin (1988) called for explicit articulation of the researcher's core values that come into play in the subjective interpretations of qualitative enquiry, an articulation that allows the inevitable subjectivity to become 'virtuous'." I believe that making art, which is the subject of my research, and also teaching, which is my profession, and even educational research, like that in which I am currently engaged, are all political activities. They all involve power-relations between people and moral decisions and have the potential to change the world. When I set out to promote your understanding of the function of art in society I guess I was secretly hoping that you might come to see how you too could become agents of change, challenge injustice and inspire future generations. It hasn't exactly gone according to plan.

Videoing our class discussions was a useful way to record what was said so I could analyse it later. (The recordings and transcripts have been kept confidential according to our agreement (Appendix). When I have quoted from them directly, they are referred to by number (T1-4 for transcripts, N1 for notes), but they will not be published.) It

meant I didn't need to take notes and I could concentrate on events as they happened. It also meant I couldn't *selectively* remember what had taken place or reconstruct events to my own advantage. I had no idea how embarrassing and difficult these recordings would be. They really forced me to face up to some home truths: I really do talk too much; I don't explain things nearly as clearly as I seem to think; and this subject that I am so passionate about… *my students find it boring*.

Illeris (2014, p.8) describes the process of transformative learning in this way: "…the teacher's and the joint activities must lead to and support the development of experience and reflection that can provide the participants with new ideas and understandings of themselves and their surroundings." I was hoping to facilitate this learning for my students but I was the one being educated. I had wanted to arrange this exciting, liberating learning adventure and it appeared I had failed miserably. The shame, humiliation and guilt I experienced were pretty intense.

Kemmis (2010, p.426), one of my education-theory heroes (yes, such things do exist) once said about research: "if the character, conduct or consequences of the practices were found to be… *Personally unsustainable:* causing harm or suffering; unreasonably 'using up' people's knowledge, capacities, identity, self-understanding, bodily integrity, esteem, privacy, resources, energy or time," then things would have to change. I underwent a little 'researcher crisis.' I wrote pages of notes in my journal, which included many more questions than answers, and then I started reading again. My experience couldn't be that extraordinary. Maybe somebody clever could shed some light on my dismal situation.

In his book *Out of Our Minds, Learning to be Creative,* Robinson (2011, p.224) suggests, "the physical environments in which people work: the structures of the buildings, the design of workspaces and the equipment and furnishings. The physical habitat can have a profound bearing on the cultural mood of the organization." On the video I had seen a nasty image of a stubborn, impatient teacher lecturing a group of listless, embarrassed students. I wondered what environmental changes I could make to change this horrible dynamic. I sketched a doodle of cakes and couches in my journal and I planned 'The Tea Party'.

This surprise certainly changed the atmosphere in the class. It served as my apology for wasting your time and we had a constructive discussion over tea. One member of the class sent me an email later saying, "Thank you for the tea party, Ms Green, it really worked in engaging everyone." (You may have noticed that those soft chairs are now a permanent fixture in my classroom.) However, this didn't really get to the heart of the problem. Although this event helped alleviate the symptoms of the disease of *disengagement*, it didn't provide a cure.

I designed the investigation into the *Raft of the Medusa*, that famous painting by Gericault. I felt sure that a bit of drama, mutiny at sea, cannibalism and death would make the task at least *interesting* but you all hated it. Alice ventured, "it's the approach of everything here that bored me," and also, "it's like eating something that you didn't really like, you still have that bad taste in your mouth" (T2). Silver complained, "I feel like it was forced on me to do it" (ibid). Then I challenged you all directly. I said, "I would hope that as young artists you would be interested in how artists make decisions" (T2) and you, kind of apologetically, replied, "I think we're all just eager to paint" (ibid). It became a 'critical incident' in my research. It seemed to me to indicate the expectation of the class that art lessons should be for *practical* activity and that talking, reading and writing were activities that 'got in the way' and wasted precious time.

As well as redesigning my teaching interventions to try and make them more engaging, I started reading 'between the lines' of the transcripts of our discussions. I started focusing my attention and my thought on comments that I had initially disregarded; side-comments, off-task observations and questions and suggestions that specifically upset or embarrassed me. MacLure (2013, p.660) had given me some new ideas about examining data. She wrote, "we are obliged to acknowledge that data have their own ways of making themselves intelligible to us. This can be seen, or rather felt, on occasions when one becomes especially 'interested' in a piece of data – such as a sarcastic

comment in an interview, or a perplexing incident, or an observed event that makes you feel kind of peculiar." This offered an alternative way of *making sense* of data that did not involve coding or clustering words and phrases as many traditional qualitative researchers do when analysing their findings. The quotations I have selected from our discussions have been chosen because they surprised or annoyed me or seemed to hold significance beyond their initial interpretation.

I was irritated by your suggestion to, "show us the art and say *'what do you think?'*" (T2). Summers (1998, p.134) suggests that *understanding* requires more than just looking and formulating a personal response. He claims, "the meanings we simply see in works of art, although not without their own value, are not historical, and therefore not explanatory. In order to gain such understanding we must actually do history." I had been specifically trying to invert this 'normal' approach to critical studies. Cunliffe (2005, p.132) helps to define these alternative approaches: "By using Searle's idea of world-to-mind or mind-to-world as a selective emphasis or direction of fit, we can begin to demarcate epistemic, transpersonal explanations for art from interpretative, personal responses, thus allowing students to encounter works of art from their own cultural position of mind-to-world as well as extending their understanding through providing the world-to-mind knowledge seeking method of the logic of the situation."

I was disappointed that you didn't enjoy the investigation I had designed but I also wanted to accommodate your request. We investigated the works from *The Museum of Bad Art* and everyone contributed to the discussion (as you know this doesn't always happen in class). However, your responses reflected the same attachment to simplistic notions about how and why artists make work: their *creativity* is based on *imagination* and they use it to share and *express their emotions*. The final part of the exercise, the generating of a list of questions that we would need to answer in order to verify our initial responses was viewed as an 'optional extension' task rather than the crux of the issue.

The final intervention that I chose to record was the session where we discussed and drafted artists' statements for the Year 12 examination exhibition. Perhaps people were motivated by the fact that this was part of a formally assessed and reported submission. Early on you asked, "what if you do something without using any other external sources… would that restrict my grade… not looking at any other artists?" (T4). Your suggestion, that seems to suggest that an artist can act entirely independently, corresponds with what Cunliffe (2014, p.5) describes as, "the understanding of creativity in early modernism as analogous to a subversive dreamer, [which] in modern art education shows up as self-expression. The focus on inward processes nurtures persons as thought to be divorced from their socio-cultural surroundings, and thus only belonging to nature." He extrapolates from this point, "if creativity is analogous with dreaming, that is, devoid of an intelligible shared reality and calibrated use of intermediary tools shaped by meta-cognition, this would mean that art cannot be deliberately planned, taught or assessed. The subject floats free from justified knowledge, making it impossible to develop complex as opposed to trivial cognitive processes in art education" (2014, p.11). I realised that despite all my talk of culture and audience, I really hadn't had much impact on how you viewed the function of art in society. Even more recently, in preparation for your trial exam you submitted a document entitled, *Forced Statement*; perhaps an indicator that you still don't feel it is appropriate to expect artists to explain or justify their work.

I think you would enjoy many of the ideas of Herbert Read, an early and committed advocate of arts education. He suggested, "The artist must be ready to delve below the level of normal consciousness, the crust of conventional thought and behaviour, into his own unconscious, and the collective unconscious of his group or race" (Read, 1963, p.7). I think your class would embrace this vision of the artist as delving his own unconscious. "Emotional self-expression" and "self-discovery" were two of the most popular 'functions of art' mentioned in our very first meeting (N1). However, Read also appreciated that the artist, although frequently being seen as, or adopting the position of, an outsider, was a member and a product of the society in which he or she was born, lived and worked. In Read's own words: "the artist must learn to love and understand the society that renounces him [or her]" (Read,

1963, p.9). He suggests that if we try to ignore or divorce ourselves from our culture we are cut off from our 'life-blood', or as Cunliffe (2005, p.125) suggests, "we can only be ourselves by belonging to communities."

We like to see art as special and different from other subjects. Pascal noted, "You feel it the minute you walk into this classroom. It's like really free… liberating" (T1). I too sometimes enjoy the special status of my subject but we lose out too if we allow ourselves to be seen as too separate. Our understanding of art is enormously enriched by our knowledge of other subjects. History, Literature and Theory of Knowledge have clear connections, but so do Mathematics, Sciences, Languages etc. Tallack (2000, p.99) describes how, "Barriers are erected between art and other subjects that prevent students from having access to knowledge, facts and ideas that are fundamental to understanding the visual arts." Curricula planned around technical skills and formal elements create a separation between the *theoretical* and the *practical* aspects of arts practice. I fear that the new IB Visual Arts syllabus (IBO, 2014) may reinforce this rift by making separate components of the *Process Portfolio* and the *Comparative Study*.

The problem is that in arts practice these two aspects cannot be separated. Robinson (2011, p.151) writes: "I define creativity as the process of having original ideas that have value." You appear to have a different definition of creativity. When you said, "whoever made this was very creative… it makes you use your imagination" (T3), the implication is that creativity comes from within the individual. I would suggest that you cannot generate 'original ideas' without some awareness of what has already been done, and one cannot judge if a work is 'of value' without a sense of its purpose. Cunliffe (2014, p.16) records how Harland et al (2000) identified this precise issue in the provision for arts education in the UK. They defined a specific weakness in, "the development of critical discrimination and aesthetic judgment-making, especially the capacity to locate these in their social, artistic and cultural contexts; the furthering of thinking skills, or more accurately, a meta-awareness of the intellectual dimensions to artistic processes."

The last point I want to make is about freedom. Silver describes art as, "a subject that is so free and usually has no barriers" (T1). You suggested that, "the reason people join art in IB is to have a sense of freedom" (ibid). In attempting to define what makes art different from other subjects, Pascal suggested, "We can do whatever we want" (T1). Unfortunately this freedom is a myth. In the era of Modernism people wrote and talked about art as though the 'formal qualities' were all that mattered. Art was seen as a universal visual language that could speak without words and thus communicate across cultures. Highly educated critics were the only ones 'qualified' to talk about art and when they did so they used a mysterious, specialist language that made the work exclusive and inaccessible.

This mystification helped to create the illusion that artists were doing something strange, magical and free from constraint. If, however, their individual intentions had been probed, it could have been established that they were investigating or interrogating the social and natural world around them and trying to contribute a useful comment or question to an ongoing cultural conversation. Tallack's (2000, p.105) quotation from Reid illustrates this idea: "The processes of art-making in a medium transform and transubstantiate the infinitely ranging values of human experience, and what comes out is new meaning… new concretely embodied meaning." Artists are only free to create new meanings within existing cultural constraints. Cunliffe (2005, p.120) describes this dynamic between the individual and society as, "conversations and practices which are open but constrained, that provide individual minds with the necessary knowledge, skills and insights to become members of communities of practice which, in turn, provide the necessary means to change such practices."

Artists face the challenge of forging a path between individual expression and membership of a cultural continuum. Rather than pursuing an abstract notion of *freedom*, I recommend aspiring to *moral agency*; neither rejecting cultural influence nor becoming its slave but finding a way to make art and act with social conscience and moral integrity. Kemmis (2010, p.421) refers to the Greek philosopher, Plato, according to whom, "one way by which we could

come to live well was by living an examined life – by reflection on our individual and collective conduct – our individual and collective *praxis* – and its consequences." Kemmis and Smith (2008, p.5) are writing about teaching but the same thing applies to arts practice: "What is at stake when practice becomes rule following is the *moral agency* of the educator [or artist]. At some point, hemmed in by rules, the educator [or artist] may become no more than the *operative* of some system – the organisation they work in. This distinction between being an agent and being an operative is at the heart of our concern for educational [and arts] practice and *praxis*."

I am coming to believe that most art teachers in most schools seem determined to ignore these oversights and misconceptions and even I do not always relish the battle. It is easier to teach techniques and make pretty pictures than to grapple with the concepts of tradition and power and agency. But it is only in schools that art is approached as a meaningless, technical activity. I would still maintain that if you don't *understand* what you're doing, you haven't yet found your *voice* as an artist. Illeris (2014, p.23) suggests that, "learning always starts with what Jarvis calls a disjuncture, i.e. a difference between what the person is, feels, knows or understands, and something in the actual situation." It has been my challenge and my mission to create for you the kind of *disjuncture* that makes new understanding *an imperative*.

With gratitude and regret

Yours
Ms Green

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Appendix 1

Student's Letter of Consent

Dear *Blanca,*

I am currently undertaking a Master's degree in Education at the University of Bath in UK. In preparation to writing my final dissertation, I am planning to complete a classroom-based research project and I am planning to focus my attention on my Year 12 Visual Arts class. I am writing to invite you to be a participant in this research project. The type of research I am planning is called 'Action Research' and it will basically involve close analysis of a series of classroom activities and reflection on the learning that results from these activities.

I am hoping to investigate my students' perceptions of the function of art in society. This comes into the first assessment criterion for Visual Arts at IB, which states that students are expected to demonstrate their ability to:

"respond to and analyse critically and contextually the function, meaning and artistic qualities of past, present and emerging art, using the specialist vocabulary of visual arts" (IBO Visual Arts Guide).

I am concerned that students often fail to grasp the complexity of the issues of the 'function of art' and I hope that through focusing some intense scrutiny on this aspect of the curriculum that I may be able to help students engage more deeply with other artists' work, reflect on their own practice and thereby improve their learning on the course. I am planning to focus my investigation on the Year 12 Visual Arts class and my teaching during the first term of the 2013/14 academic year.

I am planning to collect data from class discussions and written responses to critical and reflective tasks. If you were to participate, it wouldn't involve any extra work from you because the activities and discussions I will be examining are the kind of things we would do in class anyway. The difference is that I would video some conversations so I had a record to analyse.

I am hoping that you will agree to be a participant in this project by allowing me to quote your written or spoken comments in my research. It is standard practice in academic literature to make individuals anonymous so I would never refer to you by name. Videos would not be shown to anybody else. I would write a transcript of the discussion, without using people's names, and delete the original.

If you are interested in being a participant in this study, please sign the reply slip below and take a parental information letter home so your parents can also understand what the project involves. If at any stage you felt uncomfortable or wanted more information about the process, you would be very much encouraged to question the process or feel free to withdraw from the study.

I would be happy to answer any further questions you have about the study so feel free to contact me at brgr@patana.ac.th.

Yours,

Bridget Green

I, …… *(print your name)* agree to be a participant in Ms Green's research study into students' perceptions of the function of art in society. I understand that some classroom activities and discussions will be recorded but only Ms Green will see them and that I may be quoted in Ms Green's dissertation but my comments will be made anonymous.

Signed:

Date:

The Influence of Choice in Strategy Selection when Practising Musical Challenges in Primary School Children: The Effects on Reported Self-efficacy and Attainment

By Rachel Stead, Leader of Learning Primary Music

Introduction

This article is based on the dissertation of the same title. Full dissertation can be viewed/downloaded at https://www.academia.edu/23477910/The_influence_of_choice_in_strategy_selection_when_practising_musical_challenges_in_Primary_school_children_The_effects_on_reported_self-_efficacy_and_attainment

Background

A wide range of research has consistently shown that self-efficacy measurements are the most reliable for predicting performance levels (Bouffard-Bouchard, Parent, & Larivee, 1991; Bouffard-Bouchard, 1990; Pintrich & de Groot, 1990; D. H. Schunk & Swartz, 1993; D. Schunk, 1995). Highly-efficacious students are confident learners who manage and design their own learning. They believe in their ability to overcome problems, find solutions and move their learning forward in a given area. They set higher goals for themselves, persevere for longer periods, use a variety of strategies and experience minimal emotional difficulties when facing challenges (Bandura & Schunk, 1981; Bandura, 1977, 1997; Zimmerman, 2000). These findings have been replicated in the area of music.

Alongside this, student choice has become an increasingly common feature of education programmes in the last 20 years. Teachers and educators have endeavoured to harness students' intrinsic motivation by aiming to support autonomy through choice and "ownership" of the learning where possible (Flowerday & Schraw, 2000; Iyengar & Lepper, 1999, 2000; Patall, Sylvester, & Han, 2014; West, 2013).

In many schools, it is common for students' home learning plans (and sometimes school learning plans) to consist of a matrix of differentiated tasks for the students to choose from. Students in this case are self-regulating their learning, managing their learning, making choices about their learning and tracking the progress of their learning.

Interactions Between Self-efficacy and Student Choice

However, in my teaching practice I have noticed that some students do not enjoy choice situations like these and do not thrive in them. They have more motivation when teachers spend time helping them to select appropriately and restricting or removing their choices. In my experience, some students flounder in choice situations, resulting in lost learning opportunities, low attainment and, one might imagine, low or lower self-efficacy for the subject. Research outcomes are not uniformly positive for the provision of choice and Patall et al. (2014) find that "not all studies have found choice to be ubiquitously beneficial"(p. 28). This all points towards the fact that offering choices to all students may risk the learning of some.

If provision of choice to student and development of self-efficacy do not always complement each other, these questions are raised:

Is self-efficacy affected by choice? If so, how?
Are there certain circumstances or groups of students for whom choice is not appropriate?
Can choice be detrimental in some cases, both to self-efficacy and attainment?

Mixed Methods Case Study

This mixed methods study focuses on the experiences of Year 5 students as they undertake a real-life musical chal-

lenge taken from their planned scheme of learning. The study seeks to highlight the main issues surrounding choice and self-efficacy and offer further insight into how educators can best use choice as a positive tool for all students' learning in their classrooms.

Self-efficacy

"…we still do not understand properly the mechanisms whereby students come to believe in their own abilities to perform well." (McCormick & McPherson, 2003, p. 48)

The self-efficacy construct came to being as part of research into phobia recovery when it became apparent that an individual's attitudes and self-beliefs were a crucial part of how successful treatment might be and how 'coping behaviour' might be developed (Bandura, 1977).

Self-efficacy was defined by Bandura as "the conviction that one can successfully execute the behaviour required to produce the outcome" (1977, p.193). He found that there were four main shaping influences on an individual's sense of self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social and verbal persuasion and physiological state (Bandura, 1977, 1989). Bandura and other theorists have agreed that mastery experiences are the most powerful of these influences. Consisting of personal learning and development, it is easy to see why increased personal competence would lead to an increase in self-efficacy and how unsuccessful mastery experiences might lead to a decrease.

Levels of self-efficacy have been shown to be the best predictors for performance levels, more accurate in Music than the amount of practice time, strategy use or the regulation of practice (McCormick & McPherson 2003; McPherson & McCormick, 2006). Indeed, Ritchie (2012) found that self-efficacy ratings were "…the only significant predictor of both the self and expert ratings of performance quality" (p. 116).

So it is clear that although self-efficacy is greatly influenced by previous learning and mastery experiences, future learning is in turn greatly influenced by self-efficacy.

Choice

The second factor being examined in this study is choice and more specifically whether and how choice provision affects levels of self-efficacy. Student choice is an important factor in the classroom, used in a variety of ways to facilitate "learning and motivation" (Flowerday & Schraw, 2000, p. 636). Deci & Ryan (1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000), as part of their Self-Determination Theory, identify choice as a major factor in supporting autonomy and therefore intrinsic motivation. "Fundamentally, self-determination is an issue of choice" (Deci & Ryan, 1985, pp. 35–36). Choice has been shown to directly affect effort and performance (Cordova & Lepper, 1996; Iyengar & Lepper, 1999) and the increased engagement and drive associated with increased intrinsic motivation has been shown to promote higher-level learning (Grolnick & Ryan, 1987; Pintrich & de Groot, 1990; Vallerand, Fortier, & Guay, 1997).

However, some research has found choice to not always have a positive effect on motivation or performance. Indeed, a number of studies have shown negligible or negative effects on motivation (Assor, Kaplan, & Roth, 2002; Flowerday, Schraw, & Stevens, 2004; Flowerday & Schraw, 2003; Parker & Lepper, 1992; Reeve, Nix, & Hamm, 2003).

According to self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), choice influences intrinsic motivation through perceived control. When individuals are able to choose and determine their own actions, there is a higher perception of control. An important factor in ensuring that choice contributes to perception of control is ensuring that partici-

pants understand each of the options and have an appropriate amount of time to process the choice decision. Paterson & Neufeld (1995) ran three studies manipulating the information available on provided choices, the time available for decision making and the number of choices given. They found that perceived control only increases when information about the options is available (and presumably understood).

However, the success with which choice provisions are processed varies amongst different groups. Research has found that groups with high self-efficacy or high achievement in a field not only tolerate choice well but actually desire and benefit from choice more than other groups. When self-efficacy is low, choice has been shown to have either no effect or even a negative effect on performance outcomes. One study concluded that "the benefits of choice may be limited to those who believe that they have the skills to cope" (p. 357). In other words, a foundation of self-efficacy needs to be present before provision of choice can be meaningful.

There have been few studies on whether self-efficacy is affected by choice provision and there are conflicting results. Whilst Patall et al. (2008) found that choice impacted positively on perceived competence, Rokke et al. (2004) found that pre-event self-efficacy affected the way choice was experienced.

Some studies have found that choice can reduce self-efficacy, although this research has generally not been based in education. Individuals with low initial task competency or low self-efficacy for the task seem to be at risk for reducing their level of self-efficacy when given choice. Also different types of choices have been shown to invoke different responses in individuals and groups of individuals. Instructionally relevant choices have been shown in one meta-analysis to have the least effect on perceived competence; however, further research in this area may be warranted to see if all individuals and groups respond similarly.

If self-efficacy is being reduced by choice, it seems possible that students given choice could miss out on the chance to build mastery experiences, self-efficacy and competence.

Method

Students in four Year 5 classes completed a six-week musical challenge (Appendix 2) as part of their regular specialist music lessons. Two classes were given choice in the strategies they used to make progress and two classes were prescribed strategies to use. In all cases, children were offered whatever support they needed to enable them to understand the task.

A mixed-methods approach was chosen in order to provide data from multiple sources for comparison. Data points from quantitative results were triangulated with student interview data to further augment their mutual validity. Quantitative and qualitative data was collected via a pre-experiment questionnaire, post-experiment questionnaire, written reflections, attainment data and semi-structured interviews with twelve students.

A survey along with a questionnaire (Appendix 3) based on the "The Self-Efficacy for Musical Learning" questionnaire (Ritchie & Williamon, 2010) was administered immediately before the six-week musical challenge and immediately after it.

This established the self-efficacy levels of students both pre and post project.

Please take a look at the "Can I sing and play in canon with myself?" project sheet. You will have approximately 6 weeks to make progress. Where do you expect your final level to be? (average for Year 5 = Level 5-7).

I expect to reach approximately Level.....

	I really do not agree!		I do not agree		I don't agree and I don't disagree		I agree	I really agree!
1. I am confident that I can successfully learn the music for this challenge up to the level I expect to reach.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
2. One of my problems is that I cannot manage to practice for this project when I should.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
3. If I cannot play the music for my next targeted level at first, I will keep practising until I can.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
4. When I set important learning goals in musical projects, I don't usually achieve them.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
5. I am likely to give up preparing for this performance before achieving my true potential.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
6. When I have some challenging practice to do in this project, I can stick to it until I finish it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
7. When I decide to do this project, I go right to work on the music.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
8. When first practicing each new level for this project, I will soon give up if I am not quickly successful.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
9. The idea of not reaching my target in this project makes me work harder.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
10. I am likely to easily stop trying hard in this project.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
11. I am not capable of dealing with the problems that come up when working toward this project.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
12. I feel confident using the main practice strategies of "chunking", "slo..owly", "mental practice" and "the hard bits".	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
13. I am able to choose the best practice strategy to help me in different situations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
14. I don't usually use a practice strategy at all – I just practice.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	I really do not agree		I do not agree		I don't agree and I don't disagree		I agree	I really agree!

Figure 1: Music Learning Questionnaire

Year 4 Learning Project

Students from this sample who had attended the school in Term 1 of Year 4 (n = 53) had participated in a similar multi-layered project at that time entitled "Can I clap and sing in canon?" The project had 8 levels and results for those who had taken part were collected and analysed (Appendix 5).

Discussion and Results

This study found that the children given choice of practice strategy had a slightly lower increase in self-efficacy than those not given a choice. The students who experienced the greatest difference were the lowest attainers; when given choice, the difference in the change in their self-efficacy was significant when compared to low-attaining children who were not given choice. High-attaining children given choice experienced higher gains in self-efficacy when compared to those not given choice. Students who started the project with low self-efficacy made bigger gains when not given choice than when given choice. Change in self-efficacy and attainment level was correlated to self-efficacy in using strategies in low-attaining students only.

This study found no significant overall differences between levels of attainment between the choice and no choice groups. However, there were some interesting patterns of data, which will be explored in subsequent sections and may prove to be useful topics for further investigation.

The Effect of Participation in the Year 4 Project on the Year 5 Project

When examining the group of students who did not participate in the Year 4 project, the provision of choice had a large impact on their self-efficacy gains. Whilst those in the no choice condition had similar self-efficacy gains to the other students, those given choice saw significantly smaller increases in self-efficacy, even when their mean attain-

ment level was higher than the group not given choice.
This appears to show that the learning undertaken in the no choice condition was a kind of 'practice', 'training' or 'mastery learning' (Bandura, 1977, 1989) with the strategies which the others (in the choice condition) did not have. As the practice strategies were teacher-chosen and teacher-recommended, students could hold a high belief that they would work, that the students would learn successfully and therefore persevere more. The strategies recommended were the main strategies and they were repeated on some levels.

These results also endorse the research (Paterson & Neufeld, 1995; Rokke et al., 2004) that knowledge of the choices available is a key component of making a successful choice. All students had an opportunity to review the strategies in the weeks before the Year 5 project started and the strategies are indeed used in other music learning projects throughout the year. However, those students without the Year 4 experience had less working knowledge of strategies and less practical understanding of how the strategies function in the context of a canon and ostinato project such as this.

Questionnaire Correlations

Other results of this study also confirm the validity of previous research. The attainment levels correlate with both the overall scores for the pre-project questionnaire and with the scores for just Question 1 on the pre-project questionnaire (Level of self-efficacy for attaining the level indicated). This is in line with previous research on the importance of measures of self-efficacy as predictors for attainment levels (Bouffard-Bouchard et al., 1991; Bouffard-Bouchard, 1990; Pintrich & de Groot, 1990; D. H. Schunk & Swartz, 1993; D. Schunk, 1995).

Overall Results

When looking at the sample as a whole, the no choice condition has produced a slightly higher mean increase in self-efficacy. This is in contrast to Patall et al.'s (2014) meta analysis finding and is most likely to be the product of several influences on self-efficacy.

Firstly, the 'mastery learning' (Bandura, 1977; Wood & Bandura, 1989) effect on self-efficacy. The students in the sample have been consciously using some of the strategies for a maximum of 3 years and it is likely that many students are still coming to understand more deeply how the strategies work. The no choice condition facilitates this more effectively by stipulating strategies that work well for certain levels and by providing a framework through which the children can systematically learn a number of strategies. Conversely, many students in the choice condition are not yet able to competently choose strategies effectively and they seem to be conscious of this lack of proficiency.

This result could also reflect the effects of choice overload. Students who were unable to cope with the variety of strategies available are likely to have made less appropriate choices or even avoided making choices at all.
It follows that students with previous knowledge and experience or with greater knowledge and experience would fare better as the complex cognitive conditions are not so complex for them. Some may be experiencing choice overload or demotivation resulting from being given choice in an area in which they are not yet competent.
The result also reflects the power of knowledge of the options available to increase self-efficacy. Paterson & Neufeld (1995) and Rokke et al. (2004) found that comprehension and knowledge of the options involved had a powerful role in the effects of choice provision. In this study, students in the no choice condition had the available options removed. Concentrated study on single strategies was imposed through the mandated strategies and so students found themselves with deeper knowledge by the end of the project. When such strategies are used again, those students have increased practical knowledge about the various options available and are thus able to make a more informed, personalised choice. When their self-efficacy was measured again at the end of the project, those in the "no-choice" condition saw higher gains.

The Effects of "No Choice"

The study found that low-attaining students in the no choice condition had a much higher increase in self-efficacy than those in the choice condition. Again, this is likely to reflect the 'mastery learning' effect and the power of knowledge of the options available to increase self-efficacy. Student 48, a low-attaining student in the no choice condition, showed the effect of the project on his knowledge of strategies and willingness to use them in the written reflection:

> "I used to use the hard bits all the time and now I use a variety of different strategys (*sic*)." (Student 48, written reflection, May 2015)

Student 38, a low-attaining student in the "no choice" condition, showed their inclination to working with a given strategy structure in their written reflection:

> "I followed my strategy chain" (Student 38, written reflection, May 2015).

Conversely, high-attaining students in the no choice condition seemed reluctant to follow the strategies given to them and several admitted to using their own choice in strategy.

There is also a possibility that imposing strategies on high-attaining, highly-efficacious students may have restricted their attainment levels. Although the highest attainers from the Year 4 project were randomly placed in the no choice condition, it can be seen that the highest levels attained in the Year 5 project were from within the choice group. Additionally, in the Year 5 project, no students in this no choice condition achieved level 10 whereas two students in the choice condition did achieve this level.

Three students in each condition achieved level 9; however, of the three students in the no choice condition, at least two went on to detail how they did not stick to the stipulated strategies but used strategies of their own choice.

Caution should be exercised when considering this level of data as the sample sizes are small. However, given that choice provision can be influential in supporting autonomy and is a feature of self-regulated learning and motivational models especially for the highly competent, further large-scale research on the provision and non-provision of choice to high attaining students may help illuminate these issues (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

In contrast to the choice condition, in the no choice condition there is a significant negative correlation between the pre-project level of self-efficacy and the subsequent rise in self-efficacy over the course of the project. The higher the starting level, the lower the subsequent rise. The lower the starting level, the higher the subsequent rise.

This was not an expected outcome; very little other research has looked at the effect of instructionally relevant strategies and choice provision. However, this can be accounted for in a similar way to some of the other contrasting choice provision results: the no choice condition allows for much more reliability and uniformity in results due to its inherent control of the methods used and systematic exposure to the strategies being used allowing for a certain amount of self-training to occur. The choice condition has much more wide-ranging, less predictable effects.

The Effects of "Choice"

The overall pattern for students in the choice condition is very different than for those in the no choice condition with higher gains for high attaining students and much lower gains (including significant losses) of self-efficacy for low attaining students.

Again, research on choice (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987; Paterson & Neufeld, 1995; Rokke et al., 2004) attributes this kind of effect to lack of understanding of or capability in using the options involved. Low-attaining students may not have the degree of experience and understanding that higher-attaining students have. Furthermore, they know

they do not have the requisite knowledge and are therefore reluctant to self-endorse the decisions they may try to make.

Student 1, a low-attaining student in the choice condition, illustrates how they were stuck and only able to make progress after being given guidance:

> "I was stuck on challenge level 2 when my teacher helped me by giving me a strategy, that strategy was to use auto-pilot (*sic*). It actually helped very much and as soon as I started, my partner and teacher had signed their names." (Student 1, written reflection, May 2015)

(A signature was required at each level as part of the peer assessment and teacher assessment process.)
Furthermore, for those feeling incompetent, Patall, Sylvester, & Han (2014) found that:

> "…choosing actually further diminished their feelings of competence and in turn, their intrinsic motivation for the task and willingness to engage in the task again in the future." (p. 33)

As is consistent with the research (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987; Paterson & Neufeld, 1995; Rokke et al., 2004), this study found that high-attaining learners flourish with choice. They show that they are confident in choosing and applying strategies and wish to have agency in their learning as might be expected when considering things through the lens of Self-Determination Theory.

Student 39 explained that "sometimes I just know" which strategy to use and other times they try different ones until they find the right one (Student 39, semi-structured interview, May 2015). Student 58 was able to break up and analyse the efficacy of the strategies they were using:

> "I used chunking most of the time because instead of redoing the bits I could do, I just broke it up so I could focus on 1 thing at a time" (Student 58, semi-structured interview, May 2015).

The attainment levels for students in the choice condition only were correlated to their overall questionnaire responses on both the pre-project and post-project. This points towards self-efficacy and self-regulated learning habits being more important in the choice condition and having a greater influence on performance levels. Students' attainment is moderated by their level of self-efficacy and self-regulated learning habits. When students in the choice condition feel confident about their learning they are more likely to succeed. Conversely, when they feel incompetent they achieve much lower levels. This effect is moderated in the no choice condition by the increase in knowledge, experience and understanding of strategies facilitated by lack of choice.

Choice Provision and Attainment Levels

Choice provision does not appear to have had a large effect on attainment levels. The two important points have already been made with regard to this: in the choice condition, there is a possibility that low-attaining students are unable to make head gains in self-efficacy and attainment; in the no choice condition, there are indications that high-attaining students are de-motivated by lack of agency in their learning and may underachieve as a result of this.

Knowledge and Understanding of the Strategies

A recurring theme so far through this discussion has been that the students' knowledge of the strategies affects how they learn and also affects their perceptions of competence. From this study it seems that good working knowledge of one or two strategies can be very effective in making a student feel efficacious; it is not necessary to have in-depth working knowledge of all strategies to feel competent. Student 40 mentioned that they are more successful with strategies when "I know how to use it and its one I'm confident with." Student 64, who experienced a large rise in self-efficacy of 30, mentioned mainly using 'chunking' and 'repeat yourself' but was not familiar with 'the hard bits' which is one of the main strategies. Student 56, who experienced a fairly large rise in self-efficacy of

18, told how they rely on a small number of strategies; 'sloo..wly', 'hard bits' and 'chunking'. They did try some of the assigned strategies but didn't really know how they worked, agreeing that further training would help with that (semi-structured interviews, May 2015).

Overall, there was correlation between the pre-project and post-project questionnaires in self-efficacy for strategies. But for the low-attaining students, the change between the two questionnaires correlated with overall change in self-efficacy and level of attainment. This points to the fact that increase in knowledge, experience and understanding of strategies is particularly helpful for low attainers and makes much more of a positive difference than for higher attainers.

Conclusion

In this study, I have investigated how self-efficacy is affected by provision of choice with attention to attainment levels. Focusing on a real-life learning project using instructionally-relevant choices, students with differing levels of attainment have been compared to see the effect of choice on their levels of self-efficacy and attainment. Self-efficacy and student choice are important issues in education. The first speaks of a student's true task competency beliefs and in practice does match up well with externally assessed competency. The second is an important factor in student motivation and ownership of learning. Despite this, little attention has been paid to choice's impact on self-efficacy in different student profile types.

During the course of the study it became apparent that part of this issue was creating the right balance of student-led learning and direct teaching is important for all educators and their students. In the current educational climate, it is very common to hear about 'student-led learning', 'student-devised learning', students being 'self-teachers' and 'student ownership of the learning'. Asking students to make choices based on insufficient understanding or experience of the options is counterproductive. Of course this balance is different for different students.

The findings of this report support the idea that student choice is experienced differently by different individuals and groups. Low-attaining students may have insufficient knowledge, experience and understanding to make fruitful choices. Their awareness of their difficulty in making good choices seems to diminish their self-efficacy beliefs. High-attaining students thrive with choice and controlling their own learning this way has a positive effect on their level of self-efficacy. This study confirms earlier work by Rokke, Fleming-Ficek, Siemens, & Hegstad (2004) and Patall, Sylvester, & Han (2014) and places these trends in a classroom context.

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A Reflection of How to Improve Attainment of Underachieving Students in the IB Diploma Programme using Target Grades as a Measure and Intervention as a Strategy - Drawing on the Data and Experiences of Students at Bangkok Patana School

By Andy Roff, IB Coordinator

Background

Bangkok Patana School has a proud history of operating a non-selective Senior Studies programme, and this is something we are determined to maintain; simultaneously we are aiming to affect an increase in our examination results to achieve a raised average points score for students undertaking the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme. Following on from my previous article about a number of different initiatives underway in Senior Studies designed to better support students in maximising their attainment, this article will focus on the increased use of data to monitor student performance and intervene, mentor and review progress. I will review the progress made against this goal for the Grad 15 cohort, and lessons that we have learnt to develop our practice and improve the support we provide our students.

Introduction

For many years students at Bangkok Patana School have taken an adaptive skills test administrated by the Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring at the University of Durham (Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring, University of Durham, n.d.) at the beginning of each Key Stage (UK Government, 2016) of their secondary education, Years 7, 10 and 12. These go by the names of MidYIS (Middle Years Information System), Yellis (Year 11 Information System) and ALIS (Advanced Level Information System) respectively. The purpose of the tests is to project for any particular student the likely attainment that they will achieve by the end of that Key Stage when compared to a very large sample size of previous cohorts of students from schools worldwide. The results of the test for a particular student at the start of the Key Stage allows a projection to be made for the most likely attainment outcome. While we have received this data for a number of years, it was used mainly to reflect on examination results at the end of a Key Stage to determine the level of success that was achieved or to identify a level of "value added" (Department for Education, 2004) .

Given that achieving potential is the mission of the school, ensuring that we have methods in place to measure and ensure this is important. It was felt that much more proactive use of this data could be made to inform ongoing tracking of student progress and identifying need for and provision of additional support as necessary. The ultimate aim, of course, is to improve student attainment as a result. The setting of aspirational target grades for students has been the starting point in this process, which has then continued by tracking student attainment at each reporting cycle to ensure that satisfactory progress is being made towards the target for each Key Stage.

A number of additional points need to be made before proceeding. Firstly that the setting of aspirational target grades, is just that - aspirational. Allowing for the high expectations that we have of ourselves as a school, the 75th percentile of all schools that use this system was chosen as the benchmark for comparison and thus ALIS grades are generated and provided to teachers early in Year 12. Historically, staff were asked to use these projected data and professional judgement to set target grades for each student in each subject which were best case scenario. It is not expected that every student will always reach this target grade, but it was felt that for them to be useful in increasing attainment that an aspirational, but achievable, target should be set. It should also be noted that practice of using these target grade data has already evolved from the model described below, such that target grades and cur-

rent attainment grades are reviewed against each other at each of three reporting cycles throughout the year, and target grades adapted to maintain challenge and attainability.

This report investigates the impact of a single holistic intervention on students of the graduating cohort of 2015 between the trial examinations (January 2015) and their final examinations (May 2015). A group of 33 students, who had the greatest total disparity between target and trial examination grades were targeted for an intervention meeting following comparison of their trial examinations grades against their target grades, and their subsequent progress compared to that of the other members of the cohort. The interventions essentially consisted of a meeting with student, parents and either the IB Coordinator or Head of Year, where reasons for the large disparity were explored and targets set for improvement. The meetings were written up and sent to all involved (including importantly students' subject teachers and tutors). It was hoped that common identification and articulation of clear targets for improvement (target setting) would help give students structure for their studies over the final few months of their courses and involve the necessary support groups to invoke a common, coherent and focussed approach to support.

Data Use

An arbitrary benchmark of students underachieving their total Target Grade in their trial examinations by seven points or more was set. Primarily this was done for practicality purposes, as it identified 33 students for intervention and this was felt to be an ambitious, but manageable number of meetings to have. Students with a disparity of six points or fewer, were generally considered to be on track (a single point in each subject would generally be considered reasonable at that stage in a student's programme, given that analysis of previous cohorts predicts an average rise in score of between three and four points between trial and final examinations).

Having identified the students with the greatest disparity between their target and trial examination grades at the end of January 2015, greater detail was sought to inform the meetings and the setting of targets and strategies for improvement in the intervention meetings. Each meeting was informed by the details of the target grade and attainment grade at each reporting cycle of the student's Senior Studies programme (one at the end of each term to date: T1, 2, and 3 of Year 12 and T1 of Year 13, thus four in total) as well as the trial examination grade as shown in Figure 1.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T
	SUBJECT	ALIS	Y12.T1	ATT_Y12.T1	TAR_Y12.T1	ACH_Y12.T1	Y12.T2	ATT_Y12.T2	TAR_Y12.T2	ACH_Y12.T2	Y12.T3	ATT_Y12.T3	TAR_Y12.T3	ACH_Y12.T3	EXAM_RESULT	Y13.T1	ATT_Y13.T1	TAR_Y13.T1	ACH_Y13.T1
	(SS) Mathematics High Level [MATHHL]	N/A	Y12.T1	4	5	-1	Y12.T2	4	5	-1	Y12.T3	4	5	-1	4	Y13.T1	4	4	0
	Business Management (SL) [BUSMANSL]	6	Y12.T1	4	6	-2	Y12.T2	4	6	-2	Y12.T3	5	6	-1	5	Y13.T1	5	6	-1
	Computer Science (HL) [COMSCHL]	N/A	Y12.T1	6	6	0	Y12.T2	6	6	0	Y12.T3	7	7	0	7	Y13.T1	6	7	-1
	English A: Literature (SL) [ENGASL]	N/A	Y12.T1	3	6	-3	Y12.T2	5	6	-1	Y12.T3	4	6	-2	4	Y13.T1	4	5	-1
	Extended Essay [EE]	-	Y12.T1	-	-	0	Y12.T2	-	-	0	Y12.T3	-	-	0	-	Y13.T1	A	-	NaN
	German B (SL) [GERBSL]	N/A	Y12.T1	4	5	-1	Y12.T2	4	5	-1	Y12.T3	4	5	-1	4	Y13.T1	4	5	-1
	Physics (HL) [PHYHL]	N/A	Y12.T1	5	5	0	Y12.T2	5	5	0	Y12.T3	5	5	0	5	Y13.T1	5	5	0
	Theory of Knowledge [TOK]	-	Y12.T1	N/A	-	NaN	Y12.T2	C	-	NaN	Y12.T3	C	-	NaN	-	Y13.T1	C	-	NaN

Figure 1: Tracking data for an individual student, showing attainment and target grade data for each subject at each reporting cycle.

The disparity between target and attainment grades, teacher judged, evidence based grades, which are criterion referenced against IB grade descriptors (International Baccalaureate Organisation, 2014), for each student are analysed at each reporting cycle and colours assigned for quick and easy identification. Green indicates a disparity from target of one or less, yellow 2 and red 3 or more. The intention being to draw attention towards the subjects most in need of attention and support, and these were the focal points for the intervention meetings.

Discussion of the Intervention Meetings

The meetings were all scheduled to take place within three weeks of the end of the trial examinations, so as to allow time for the implementation of strategies to support improved attainment. The meetings were each about 30 minutes in duration and, as said, involved the Head of Year or IB Coordinator, student and student's parent(s). The opening of each meeting asked students to reflect on their performance in the trial examinations and suggest reasons for the apparent underperformance. Students commonly cited the main reason for low achievement in the trial examinations was the result of little preparation. There were a number of common justifications for this put forward by the students and their families. There are no real consequences to a poor performance in the trial exams - predicted grades have already been submitted to universities, and the grades don't appear on student transcripts. Students spend significant time in the Christmas vacation either visiting universities or completing university applications. Finally students need a break; they have completed a long and gruelling first term and need to recuperate. These reasons do not apply any more to the intervention group than others, but perhaps the large distance from target grade seen in the group under study suggests that they manifest more strongly in those who most significantly underperform.

The meetings continued to discuss each of the student's subjects in turn, prioritising those where achievement in the trial examination was the greatest distance from the target grade. In each case reasons for underperforming were discussed, and targets and strategies agreed in an attempt to provide clear structure for improvement. These targets, were as far as possible made SMART (Haughey, 2015), and details of what is meant by this were provided to students and parents in the meeting summary. Quite often this became the main discussion point of the meeting as students were aware in general terms of what they needed to do, but these objectives were so general that students didn't have clear strategies in place to achieve them. Meetings were written up by the IB Coordinator or Head of Year and sent to student, parents, student's pastoral tutor and all subject teachers. The write ups summarised the discussions and clearly outlined the SMART targets set for students in each subject. The intention being for subject teachers to then refine or adapt the targets as necessary and then maintain a dialogue with students as to their progress with them.

While in all cases smart targets were set in pertinent subjects, students were not given accountability for them as the time for effective follow up by the Head of Year or IB Coordinator was not available, and no real expectation for follow up was placed on subject teachers. It is, of course, intended that by this stage in their education that students have the reflective and self-management skills to be accountable to themselves effectively. It is noted however, that to maximise the efficacy of mentoring style intervention regular follow up is needed, and accountability for achieving targets made by the student to the mentor (Miller, 2002).

Results

The average target grade for the Graduating Class of 2015 (124 IB diploma students) was 34.62 and the average 75th percentile grade predicted by ALIS was 34.23 points (out of a possible 42). In January 2015, 33 students were selected for intervention with an average distance from target grade of 8.09 points (compared to an average disparity of 5.75 for the Year group).

(Diploma only)	Total Target (No Bonus Pts)	Total Trial (No Bonus Pts)	Distance from Target (Trial)	Total Final (No Bonus Pts)	Improvement (Trial to Final)	Distance from Target (Final)
Intervention Group (of 33 students)	36.36	28.27	-8.09	31.61	3.33	-4.76
Non Intervention Students (91 students)	34.12	29.20	-4.93	33.13	3.93	-0.99
Whole Year Group	34.62	28.87	-5.75	32.70	3.83	-1.92

Figure 2: Target and Attainment data for intervention and non-intervention groups- Grad15 cohort.

Conclusion and Discussion

As can be seen from the data, an improvement of 3.33 points was made by the intervention group of 33 students between the trial and final examinations. This was, however, lower than the average improvement seen by the cohort as a whole (3.83 points). A number of reasons can be asserted for this and some interesting discussions result. The mean increase in score shows that a significant gain in attainment between the trial and final examination can be expected of all students. That there is less improvement in the intervention group than the non-intervention group shows that the reasons stated by students for under achievement in the trial examinations (university application pressure, the need for a holiday, etc) is no more acute for the intervention group than the non-intervention group. If it had, a greater gain could have been expected from the intervention group when these reasons were no longer applicable.

It is initially tempting to conclude that the intervention process has been unsuccessful, and certainly there are important lessons to learn to improve the efficacy of the intervention. However, to immediately discount the interventions as a waste of time is, I believe, short-sighted. A deeper analysis is needed into the successes and failures of the interventions in individual cases, as there were clear successes (several students from the intervention group increased their performance by eight points from trial exams to finals) and failures (students who failed to make any improvement over the same period). For the graduating cohort of 2016, a questionnaire will be sent out to students who received a similar level and style of intervention, asking for their reflections on the efficacy of the various aspects of this support.

[1.] The IB Diploma is graded from a possible total of 45 points, however this includes up to three bonus points, which come from a combination of two externally assess components: the Extended Essay and Theory of Knowledge. These are not included in this analysis as ALIS only makes predictions for individual academic subjects, and does not offer predictions for these aspects of the Diploma.

In general I would assert that the students who received intervention support, were students whose general study habits were not well developed or effective. Often the meetings which were held, although intending to set SMART targets for individual subjects to inform improvement specifically, turned into general conversations about good study habits and effective revision techniques. For students with these sort of holistic requirements, a broader mentoring approach is appropriate; however, as mentioned previously this needs to be a continual process of support, with regular, frequent meetings rather than a one off. In addition, the method by which such students are identified needs to be more robust. Students identified for intervention in this study were those with greatest disparity from target grades at only one point in time. Using only one marker allows the reasons put forward by students for underperformance to have a significant impact and thus perhaps does not best identify students with ongoing need (hence, perhaps, the students which made the eight point gains), where using more continually gathered data over the course of the two year programme, would allow for a more accurate identification of students for whom work ethic or study skills are the primary source of difficulty.

The lesson we learn, and the improvement already in place is to make intervention an intrinsic and continued part of the Senior Studies programme, at every reporting cycle. Students who continue to underperform need to have continued interventions, and these interventions need to more effectively invoke the principles of feedback and meta-cognition. For example, consideration of a learning to learn course for senior students focussed on teaching how to plan, monitor and evaluate their work as well as how to more effectively respond to feedback that they receive. These developments align well with the high impact strategies of meta-cognition and self-regulation for improving student performance (Education Endowment Foundation, n.d.).

Where intervention is appropriate in individual subjects, such as in cases where student under performance is restricted to significant under performance in just one or two subjects, then greater use of subject teachers' individual knowledge of students must be made. Instead of target setting for all their subjects with the IB coordinator, who is not a subject specialist nor necessarily particularly familiar with each individual student, this needs to happen through dialogue between student and subject teacher with a clearly articulated set of targets for each subject being prepared for intervention meetings, so that these are most effectively informed by teacher feedback. Earlier intervention by subject teachers at an individual subject level is also a development that would improve the attainment of students. Provision of detailed tracking data (target and attainment grades achieved at each reporting cycle for each subject a student studies) is now available via the school's data management system (Figure 1) and will allow this, but the culture of the school must evolve such that effective and regular use of this data is built into our systems and time is allocated to allow subject teachers to make this intervention and monitor closely the targets set, ensuring student accountability for these targets and feedback is given along with next steps.

A level of realism is also necessary in the case of some students who are, apparently under achieving compared to their target grades. While significant professional judgement of teachers is called upon in the setting of these target grades, they are still significantly influenced by the ALIS testing predictions, which as one representative of CEM surmised are "generally accurate, but specifically inaccurate". An expected attainment within the 75th percentile of all schools using the ALIS system is not going to be an appropriate target for some of our students, and caution must be made in overly relying on this data.

Perhaps the most important conclusion to draw from this analysis is that a greater level of information now exists upon which to inform and implement intervention and support measures for students. The efficacy of the support that was implemented in this study does not show a particular efficacy in terms of raising attainment, but for this to be a robust conclusion a control group in non-supported, underperforming students would need to exist for comparison- something that is professionally unacceptable. Ongoing reflection and further study of best practice in relation to most effective intervention, informed by educational research, is necessary to continue to develop strategies to most effectively target and support students in reaching their potential. Importantly a willingness to be honest and open to change in processes must continue to exist so as to best serve the students we work with.

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Creating Global Learning Communities within International Schools

By Michelle Brin

I recently had the privilege of being invited to act as a 'critical friend' to the Early Years Department of the British International School of Jeddah (BISJ). The Foundation Stage (FS) within BISJ is currently moving towards a more child-centred curriculum based upon an amalgamation of British and other international good practice in Early Years. The Primary Deputy Head for Curriculum in BISJ, Mrs Joanne Rice, having previously worked as a Leader of Learning in K2 at Bangkok Patana School (BPS), recognised that their Foundation Stage (FS) was in a similar phase of transition as the FS at BPS during her period of employment here. She also recognised the invaluable support that BPS had received during this period through the employment of a 'critical friend'.

Whilst undergoing this transition in BPS, we were incredibly fortunate to have the support of Fran Paffard, an Early Years specialist from the University of East London, UK. Fran's support throughout our original transitional period was crucial. Having an 'outside' perspective encouraged us to take a step back from the minutiae of re-organising our day-to-day practice and reflect upon our overarching vision. It allowed all FS staff to air their concerns, discuss ideas, share good practice and also compare and contrast experiences between UK settings and our international context. Talking to an experienced Early Years practitioner, familiar not only with our aims but also our concerns, reassured us and renewed our confidence in the appropriateness of our vision. It allowed us to reflect and review the progress we were making and to understand which changes were essential to that process and which were more superfluous, thus encouraging us to create a realistic and achievable timeline for change. In addition, Fran's well-timed return visits encouraged us to regularly assess our progress towards our goals and to refocus our vision. It also allowed us to take a step back and appreciate how far we had actually moved towards those goals; crucial to maintaining motivation and enthusiasm during what can be a very stressful time.

Consequently, having since moved to BISJ, Mrs Joanne Rice (previously a Leader of Learning in FS) understood the power of an outside eye and an experienced voice during periods of transition and, having been through this process, I was lucky enough to be invited to act as this critical friend. (I think Fran must have been otherwise indisposed!) Luckily, the Senior Leadership Team at BPS also recognised the immense benefits of cross-school engagement in professional deliberation. Thus, my potential visit to Jeddah was viewed as an excellent (if less traditional) opportunity for professional development and was fully supported. Consequently, in October 2015 I spent three days in BISJ. These three, very busy but incredibly worthwhile, days were spent observing in FS and Year 1 classrooms, presenting on the theoretical perspectives underlying the changes, chairing discussion groups and meeting with individual and small groups of teachers to air concerns and share good practice.

The feedback received at the end of the visit was incredibly positive. However, the benefits were not unidirectional as my own understanding of child-focused learning (from Nursery to Year 1 and beyond) was substantially enhanced. In my experience I have found that helping others to understand encourages a deeper understanding in one's self. This was certainly the case here. In discussing, sharing and explaining our strategies for enhancing children's involvement within their own learning and reflecting on those aspects that we regarded as successful or not so successful, a new clarification of our aims (both past and present) were achieved. When Fran supported the BPS team through their transition, we fully understood that solutions learnt in UK settings might not be suitable for our particular context. Similarly, solutions that BPS developed were not necessarily suitable for BISJ. However, unpicking those solutions led to a greater understanding of their underlying essence and thus to a greater clarification of what aspects were essential to the overall vision and those that were not. Consequently, the central goal of encouraging children to be active participants in their own learning became clearer. This sharpened vision will now hopefully pay

dividends in our current endeavours to encourage assessment-capable learners throughout the whole school.

Response from British International School of Jeddah (BISJ) on Michelle Brinn's visit in October 2015

Our Early Years at BISJ is undergoing a period of transition from a more traditional, formal approach to a child-centred curriculum. Change is a time of mixed emotions, so it was important that staff felt involved in the changes, understood the reasons and benefits the shift in approach would offer and had an idea of what the end product could look like in our setting. Being in an international setting offers many wonderful opportunities. However, in our particular context in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia the opportunity to network with schools offering a similar approach is limited, illustrating the power of the Early Years Teachers' network in Bangkok. The school values the importance of Continuous Professional Learning and had sent members of staff from Early Years and Year 1 on Early Years Training in the UK, but we needed a way to support all 32 members of our Early Years team. Having such a large department also means that our staff come from a range of backgrounds with very different experiences. We needed to establish the vision so that we could develop a shared understanding of where we were heading and why. An outside critical friend seemed the best way forward.

On arriving in Jeddah, Michelle hit the ground running, providing a range of sessions to different groups of staff. She was able to spend time in classrooms, hold discussion groups, present sessions and offer that empathetic ear. Having opportunities to openly discuss issues that FS staff in BPS had worked through was invaluable and consequently the Early Years Leadership Team in BISJ were able to collaboratively begin to map out the next steps in their development. The reassurance offered from a critical friend was a real boost to morale and the impact of the visit is still clearly visible. We are continuing to develop both the indoor and outdoor environments, but now with a shared understanding of what this would look like. We are working in groups to develop policy and have recently appointed a Head of Early Years to focus on making the plans a reality. The future is looking bright and this collaboration between schools was instrumental in moving us forward with a clearer focus as to why these changes were taking place. In addition, feedback from staff was extremely positive and we would like to thank Bangkok Patana School for their support in setting up this professional collaborative community.

Joanne Rice, Deputy Head for Curriculum

BISJ Staff Reflections

Reflection 1

I found the sessions so inspiring, that I was rushing back to share ideas with my Year Group Leader. I had a very heated (in a good way) discussion with a colleague about how we can get everyone, including parents and volunteers, on board, as well as Year 1 teachers, and at home I mapped out lots of ideas that I shared with my Year Group Leader about setting up a more collaborative and exciting, enabling environment. It was great that our TAs were involved, as it really cemented, for my TA in particular, the philosophy behind the changes we have made, and she was keen to learn more.

I really value INSET that leads to change, and I felt that this visit was a catalyst in pushing forward what we had started as a team. I would be very pleased to maintain this link as it made it feel possible that our aims could be achieved.

(Reception teacher)

Reflection 2

One thought shared with us, that "the wider the range of possibilities we offer children, the more intense will be their motivation and the richer their experience" truly makes a lot of difference.
Certain routines were changed in our environment just last year, when we were first introduced to Development Matters, and we found immediate positive results for some of these changes straight away. The highlight has been experiencing and understanding the world around, where children were provided with more opportunities in an open surrounding rather than having the routine indoor setup. I personally feel it made a lot of difference in our kids, especially when we began the new academic session this year as children settled in comparatively more quickly. The fear of entering the unknown classroom was not there, as opportunities were provided outdoors, opportunities that appeared to be inviting and engaging at the same time.

We have in our outdoor provision added, on a permanent basis, a "water play extension" (which was not there earlier), and keep making changes in them according to our term units. It has been a SUPER HIT from day 1!!!
Also we made changes in our morning routine. We introduced self-registration which has made the kids more independent in a fun way. We have a rocket next to the door up on the wall, and these little munchkins just pick up their photos and stick it on the rocket once they are inside. Also they are confident to decide if they would prefer going to the library or they choose an activity table. We noticed the change in their behaviour as to how soon they adjusted and got engaged when provided with opportunities that interest them.

There is no denying the fact that every accomplishment starts with the decision to try, and we as a team have been gradually bringing in changes and are to a great extent happy with the results we see.

I was fortunate to take over a Reception class for a week (age group 4-5 years) and do the planning for that week too. Our topic book was "OLIVER'S VEGETABLES", and keeping in mind the prime and specific areas from Development Matters, we were able to share a great deal with the kids. The approach towards the characteristics of effective learning helped to the retain interest of the children. We even had a theatre role play on the last day, which was thoroughly enjoyed by the kids. From buying the ticket, to sitting in their allotted space, to applauding, and going through the story and using props, it was truly a great feeling to see them learn, with the kind and combinations of resources and materials and the possible interaction(s) with things, peers and adults.

Through experience I have accepted that as soon as children find something that interests them, they lose their instability and learn to concentrate. Education cannot be effective unless it helps a child open up himself to life. Like we say in the Montessori world, 'the greatest sign of success for a teacher is to be able to say that the children are now working as if I did not exist.'
(Nursery (2-3 year olds) Senior TA)

Reflection 4

Michelle came to our setting as a 'critical friend' and an expert eye. She was able to offer lots of helpful suggestions about how best we could improve our provision. Her approach was supportive and realistic, particularly with regard to the time frame for the changes we are implementing. This helped me to feel more confident that we are moving in the right direction and that there may be steps forward but also steps in different directions if one particular thing doesn't work in our setting. It would be beneficial to continue this professional collaboration.
(Year Group Leader for YE - 3-4 year olds)

Reflection 5

The most important advice that I took away with me was that transitions of any kind take a long time and constantly evolve during the process. Also, the importance of having a clear idea of what we want our Early Years setting to look like and in order to achieve these goals constant reflection and dialogue between colleagues is needed throughout this process of change.
(Reception Year Group Leader)

Conclusion

There seems to be a growing recognition that professional dialogue between like-minded practitioners can be an incredibly effective strategy for improving professional practice. This is evidenced in the growth of grass roots professional networks (such as, for example, the Bangkok Teachers' Network, English Language Learning Specialists in Asia (ELLSA, who recently held their last conference at BPS) and the Bangkok Early Years Network and the rapid proliferation of the lesson study process from its origins in Japan (Takahashi, Akihiko; McDougal, Thomas, 2014). It was a great privilege to be involved in an international professional dialogue and interestingly, discussion has also begun between staff at BSIJ and myself about how to continue this professional interaction, perhaps through the use of Pinterest, Skype or other media. Consequently, this visit may have been the first step in the creation of a professional learning community on an international scale.

Watch this space!

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Shifting Paradigms for Teaching and Learning

By Lisa Cody-Sehmar, Class Teacher

"If we teach today as we were taught yesterday, we rob our students of tomorrow" are the words of John Dewey written one hundred years ago in his book, 'Democracy and Education' (Dewey, 1916). Their relevance today seems astonishing.

The urgent need to transform 20th century classrooms into 21st century learning environments is apparent to all educators. In a world of globalisation and rapid technological advancement, it is imperative that educators ensure that students develop the 21st century skills which will enable them to thrive in the unknown work place of tomorrow. Skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration and creativity will serve them well as they prepare to independently live and work in the 21st century (Schrum and Levin, 2009).

Digital technology, when used effectively, will enable educators to build in a learner-centric approach, utilising the flexibility of anytime-anywhere learning by the use of learning platforms and e-portals. Such innovative digital technology will "make learning a far more continuous process, not governed by the school bell or the need to book a specialist room several days in advance" (Andain and Murphy, 2008).

Adam Franklin states "we know that sophisticated technologies that are implemented poorly will not make any difference, whereas ones that are unsophisticated, if they are implemented in certain circumstances, they will actually deliver better results" (Franklin, tedxbeacon, 2012).

Embracing digital technology has become a commonplace occurrence in many schools. Jukes et al suggest that the 'Internet Revolution' has only just begun. "Yet it is starting to overwhelm some of us, out stripping our capacity to cope" (Jukes et al, 2007). Although some teachers are genuinely excited about the opportunities of embedding innovative digital technology into their classrooms, others feel "uneasy, overwhelmed and irrelevant" (Ohler, 2010 p.90). Feelings of uneasiness or being overwhelmed can be overcome with the correct support systems being put in place. However, fear of becoming irrelevant, I feel, is something that should be confronted head-on. Educators need to know that their role, in the midst of this technological revolution, is as important now as it ever was. The role of the educator has changed, and will most probably continue to evolve as the digital technology does. However, so too, will his/her relevancy.

The need to transform 20th century classrooms to 21st century learning environments along with the understanding that embracing digital technology is one way forward, is a given. But the question remains, how can this be achieved?

One strategy would be teachers adopting a new paradigm for teaching and learning. New behaviours for what is taught, where and when the teaching and learning occurs, and whether and how the teacher is reaching the students need to be considered. Reaching students is of paramount importance.

It is widely accepted that never in the history of education has a technology changed the way in which students think, behave and interact with one another as digital technology has. Students of today are different because they were born and are being brought up in a new and ever-evolving digital landscape, unlike anything seen before.

"It is likely that the technology of our students' future lives will be as much as a trillion times more powerful than

today's", suggests Marc Prensky (2010) in the foreword of "Understanding the Digital Generation".

Constant exposure to digital media has, it has been suggested, changed the way students today process, interact and use information, resulting in them communicating and thinking in very different ways than any previous generation (Jukes et al, 2010 and Small et al, 2008). Their current educators, sometimes merely one generation older, have the responsibility of preparing them for the, yet unknown, future careers and opportunities that await them.

Innovative technologies, however, have occurred for centuries and, like today, have caused great angst and fear for teaching practitioners at the time. But, they in no way altered students' communication and learning capabilities as digital technology is doing today. Examples of historical "paradigm paralysis" (McCain et al, 1997) in the classroom may be somewhat amusing to read today. Over three hundred years ago, students depending on slate over previously commonly-used bark was an issue, followed one hundred years later, by an outcry when students began depending too heavily on paper over slate. Then came the concern that students no longer knew how to use a knife to sharpen a pencil because they relied too much on ink. Twenty years after that, it was reported that students depended too much on shop-bought ink and no longer knew how to make their own ink. In the 1950s, the introduction of the breakthrough innovation, the ballpoint pen, was predicted by Federal Teachers as being the "ruin of education" (Biens, 2011).

By using these examples, I wish to raise two points. First, paradigm paralysis can and will, with great effort and perseverance, give way to paradigm pliability (McCain et al, 1997). This is achieved by letting go of our old, and probably closed, mindsets and adopting new, open and pliable ones. Secondly, there is a hugely significant difference between the change which occurred in the 20th century as a result of the innovative technologies of the time and the digital technology of today, which is exceedingly more powerful than anything seen in human history. The pace of change within digital technology can be described as explosive. Ray Kurzwell (2005) describes this rate of change in his book 'The Singularity's Near'.

"A half millennium ago, the product of a paradigm shift such as the printing press took about a century to be widely displayed. Today, the products of major paradigm shifts, such as cell phones and the World Wide Web, are widely adopted in only a few years' time" (Kurzwell, 2005 p.42).

The increase in processing speeds coupled with the wide range of affordable devices have transformed us into a high-tech society. This has resulted in us all, regardless of age, experience or background, witnessing accelerated change at a pace never before experienced in human history. Some cope, for a variety of reasons, better than others. The key to staying relevant is being able to change our focus and mindset which will allow a shift in paradigm to occur.

"There is no doubt that we are now in the middle of a huge transformation in the realm of education. The disruptive nature of technology has unseated the teacher as the "owner" of knowledge in the classroom and opened the possibility for global collaboration that is unprecedented" (Lippman, 2015). I would argue that, although transformations within education are occurring as a result of digital technology, the assertion that 'the disruptive nature of technology has unseated the teacher as the "owner" of knowledge' is not entirely accurate. Teachers, in my view, 'unseated' themselves years ago without the catalyst of digital technology. Progressive pedagogy has enabled teachers to evolve from the strict rote learning style approach where teachers were considered to be the owners of knowledge to a much more inclusive style of teaching and learning where collaboration and questioning were encouraged and happened within the classroom. What the advent of digital technology has done is remove the walls of the classroom as confines to the amount, range and accessibility of information available to them. With the guidance of teachers, students have the opportunity to utilise the technology to access, consume and interact with this

multitude of ever-evolving information at their fingertips. The shift in practice where students move from consumers of knowledge to creators of their knowledge may well be paramount to students' future success.

Digital Technology

Becoming literate through reading and writing has been the cornerstone of education for centuries. Undoubtedly, it will remain the foundation upon which all learning is built. “It is inconceivable that any thought of adequately educating young people could ever not have reading and writing as a centerpiece” (Jukes et al, 2007). However, today's digital landscape is having a significant impact on how communication now takes place. Put simply, we live in a visual world. The arrival of the television in the 1950s and 1960s, followed by the widespread use of still and moving cameras marked the beginning of the visual world. However, it was the introduction of the World Wide Web in 1985 when visual communication forever changed our landscape. The sudden avalanche of information brought into any home with internet access provided not only familiar textual information but also instantly presented information in a variety of other new, exciting and interactive ways. This massive shift to visual communication has had, and continues to have, a significant impact on traditional learning and teaching, especially for today's students who are growing up in this digital landscape with no personal experience of a pre-digital time. They are accustomed to the connected opportunities the internet offers. They have grown up with a multitude of ways to communicate: email, texting, Twitter, Facebook, blogs, MySpace, message boards, WhatsApp to name but a few. Jukes et al (2010) suggest that today's students have developed advanced visual and cognitive skills, required to deal with the bombardment of hyperlinked multimedia information, which is presented to them with a single click of the mouse.
Educators are faced with the reality that this visual communication is what motivates and engages today's students. This engagement is crucial for learning to occur. Working with the technology and using a new visual language for communicating is key to using effective instruction in the 21st century learning environment of today (Jukes et al, 2010).

Educators now realise that alongside the traditional literacy skills of reading and writing, new skills will have to be incorporated into the curriculum to accommodate and support learning in the new and ever-evolving digital world. As consumers, from a very early age, of visual messages, today's students must be taught the skills necessary to correctly interpret what is being presented to them on the screen. With access to affordable devices all around them, students are now also producers of visual information. This is an exciting opportunity, but one which comes with great responsibility. The trained professional creators of visual communication are now sharing space with millions of eager young amateurs who need guidance and support. They may have the technical know-how and confidence to operate the gadgets, but understanding the empowering principles of digital technology is not innate. The role of educators is to help students understand the significance of the power of the technology they are using. For example, when they post content on the World Wide Web, they are effectively writing their own history. The need for students to understand this responsibility cannot be over-emphasised. The ability to analytically look at any communication media and interpret and articulate the real underlying message is a skill which requires support to perfect over an extended period of time.

Digital Technology and Teacher Attitudes

Kotrlik (2000) and Ottenbreil-Leftwich (2012) identify the following as essential-related skills every teacher should possess (or acquire) to effectively integrate digital technology into the classroom:

- proficiency in the use of productivity tools
- ability to troubleshoot commonly occurring technology-related problems in the classroom
- familiarity with and ability to search the World Wide Web
- know-how to seek technical support
- openness to innovation which can improve teaching and learning (Poole, 2006)

These pre-requisite skills are very achievable for most as digital technology is ubiquitous in daily 21st century living. Teachers believe technology is having an impact on how they teach thinking and learning skills, which is directly contributing to students becoming life-long learners (CDW-G, 2007). With this in mind, it appears crucial that school leaders provide on-going, supportive CPD opportunities to empower staff to embed digital technology into their daily practice.

Bogler (2005) suggested that empowering teachers and giving them decision-making opportunities improved their professional commitment. Adopting change of any kind is challenging, both at an individual level and whole-school level. When it involves embedding digital technology, the change becomes even more complex and multi-facetted because of the varying starting points individuals begin the process of adoption of innovation with. Not all participants involved in embedding the technology into the curriculum are going to adopt or change at the same rate.
The work of Everett Rogers (2005) examines the nature of organisational change. He relates the adopter of innovation to the typical bell-shaped curve which shows the percentage of individuals who typically fall into categories during an innovation implementation. These categories created by Rogers are described by Schrum and Levin (2009) as follows:

- Innovators: brave people pulling the change (2.5%)
- Early adopters: respectable people, opinion leaders, trying out innovation in careful ways (13.5%)
- Early majority: thoughtful people, careful but accepting change more quickly than average (34%)
- Late majority: skeptical people, use new ideas once majority is using it (34%)
- Laggards: more traditional, critical toward new ideas (16%)

When one considers the short time-line of the dawn of the digital age, there are three very distinct categories in which people can be placed simply based on the year they were born: pre 1970, between 1970 and 1985 and post 1985. The year in which a teacher was born has undoubtedly influenced their initial and formative experiences of using digital technology. For teachers born before 1970 (now in their 40s, 50s or 60s), computers did not feature at all in their schooling. The use of electronic devices is something they could never have anticipated. For those born between 1970 and 1985 (now 30-45 year olds), computers were accessible in their formative education but without access to the World Wide Web. They did not grow up with mobile phones or on-line social networking. People born after 1985 were born into a very connected world thanks to the emergence of the World Wide Web and a huge choice of relatively inexpensive electronic devices.

Virtually every school, both nationally and internationally, has cohorts of staff who fall into all three of these categories. Familiarity and exposure, however, are just one factor which influences teachers' ability and willingness to adopt an innovation.

Digital Technology - Barriers and Influencing Factors

Rogers (2008) also described the teachers' interest and the value placed upon the innovation, in addition to the interaction with the innovation, as being factors which influence teachers' willingness and ability to adopt an innovation.

Ertmer, Ottenbreif and York (2006) surveyed 'expert technology-using teachers' to investigate the factors influencing them to integrate technology into the classroom. These factors included inner drive, personal beliefs, commitment, confidence, previous success and professional development.

Barriers that impede adoption of digital technology by teachers also point to, including other factors, the quality and quantity of professional development opportunities for teachers as a contributing barrier. In one review of 48 barrier articles, Hew and Brush (2006) summarised the following barriers to technology integration:

a. resources (hardware, access, time, technical support)
b. institution (e.g. leadership, school planning)
c. subject culture (e.g. institutionalised practices in subject areas)
d. attitudes and beliefs (e.g. pedagogical beliefs, personal attitudes toward technology)
e. knowledge and skills (e.g. technology skills, how to integrate technology into the classroom)
f. assessment (e.g. standardised testing)

Continuous Professional Development and School Leaders

Although there has been much focus on what teachers need to know about technology to be effective practitioners in this digital age (Zhao, 2005 and Poole, 2006), there has been less focus on how teachers are expected to integrate this technology to enhance student learning.

It is assumed, Koehlor and Mishra (2005) suggest, that "teachers who can demonstrate proficiency with software and hardware will be able to incorporate technology successfully into their teaching". I am not convinced that this is entirely true as there other mitigating factors which also need to be considered, such as access to resources and links to the curriculum. Jason Ohler (2010) suggests there should be a shift of focus "from on machine focus and towards a focus on content and communication, i.e., a shift from 'the gear or gadgets' to what we are doing with the gear" (Ohler, 2010 p. 25).

It is certainly appropriate and necessary to initially familiarise non-digital natives with the physical equipment, or the 'gear and the gadgets', and the opportunity to learn how to operate them. For the most part, this initial objective has been achieved. It is quite clear that no matter how well-resourced a school is, little will change unless teachers are well-prepared and have had the opportunity to hone their skills (Hernandez-Ramos, 2005; Sandholtz and Reilly, 2004). Time, a very precious commodity, is essential for teachers to consolidate new skills. Without well-developed, on-going professional development opportunities, teachers will be unable to fully incorporate digital technology into the process of teaching and learning (Schrum, 1999). Other literature (Nir and Bogler, 2008; Somech and Bogler, 2002) has shown that on-the-job professional development opportunities are most useful when they are long-term, focused on students' learning and linked to the curriculum.

Some researchers believe that traditional in-service training and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) opportunities are "ill-suited to practice the 'deep understanding' that can assist teachers in becoming intelligent users of technology for pedagogy" (Koehler and Misha, 2005). Others go one step further by stating that "a great deal of professional development that has focused on technology has been ineffective" (Schrum and Levin 2009 p.107).
Before considering effective CPD programmes for teachers, it is worth mentioning what the literature says about optimum conditions for teacher learning to occur. Teachers, as adults, respond best when two significant factors are considered (Little, 1982).

- Adult learning is improved when others demonstrate respect, trust and concern for the learner.
- Adults wish to have ownership of their own learning (i.e. they wish to choose their own learning objectives, content, activities and assessment).

Given the clear fact that 'well-developed, on-going' CPD is crucial for teachers to become effective practitioners in this ever-evolving digital age and what is currently on offer in some schools has been 'ineffective', it is appropriate for school leaders to reconsider options to create more effective CPD opportunities which fully support the needs of all their teachers. It seems that a one-size-fits-all approach is not a viable option given the vast array of starting points or previous experience teachers have. A much more differentiated approach that is on-going and personalised, with clear targets moving towards an end goal seems more likely to support the needs of all teachers. Sharing the vision is paramount to success as it enables teachers to be clear of what the expectations and long-term goals

are, thereby allowing them to structure and pace their personal learning targets to meet these. Initiating conversations about the vision will generate much-needed discussion and even, at times, debate, but answers to the following questions will become apparent.

- What do staff already know?
- What do they want to know more about?
- How can this be achieved?
- What are their concerns?
- What are the possible solutions?

By having time to consider the possibilities (as well as the potential pit-falls), the 'vision' of a few will become a shared vision, the vision of many. The development of a shared vision is essential (Reeves, 2006). A shared vision often leads to the development of a Professional Learning Community (PLC) (Louis and Kruse, 1995). Professional Learning Communities are "social groupings of new and experienced educators who come together over time for the purpose of gaining new information, reconsidering previous knowledge and beliefs, and building on their own and others' ideas and experiences in order to work on a specific agenda intended to improve practice and enhance students' learning" (DuFour et al, 2006).

In order to truly sustain and encourage teachers' growth, successful Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), of whatever size, have one underlying commonality - school leadership and support (Louis and Kruse, 1995).
Lave and Wenger (1991) coined the term 'communities of practice' to highlight the importance of activity/learning in binding individuals to communities.

The three common features of learning communities include:
1. a common cultural and historical heritage, including shared goals, negotiated meanings and practice
2. individuals becoming a part of something larger
3. the ability to reproduce as new members working alongside more competent others (Lave and Wenger, 1991)

CPD opportunities offered within such a community of practice seem a promising way of teachers receiving 'well-developed, on-going' professional development so sought after to fully integrate digital technology into the classroom. Members of the community share a common goal (improving teaching and learning through use of digital technology), which enables non-digital natives to become 'part of something bigger' with a view to these newly-acquired skills and knowledge being shared with others. The idea of *novices* or *apprentices* working and learning alongside more knowledgeable *experts* or *masters*, as Lave and Wenger (1991) describe, may connote images of a somewhat parasitic partnership and, for that reason, I suggest a more symbiotic relationship where every member of the learning community has something to offer each other.

It is through active participation in authentic activities within a collaborative community where deep, meaningful learning and discovery becomes embedded, or as Lave and Wenger (1991) suggest, a process of 'enculturation' occurs. In communities of practice, learners work collaboratively so that situated authentic problems can be solved. Learners, in this case teachers, are afforded the opportunity to be *originators of their own learning,* in a context of *trust and respect* which are the two significant factors suggested by Little (1988) to be conducive to adult learning. Similar in some ways to both PLC (Louis and Kruse, 1995) and communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, (1991) is 'Learning by Design'. Koehler and Mishra (2005) argue that in order to go beyond the simple "skills instruction" view offered by the traditional workshop in-service training approach, it is necessary to teach technology in contexts that acknowledge the connections between subject matter (content) and the means of teaching it (the pedagogy). Learning by Design offers just that. This approach seeks to put teachers in similar roles as they work collaboratively in small groups to develop technical solutions to authentic pedagogical problems (Mishra and Koehler, 2003). This approach goes beyond just the simple acquisition of skills but, in fact, gain a deep understanding of the technology

by engaging in authentic design tasks in collaborative groups. Learning by Design requires teachers to navigate through the options the hardware and software offers to choose a best-fit solution to a given problem which encourages and facilitates flexible ways of thinking about technology, design and learning.

But, as Bill Gates says, "technology is just a tool. In terms of getting kids working together and motivating them, the teacher is the most important." It seems that becoming an advanced technician is not as important as becoming an "advanced manager of their students' talents, time, inquiry and productivity" in today's 21st century classrooms (Ohler, 2010). The 21st century skills predicted to serve today's students well as they enter the unknown workplace of tomorrow include "critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration and creativity" (Schrum and Levin, 2009). These are the same four skills teachers will be focusing on in communities of practice as they are supported to embed innovative digital technology into their daily practice.

In this world of constant and rapid technological advancement, an unexpected role and duty of the teacher has emerged - the ethical role model. Helping students realise the broader context their learning and collaborating online entails, has become a crucial part of teachers' working days. This is an area where perhaps teachers are somewhat ill-prepared and would benefit from guidance on how and when this is explicitly shared with students (Ohler, 2010, p.90).

To those teachers who have expressed feeling overwhelmed, at times, I wish to reiterate that the pace of change within digital technology has been recognised as being nothing less than explosive and has never before been experienced in any previous educational innovation in history (Kurzwell, 2005). To those teachers who have expressed feeling irrelevant, at times, the reality we are facing is that "the more technological we become, the more important teachers become" (Ohler, 2010, p.90).

The flexibility of anytime-anywhere-anyplace learning (Milrad and Spikol, 2007) which is now mentioned as being one of the possibilities digital technology may allow, has led some people to assume that schools, as we know them now, may become superfluous in the future. However, it is becoming very clear that the opposite is true for teachers. Their role will most likely evolve as the technology does, but the core skills crucial for survival in the workplace of tomorrow will remain the remit of teachers - critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration and creativity. In addition to these is the new and unexpected role of ethical role model.

Keeping teaching practitioners, at least, abreast and, at best, ahead of the transformative uses of digital technology in an educational setting will continue to be a challenge for school leaders in the years to come. Putting teachers at the centre of the learning experience where there is a meaningful and supportive context for their own learning and development to occur is a possible way forward (Stager, 1995).

I will end with a quote from Jean Piaget who died at the age of 84 in 1980, unaware of the coming of the World Wide Web and the implications it would have on our world. The wisdom of his words hold as true today as they did in the pre-digital past.

"The principle goal of education is to create men and women who are capable of doing new things, not simply of repeating what other generations have done, men and women who are creative, inventive and discoverers who have minds which can be critical, can verify, and not accept everything they are offered."
Jean Piaget, 1896-1980

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Social Stories - A Strategy to Support and Guide Children Through the Complexities of our Social World

By Elizabeth West and Gemma Pomfret

"Stories of all kinds have been used to teach children values and behaviours for thousands of years. These include Aesop's Fables dating from the eighth century BC, parables from the Bible, European folk stories, Enid Blyton's Brer Rabbit through to modern day children's stories. Many modern day children's stories, such as, Tony Ross' Little Princess series have been written to help children learn to understand others, themselves and feelings, which would be otherwise difficult to articulate directly to a child. Stories are very effective for conveying complex social concepts." (Demiri 2004)

What are Social Stories?

Social Stories are an intervention designed by Carol Gray in 1993 to help children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) negotiate the social world. They are based on the concept of bibliotherapy (Pardeck, 1995) which uses reading material to help children solve personal problems. Social Stories are individualised short narratives which are designed to support individuals with ASD in interpreting and understanding social situations. Specifically Social Stories are defined as stories that:

> "describe a situation, skill or concept in terms of relevant cues, perspectives and common responses in a specifically defined style and format."
> (Gray, 2004, p.4)

> "provide information on what people in a given situation are doing, thinking or feeling, the sequence of events, the identification of significant social cues and their meaning, and script of what to do or say; in other words, the what, when, who and why aspects of social situations."
> (Attwood, 2000, p.89)

Social Stories are a popular and widely used intervention for ASD individuals and those working with individuals with ASD (Okada *et al.,* 2008; Carbo, 2005; Demri, 2004). Social Stories are listed among a range of support strategies by the National Autistic Society for teachers working with ASD children (National Autistic Society, 2009). Reynhout and Carter (2009) reported 93% of respondents to a survey of teachers working with ASD children had used Social Stories and agreed that it was an effective intervention.

Why Social Stories are used as a Support Strategy for ASD Individuals

Impaired Theory of Mind which frequently occurs in ASD individuals (Perner *et al.,* 2002; Frith, 1989; Baron-Cohen *et al.,* 1985) suggests individuals have difficulty understanding what other people are feeling, thinking or meaning and consequently would benefit from such information which is supplied within the Social Stories framework. Social Stories can provide information on how people are feeling, thinking and behave in specific social situation. This is achieved by the use of perspective sentences within a Social Story which refer to others feelings, thoughts, motivations and actions.

Weak central coherence, which can often occur in ASD individuals, is an inability to see the "whole picture" (Happe and Frith, 2006). This can be seen in individuals who pay attention to small details which may be irrelevant and not see things, events as a whole (Kokina and Kern, 2010). Social Stories can therefore support individuals who display weak central coherence as they guide individuals to identify relevant details and provide connections in order to see

the bigger picture. Thus, a Social Story which presents diverse pieces of information pertaining to a social situation in a coherent and integrated manner may assist an individual to respond in an appropriate way.

Can Social Stories be Used with Non-ASD Individuals?

As Social Stories have become more widely known and researched, teachers have begun to use such an intervention more frequently with children who do not have ASD. Social stories have been used with: students with language impairments (Thiemann and Goldstein, 2001), challenging behaviours (Toplis and Hadwin, 2006), learning disabilities (Moore, 2004) and Fragile X syndrome (Kuttler *et al.,* 1998). Typically the skills which have been targeted have been to help teach young children social skills and self-help behaviours. The majority of children can benefit from Social Stories because it is a technique which can be adapted for a variety of settings and a wide range of children (Rowe, 1999; Gut and Ufran, 1992). Using such interventions has proven especially beneficial for many children who do not possess an identified disability but have been rejected or isolated due to poor social skills (Gut and Sufran, 2002).

How to Write a Social Story?

Social Stories have been found to be very user-friendly, time-efficient and easily implemented by teachers, carers and parents (Crozier and Tincani, 2005; Scattone *et al.,* 2002; Chan *et al.,* 2008). The main objectives of Social Stories are to: reduce inappropriate behaviours; acquire appropriate behaviours; teach routines; teach skills; support during transition times and new situations or events. Their primary goal is to share accurate social information in a way which is easily accessible, appropriate and understandable by the individual concerned.

Social Stories should be, as Gray (1994) suggests, customised to the individual, taking into account different learning styles, age and language skills. Gray provides clear guidelines and criteria to support the development of Social Stories which includes use of: using the first or third person, sharing information in a simple literal way, positive language, answering the 'wh' questions (who is doing what, when, where and why) and referring to positive behaviours rather than negative behaviours. In 1991, Gray stated that Social Stories should include four sentences types: descriptive, perspective, affirmative and directive sentences.

- Descriptive sentences specify and answer the *wh* questions, when, who, what, where and why an individual should display a specific targeted social behaviour.
- Perspective sentences describe the reactions and feelings others may have about a social situation, or how the individual displays the targeted social behaviour.
- Affirmative sentences describe a shared belief by society.
- Directive sentences describe how an individual should try to behave in the targeted social situation.

In 2004, Gray added, three additional sentences to her original sentence types: control sentences, identifying strategies for recalling or applying information; co-operative sentences, indicating who can assist the individual in a given situation; and partial sentences, filling in the blank type sentences which can be in any sentence type and can help measure a child's comprehension encouraging independent thinking.

Gray felt that a Social Story should be descriptive more than directive and thus prevent an individual from experiencing the intervention as restrictive. As such, she devised a Social Story ratio which she later renamed the Social Story formula. This Social Story formula stipulates that for every one directive or control sentence, there should be a minimum of two descriptive, perspective or cooperative sentences (Howley and Arnold, 2005; Gray, 2004). Within the most current Gray Social Stories guidelines, 'Social Stories 10.0: The new defining criteria and guidelines' (Gray, 2010), Gray has identified a ten-step defining criteria (see Table 1).

Table 1

The 10 criteria that define each Social Story	
1	The story meaningfully shares social information with an overall patient and reassuring quality
2	The story has an introduction that clearly identifies the topic, a body that adds detail, and a conclusion that reinforces and summarises information
3	The story provides answers to the 'wh' questions describing the setting or context (where), time related information (when), relevant people (who), important cues (what), basic activities, behaviours or statements (how), and the reasons or rationale behind them (why)
4	The story is written from a first person perspective, as though the child is describing the event or third person perspective, like a newspaper article
5	The story uses positive language, omitting descriptions or references to challenging behaviours in favour of identifying positive responses
6	The story can comprise of: descriptive sentences, perspective sentences, affirmative sentences, directive sentences, control sentences, cooperative sentences and partial sentences
7	The story follows the Social Stories™ formula: 1 directive or control to 2 or more descriptive, perspective, affirmation or co-operative sentences
8	The story matches the ability and interests of the audience, and is literally accurate
9	If appropriate the story uses carefully selected illustrations that are meaningful to the child and enhance the meaning of the text
10	The title of the story meets all applicable Social Stories™ criteria

In addition to the Social Story formula for writing a Social Story, visual supports can be incorporated within a Social Story. Visual supports in Social Stories were originally advised against by Gray and Garand (1993), as they were thought to cause distraction or misinterpretation of the situation. However, Gray (2004) has since revised this recommendation and now recommends using individually-tailored illustrations to enhance the meaning of the text. This recommendation is followed by researchers and practitioners constructing and using Social Stories and all have concluded that Social Stories including illustrations appear to be more effective than those which use text only (Kokina and Kern 2010; Reynhout and Carter 2006, 2009). This may be explained as the illustrations in Social Stories appear to address the 'visual learning style' of individuals with ASD (Bogdashina, 2006). It is well documented that visual supports assist with social interaction, communication, organisation and the management of challenging behaviours in individuals with ASD (Quill 1995). Social Stories have the potential to provide comprehensive support for individuals with ASD because they have both textual and visual presentation (Demiri, 2004).

A Bangkok Patana Teacher's Perspective of Social Stories

Background

I have been an Early Years Foundation Stage Teacher for eight years, of which two have been at Bangkok Patana. I was first introduced to Social Stories two years ago on a staff in-service training. This provided me with an opportunity to learn what Social Stories are and how they can be used to support children. In addition, I gained some experiences of creating them with colleagues. While at the training, I was considering my own class and how I could use this strategy to support them in the prime area of PSED (Personal, Social and Emotional Development) in the Early Years' Foundation Stage Curriculum.

My Professional Experience

Over the last two years, since having the training, I have used Social Stories mainly to support children with routines, social interactions and to promote positive behaviours within the setting. They have become an essential strategy within my practice to support the young learners that I teach.

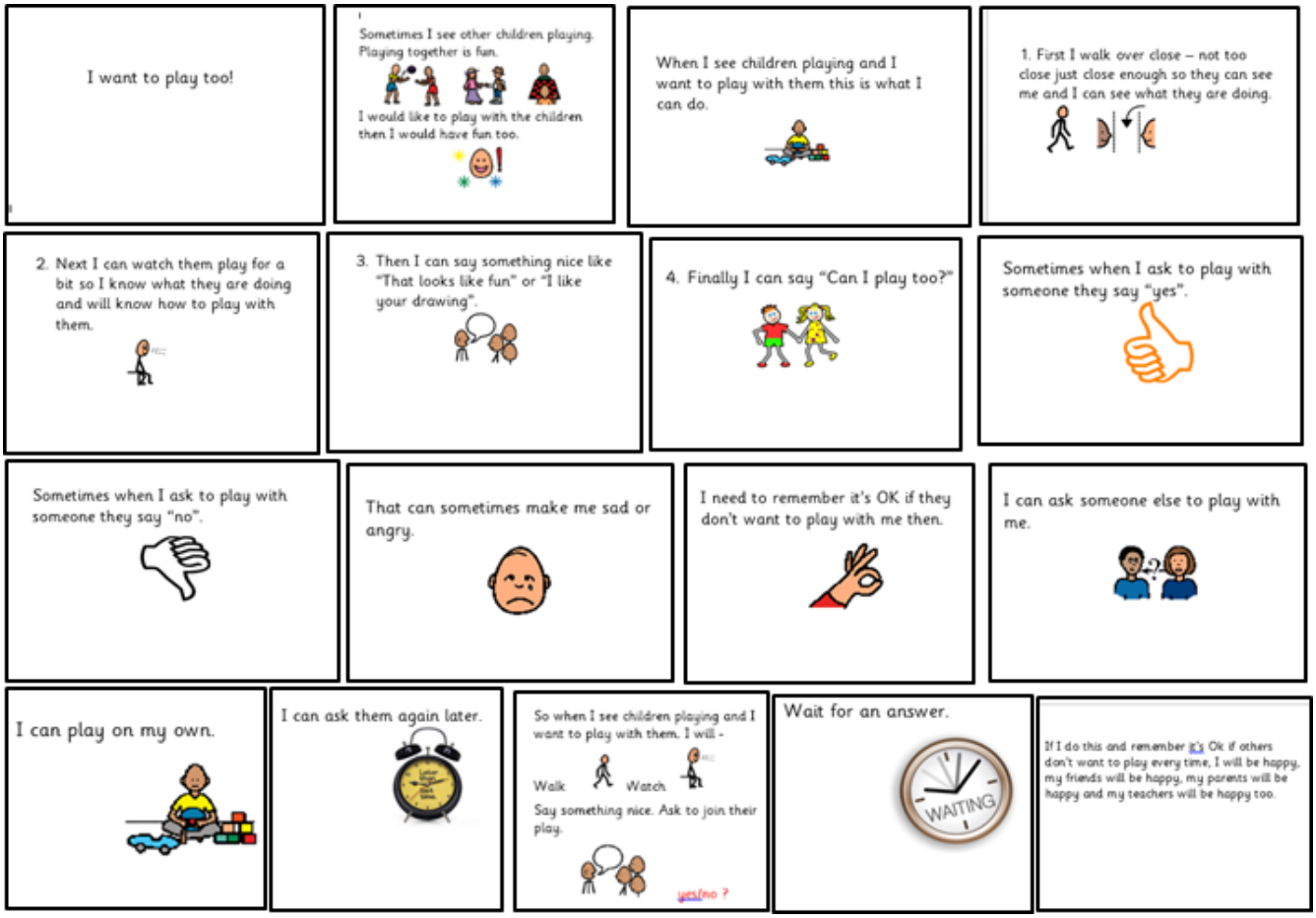
Creating Social Stories for Young Learners

Once a behaviour which can be supported by a Social Story arises, I collaboratively plan and write the story with other staff who support the child's learning. Together we consider how we can create clear and precise steps that will support the child to be independent in solving the problem or understanding a social interaction. We ensure that the stories we create always adhere to *The 10 criteria that define each Social Story (see Table 1).*

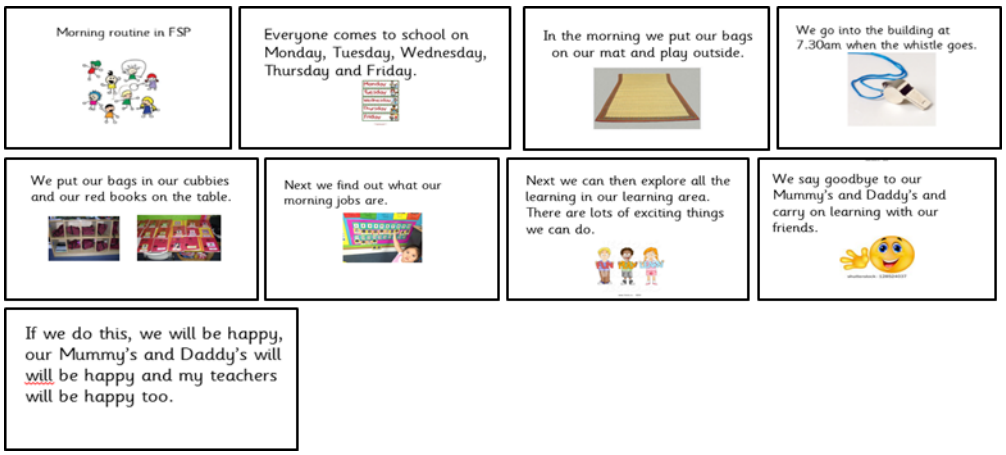
As the stories I am using are for children in the Foundation Stage, I have found that there are some essential ingredients that make them more accessible. The language we use is simple and concise and a clear image is used alongside the text to support understanding. Furthermore, we use them in partnership with parents so that the stories can be used regularly both at home and in school.

Examples of a Social Stories that we have used to Support Children's Learning

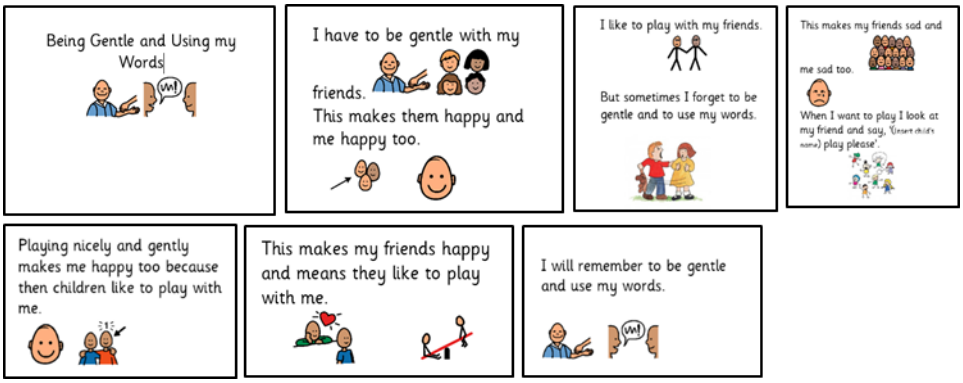
Social interactions



Routines



Behaviour Management



Outcomes

I have used Social Stories with a range of children with varying needs. I have found them to be an essential teaching tool which have benefitted a significant number of students. The speed and impact on children's PSED has been astounding; from students readily adopting previously-difficult classroom routines or calmly eating lunch with their peers for the first time. Although I have had many successes with Social Stories there have been times when they haven't been as successful or quick to have an impact on the child. I found that on these occasions the children have struggled to understand and retain the Social Stories. When this has happened, we have tried an alternative strategy to support them.

Positive Impacts Observed

I have witnessed first-hand the positive impact that Social Stories can have on children. The outcome is very specific in each instance but I have seen them have the following effects:

- Reduced anxiety in social interactions and daily routines
- Independence in daily tasks and self-care
- Supporting positive rather than negative behaviours (hurting others, shouting)
- Supporting appropriate responses to specific social interactions
- Creating awareness of the feelings of others

Conclusion

Currently, Social Stories are used within our school setting where classroom teachers and the Learning Support department work collaboratively. It is a strategy to support transitions, changes in routines and behaviour modifications for some identified children. It has proved to be a powerful and successful tool to help modify the challenging behaviours of some children. There has been staff in-service training which highlighted the positive impact such an intervention can have.

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What Innovation in the Context of Education Means and How and Why it Can be Successful or Fail in Schools

By Nick Goligher, Leader of Learning Year 6

Introduction

"We are living in a defining moment of educational history, when the world in which teachers do their work is changing profoundly" (Hargreaves, 2002, p.2). Students now need to be prepared for the 'knowledge society'. "Knowledge societies process information and knowledge in ways that maximize learning, stimulate ingenuity and invention and develop the capacity to initiate and cope with change" (Hargreaves, 2002 p.2). In order for schools (and other educational establishments) to prepare students to become citizens of the knowledge society, it is imperative that they become their own micro-knowledge societies creating an environment conducive for "mutual learning that leads to continuous innovation" (Reich, 2001).

Article Aims

The initial aim of this article is to identify what innovation in the context of education means. Following this, a literature review of the conditions and mechanisms which exist within schools to promote and support innovative cultures will take place, with reasons sought for why innovations either succeed or fail.

This article is derived from the author's MA in Educational Leadership dissertation. The dissertation included primary research, the outcomes of which when analysed alongside this literature review fed into the development of suggested model / system schools could use to incorporate innovation into their self-improvement planning. The final dissertation is available on request from the author.

What does Innovation in the Context of Education Mean?

As "more and more people care about the quality of teaching, teachers are being put at the forefront of change" (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012, p.xii). Consequently, 'innovation' is a buzzword within the world of education. There are numerous institutions that now have the promotion and advancement of innovation within education as their stated aim and purpose of operation. A large and influential example of this is the World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE), which aims to connect and network educators, providing them with an opportunity to share ideas and best practice. WISE is also intended to "offer a global platform for collaborative action, using innovation as a key ingredient" (Leadbeater, 2012, p.13). WISE is backed and financed by the Qatari government.

To provide a working definition for this study, innovation, in the context of education, is seen as "a systematic, sustained effort aimed at a change in learning conditions and other related internal conditions, with the ultimate aim of accomplishing educational goals more effectively" (Van Velzen et al., 1985, p.48).

"Some innovations require changes that are gradual and subtle; others require changes that are drastic and dramatic" (Marzano, Waters and McNulty, 2005, p.66). Wagner (2012, p.10) details two types of innovation: incremental and disruptive. "Incremental innovation is about significantly improving existing products, processes, or services. Disruptive innovation on the other hand, is about creating a new or fundamentally different product or service." Marzano, Waters and McNulty (2005, p.66) use the terms "first order change and second order change" to characterise different types of innovation. Similar to Wagner, they state "first order change is incremental. It can be thought of as the most obvious step to take in a school. Second order change is anything but incremental. It involves dramatic departures from the expected."

Whole-System Innovation

Within educational contexts, the majority of innovations would be classified as being 'incremental' or 'first order'. Curricula are subtly changed to meet the requirements of new tests or timetables are changed to allow for more teacher-student contact time. However, key thinkers in the world of education such as Sir Ken Robinson (WISE Channel, 2013) and Andy Hargreaves and Michael Fullan (2012) are calling for a paradigm shift and complete education system redesign. They all state that 'disruptive' or 'second order' innovations and are urgently needed to ensure that the way in which 21st century learners are taught actually matches the way in which these learners learn. Combined with this, they state that education systems must be reoriented to ensure that they are preparing these young people for the future they will face beyond education. "Too often our children enter adulthood without the tools that will empower them to cope with an uncertain future. Incremental change is no longer sufficient. Transformative leadership is required" (Leadbetter, 2012, p.13).

School-Level Innovation

Fullan (1982) proposes that there are four phases in the educational change process. This model presents a tangible framework for the processes school leadership teams might work through when attempting to bring about change through the introduction of new ideas, ways of working or initiatives.

Initiation – Implementation – Continuation – Outcome

There are close links between Fullan's 1982 framework and the theory of 'Diffusion of Innovations' as developed and proposed by Professor Everett Rogers (1962). The theory and associated model explains how, over time, an idea or product gains momentum and diffuses (or spreads) through a specific population or social system. The end result of this diffusion is that people, as part of a social system, adopt a new idea, behaviour, or product. Adoption means that a person does something differently than what they had previously. The key to adoption is that the person must perceive the idea, behaviour, or product as new or innovative. It is through this that diffusion is possible. Gladwell (2000) would characterise the moment of mass diffusion as the 'tipping point' whereby the idea or way of doing something proposed becomes 'what we do'.

The Role of Leadership Approaches in the Implementation of Innovation

Effective change leaders will "reframe change from an overwhelming and pervasive threat, to a modification of practice within the broader picture of affirming every colleague as a worthwhile professional and person" (Reeves, 2009, p.10). "Successful leaders use a variety of strategies and styles depending on what it takes to create an environment for learning; and they actively search out the many good practices that are out there but also adapt them to their particular contexts" (Fink, 2003, cited in Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED), 2003, p.7). By searching out and identifying successful innovations, or innovative practice within their own school contexts, these 'successful' school leaders work towards improving the outcomes of their students.

To successfully introduce, develop, monitor and fully implement a particular innovation, a school leader must embrace many different types of approaches to leadership.

Transformational Leadership

James McGregor Burns first discussed the concept of transformational leadership in 1978. Rather than referencing transformation leadership as a set of behaviours, he described it as a process where "leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation" (Burns, 1978, p.78). Kowalski and

Oates (1993) agree with the concept of transformational leadership representing the transcendence of self-interest by both the leader and the led. This thinking was reinforced by Bass in 1985 who outlined transformational leadership as a form of leadership that focuses follower outcomes on a sense of purpose and an idealised mission.

Transactional Leadership

"Transactional leadership involves motivating and directing followers primarily through appealing to their own self-interest. The power of transactional leaders comes from their formal authority and responsibility in the organization. The main goal of the follower is to obey the instructions of the leader" (Management Study Guide, no date). The focus and purpose of transactional leadership is to get the job done. Transactional leaders or managers put in place systems, procedures, policies and resources in order to achieve the stated outcomes of the team or organisation.

To be truly transformative, leaders need to have highly-functioning, trusted teams around them. These teams then must develop structures and put into place the transactional leadership frameworks to implement the vision, idea or goal. Bass' (1985) work led him to develop his two-factor theory in which transformational and transactional leadership represent opposite ends of the leadership continuum, whilst maintaining that the two can actually be complementary.

Distributed Leadership

The differentiating feature of distributed leadership is that it is not hierarchical; it is a form of shared and collective leadership whereby groups of colleagues develop professionally through collaboration. This perception of leadership requires organisations to subscribe to the view that leadership does not solely happen at the top, but across an organisation, with everyone assuming leadership roles.

Teacher Leadership

To accelerate the rate of school improvement and further development of innovative cultures within schools, Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) suggest the advancement of Teacher Leadership. Teacher Leadership encourages the development of a culture which allows teachers to:

- start and spread new projects, not just implement others or top down enforced ideas and approaches;
- find and work with colleagues who can generate innovative approaches and ideas;
- be part of high level conversations where the teacher can come across as being just as smart and confident as the leader or the policymaker;
- be open to change but not exploitable by fashion;
- receive resources for change directly rather than these going via the leaders or School Board;
- manage upwards and challenge the system when appropriate for the benefit of their students.

Barriers to Successful Innovation

"At the core of successful innovation in schools is the relationship between the innovation: the capacity and disposition of the innovator, and the environment in which the innovation occurs. The relationship between each of these areas is unique to each school" (Kirkland and Sutch, 2009). The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) Futurelab project has identified seven key barrier themes impacting on the successful implementation of educational innovation:

1. The Innovation itself
2. Informal and social support structures

3. Formal environment / organisational structure of the school
4. Risk aversion
5. Leadership
6. Shared vision
7. Change management

Of the seven barrier themes detailed above, the role of school leadership towards innovative practices and approaches would be highlighted as being the most important. The perception and view of a school leader towards innovation "must be consistent with the order of magnitude of the change represented by that innovation. If leadership techniques do not match the order of change required by an innovation, the innovation will probably fail regardless of its merits" (Marzano, Waters and McNulty, 2005 p.66). An innovative culture can be quickly damaged if staff "have invested themselves heavily in two or three major change efforts only to see the rug pulled from under their feet every time because the focus shifted, the resources were withdrawn or the leaders or champions of change moved on" (Reeves, 2009, p.11). Deutschman (2007) notes that while humans rationally associate change as a vital part of life, we nevertheless crave continuity and consistency. It is school leaders' job to ensure that innovative cultures and practices are developed, supported and celebrated as "opposition to change spreads like a virus, and the irrational fears of a few are quickly transmuted into mob rule" (Reeves, 2009, p.9).

School Improvement and Development Planning

A school development plan should bring "together; national and local policies and initiatives, the schools aims and values, existing achievements and development needs. The school development plan must not be seen as another initiative, but as a means of managing and coping with innovation overload" (Weindling,1997, p.223).

Hargreaves et al., (1989) developed a model with four main processes in a school developmental planning cycle:

Audit - where the school reviews its strengths and weaknesses
Construction - priorities for development are selected and these are then turned into school specific targets
Implementation - the planned priorities and targets are implemented
Evaluation - the success of the implementation and the cycle's objectives are evaluated

Improvement planning is most effective when all school staff participate in the process. This then helps all staff to buy in to the results and outcomes. The reflection process which feeds into the construction of development plans should include a review of recommendations from previous school self-assessment and any external accreditations or inspections. Assessment data detailing student progress and achievement should be analysed, with the results of this analysis being used to revise and refine goals and then further used to set targets for student achievement. The reflection should also clearly identify and detail curriculum expectations and should set indicators for those curriculum expectations being achieved. These outcomes will then feed into the 'construction' phase where specific priorities are set.

Conclusion

The paper explores what innovation is and how and why it can either be successful or fail. It is clear that schools need to embrace new and innovative ways of doing things which will help them to drive and develop the transformative changes which are required. However, school leaders need to plan for these innovations whilst being mindful of the inspection or accreditation system they adhere to, along with the stated long-term vision, priorities or mis-

sion statement of their particular school context. Innovation must be incorporated into a school's self-improvement plan for the school to successfully and sustainably bring about change.

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A Review of How Academic Success is Impacted Positively by Participating in Physical Activity

By Hannah Marshall , Physical Education Teacher

Introduction

The benefits and outcomes of students' participation within Physical Education (PE) and non-curricular physical activity has been well documented within recent years (Flintoff and Scraton, 2001; Cale and Harris, 2006). At a time when obesity rates are rising (Gibbons, 2009), populations are becoming increasingly sedentary (Fairclough and Stratton, 1997) and young people are becoming more susceptible to developing psychological disorders (Biddle and Asare, 2011). Decreasing physical activity and increasing sedentary behaviours are independent predictors of adult obesity. In contrast, maintaining a physically-active lifestyle during childhood can reduce the risk of suffering from obesity in adulthood (Gibbons, 2009).

Young people's and adolescents' involvement in physical activity has been proven to increase physical, social and cognitive skills, thus facilitating an active, healthy lifestyle (Choi, et al, 2014). As Bailey et al (2013) discuss, students' engagement in physical activity leads to a variety of positive outcomes, notably physical and psychological health, social development and academic performance. It is largely recognised that due to the varied exposure students receive, such as practical work, teamwork elements and thinking skills development, PE and extra-curricular activities are the ideal vehicles to promote these positive outcomes. Educators have the knowledge, resources and opportunities to integrate these outcomes into the overall educational (curricular and non-curricular) process (Telford, et al, 2012). It is important to ascertain whether PE and school extra-curricular programmes are enabling students the opportunities to develop an active, healthy lifestyle whilst simultaneously supporting the increasing academic demands of current educational programmes.

Researchers have long focused on the negative outcomes of students' participation within physical activity, especially on the detrimental impacts participation can have on academic performance. However, there has been a recent shift towards considering the potential benefits. Griffith (2004) argued that, "there is remarkably little research on the interplay of sports and academic achievement" (p. 1). Historically, it was a presumed notion that taking part in physical activities negatively impacts the academic performance of students (Beamon and Bell, 2006). Critical discussion often revolved around an argument that physical activity deflected time away from the classroom (Melnick et al, 1992), resulting in those students with sporting prowess diverting their talent from academic programmes to the sporting realm. Khan et al (2012) explain that critics argued students, "did not have time or energy to achieve excellence and satisfaction in both roles" (p.421).

In this paper I will review some of the available literature to attempt to answer this two-part question:
Is there a direct correlation between athletic participation and academic success? And if so, which personal attributes developed through physical activity are responsible for this correlation?

There are a large number of benefits of participating in physical activity, which apply equally to an academic as well as a non-academic setting.

Benefits of Participation in Physical and Extra-Curricular Activities

There is a growing body of research, both in the UK and internationally, which has found a positive association between participation in physical activity, through curricular and non-curricular opportunities and academic performance in young people (Chaddock et al, 2012; Singh et al, 2012; Lleras, 2008; Trudeau and Shepard, 2008; Strong et al, 2005; Taras, 2005). However, much of this literature interprets this positive correlation as somewhat 'indirect'. Before addressing this potentially 'tentative' link, it is necessary to consider the physical, cognitive and non-cognitive benefits of physical activity and athletic participation.

The health benefits of physical activity are well-recognized and documented (Reiner et al, 2013). In a review of youth sport, Blom et al (2013) identified a range of benefits which include improved bone mineral density, increased strength, stamina, flexibility and endurance, as well as enhanced functioning of cardio-respiratory and muscular systems, reduced risk of chronic illnesses and favourable changes to body composition.

Athletic participation ameliorates the working capacity of vital body systems, which leads to an improvement in the level of mental alertness among performers (Hills, 1998), as well as a positive mood due to the hormonal changes brought about by physical activity. Bailey (2004) implies that a boost in concentration due to quicker cognitive processing is brought about by participation in physical activity. Consequently, it appears logical to assume that within a classroom setting, students who are increasingly physically and mentally alert perform better and have raised levels of attainment (Taras, 2005). In another study, Ferris et al (2003) used an expectancy value theoretical framework to measure the degree to which motivation was maintained in student athletes, finding that athletic motivation carried over into academic motivation. Another positive outcome of sporting participation is increased productivity as a result of enhanced attention. Evenson et al (2009) and Lleras (2008) both reported that students who are more physically active appear to have greater allocations of attention resources for the working memory, which will undoubtedly benefit student achievement. Similarly, Chaddock et al (2012) theorise that physical activity is a pro-social culture which helps to instill virtue and character in young people, thus improving their dedication to academic studies.

Physical activity and sport can also be responsible for encouraging the development of fundamental behavioural habits such as discipline (Davison and Lawson, 2006), improved motivation (Ferris et al, 2003) and skills relating to an individual's ability to follow instructions (Khan et al, 2012). Thus, this not only leads to an increased readiness for students to fulfill their potential, but also provides them with the skills required to do this, providing a direct link with the self-regulatory skills vital to succeed academically. With athletic scholarships for undergraduate university courses becoming increasingly competitive and popular, participation in physical activity can act as a vehicle to heighten educational aspirations (Darling, 2005). In addition, Holloway (2002) believes that participation in physical activity can act to maintain a student's connection with their school, resulting in a potential subconscious betterment of academic standing.

Trudeau and Shepard (2008) revised some relevant literature on the connection between PE and physical activity on academic performance. They concluded that physical activity could be added to the school curriculum, by reducing time in other subjects, without the risk of hindering students' academic achievement. They propose a strong argument for the additional benefits of physical activity such as motivation, discipline and improved self-esteem allowing for increased academic focus. Further conclusions were made which strongly suggest that academic achievement, physical fitness and the health of children will not be improved by restricting the time allocated to PE lessons, school physical activities and sports programmes, mirroring the suggestions made by Melnick et al (1992).

Taras (2005) reviewed literature investigating the association between physical activity and academic outcomes

among middle school children. It was recognised that physical activity is well-associated with improved overall health and that among middle school children it can help develop social skills, improve mental health, and reduce risk-taking behaviours. Echoing the research of Hills (1998), Taras (2005) determined that an improvement in concentration can be one of the short-term benefits of physical activity.

Schools, particularly within the UK, are becoming increasingly accountable to meet standards and the government has set targets regarding outcomes, primarily scrutinised by test-score standards and league tables (Rainer et al, 2012). Despite these recognised benefits of physical activity, this competitive academic climate often culminates in schools having to cut back on courses such as Physical Education (Wilkins, et al., 2003), which is concerning when "one considers the holistic development of students" (p.721). Although schools within the international setting tend to not be bound by such intense legislation and government scrutiny, it is still extremely important that schools are not tempted to reduce Physical Education hours in favour of more 'academic' subjects. In agreement, Trudeau and Shepard (2008) declared that if our intention is to increase students' academic achievement and physical fitness, we should not be reducing the time assigned to Physical Education. Critics contend that participation in sports deflects time away from the classroom and diverts students' attention from study (Khan et al, 2014). It is further stated that it is not possible for students to achieve excellence and satisfaction in sports as well as in education. In a study by Evenson et al (2009), the respondents to their survey disagreed that the removal or diluting of PE and school sport from a school's curriculum or agenda would improve the academic performance of the students. Therefore, it is important for academics, policy makers and educators to further develop their understanding of the link between academic performance and athletic participation, in terms of PE, school sport and extra-curricular activities.

As the literature reviewed advocates, participation in physical activity provides students with numerous physical, non-cognitive and social benefits. However, attempting to justify a direct, or indirect, link between athletic participation and academic success appears a more challenging task. Indirect connections involve the non-cognitive aspects of an athlete's character discussed earlier - such as increased motivation, confidence, self-control and resilience - and how enhancement of these character traits can result in better academic performance. This improvement in academic performance generally occurs as an intrinsic result, for example an increase in personal motivation to succeed, perhaps mimicking the positive results experienced through physical activity. Or alternatively, due to an increase in self-esteem and self-worth, reduced probability of students dropping out of school (McNeal, 1995). Direct connections focus on how students' athletic participation can replicate situations mirroring those of a competitive nature, such as pressured situations and academic tests (Choi et al, 2014). When it comes to long-term success, competition helps children become better prepared for the challenges they will face in the future, whilst helping them to learn effective emotional and psychological skills and strategies to deal with winning and losing, as well as success and failure (Choi et al, 2014). Despite the empirical evidence that establishes a healthy statistical correlation between athletic participation and academic success, it does not mean that participation in physical activity inevitably contributes to academic achievement. In short, correlation does not automatically indicate causation. The question which current research is struggling to answer is whether, or not, a cause-effect relationship can be confirmed or whether it remains ostensible.

Conclusion

As the review of relevant literature suggests, the relationship between athletic participation and academic success is far more complex, multifaceted and less direct than first assumed (Griffith, 2004). Consequently, this 'relationship' requires further elucidation. As practitioners, researchers and policy makers, it is incumbent that we better understand this perplexing relationship between athletic participation and academic achievement. An understanding of the complexities and variations of sport's educational impact is crucial if the PE curriculum is able to take full advantage of the educational potential of physical activity. There are many positive conclusions and recom-

mendations relevant to educational practitioners from the reviewed literature. From the vast quantity of research, scientific evidence and social understandings it is clear that participation in physical activity and/or additional ECAs benefits students in a number of ways. As discussed, these benefits can be directly linked with an enhancement in focus, or a boost of confidence, reduced anxiety or stress and direct improvements to the body systems improving health, to name a few.

Marsh and Kleitman (2002) review how "a number of studies revealed that students participating in extra-curricular activities did better academically than students who did not participate" (p. 1). Here, at Bangkok Patana School, we are fortunate to offer our students, and staff, a vast variety of ECA activities and opportunities to participate in physical activity, either in a recreational or competitive realm. Whether we can argue/state that participation in these activities will have a direct positive impact on academic standing is something which requires more research. However, it cannot be denied that the cognitive and non-cognitive benefits brought about by participation will certainly benefit, not hinder students. As educational practitioners the crucial point is that we find students' own strengths and areas of enjoyment, whether this be physical activity, drama, art or music. It is then our, as a school and community, responsibility to provide students with the opportunity to participate in their chosen activity, thus advancing cognitive and non-cognitive skills which sanguinely will improve their academic success and physical strength.

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Reflections on Intercultural Education: Representations of Students' Intercultural Experiences, Purposes of Intercultural Learning and Potential Strategies to Support These

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Introduction

This article explores some different ways of framing the intercultural experiences of students in international schools as they navigate complex and ever-changing cultural exchanges. It considers some of the purposes of intercultural education and concludes with three ways in which these aims can be catered to. These ideas are filtered through my own thoughts, experiences and perceptions having attended a conference on intercultural learning in Hong Kong this year.

On 3rd and 4th of March 2016, I had the privilege of attending a conference on intercultural learning in Hong Kong. The symposium was organised by the Council of International Schools (CIS) and hosted by the English Schools Foundation. Two main aims were (a) to help educators to increase their understanding of how intercultural learning can apply to their schools and (b) to establish links with university-based specialists who are working in related fields of study. The latter goal was achieved by inviting experts and researchers to deliver key-note speeches, host discussions and present workshops. Similarly, there was a wide range of contributions – both theoretical and practical – by school teachers and leaders attending the conference. The days were organised by three strands, and I opted to follow the strand entitled 'developing whole school commitment to intercultural learning'.

Third and Fourth Culture Kids

The term 'third culture kids' was first introduced by John and Ruth Useem in the 1950s with reference to the children of American ex-patriates. It is a useful, accessible idea to describe the complex experiences of a child who grows up in a culture that is different from the culture of their parents. Many of our expatriate children have this very scenario. The theory is that such students will incorporate elements of both their parents' culture and that of the host country which they live in. However, due to the fact that they do not feel close attachment to either, they will feel their closest sense of belonging amongst groups of children with a similar experience – hence their 'third culture'.

Deveney (2005) coined the phrase 'fourth culture kids' in which students attending an international school within their home country will experience cultural norms and values which may be at odds with the culture(s) of the host country which their own families may be immersed in. According to Deveney (2005) a fourth culture is "one that is not their home system, not a foreign system in a foreign land and not an international school abroad, but an international school in their home country which does not represent their native culture and beliefs."

Digging a little deeper into the phrase 'fourth culture kids', we soon find that the same phrase is used differently by other people. Some use the concept to refer to their own experience as a former international school student in which their two parents originated from different host cultures, so going one step further than the original 'Third Culture Kid' idea. Alternatively, some may refer to situations in which a child has moved between countries and experienced more than one school in quite different cultural contexts.

Labels referring to third, fourth, fifth or more 'culture kids' serve to help define and recognise the experiences of students who negotiate different cultures in ways which their educators and parents may not have done but should at least be aware of.

The Notions of Multicultural, Intercultural and Transcultural

While concepts such as Third and Fourth Culture Kids are useful for at least picturing some of the complicated cultural experiences of students in international schools, talking in terms of discrete cultures may lead us to overlook the ever changing, highly dynamic cultural developments and exchanges which students are inevitably finding their way through. Hassim (2016) places emphasis on the concept of transculturalism as a means to maintaining focus on this last fact.

To help understand what the word transcultural means, it is worth first considering the words multicultural and intercultural. Multicultural communities and societies are ones in which a number of cultures co-exist, but this does not necessarily mean that they interact with one another much, if at all. Exchanges between the cultures in such a context tend to be one-way.

In intercultural situations, people of different cultures will interact with each other to the extent that the cultures will have lasting impacts on each other, continually changing and influencing the cultures as a result. In theory, exchanges are two way and on an equal footing. In the context of an international school, it is easy to see why this word is favoured over 'multicultural'.

There are a number of definitions of the word 'transcultural', but a few key ideas resonate with the experiences which students may have. Transcultural can mean extending through all cultures; a transcultural idea would be one that applies across cultures. It means being able to look beyond our own culture(s) and the cultures we are in contact with. Hassim (2016) argues that all of our students lead transcultural lives. Part of this is because of online technologies and social networking. Many students these days have access to a personal device through which they connect with ideas and people across the world. The daily "chaos" on their mobile phones is, as Hassim points out, an entirely transcultural experience.

A key contribution from this word is the idea that our students are experiencing complex exchanges of multiple, overlapping cultures. As such they form their own complex and shifting identities by hybridising the many different cultures which they experience, both directly and remotely.

Are Cultures More Complex Than we often Assume?

Recognising that experiences of culture and concepts of identity for our students are highly dynamic and complicated is not an easy focus to maintain when trying to build curricular and co-curricular learning activities, but it is a necessary one if we are to do intercultural education justice.

In the context of intercultural education, we often assume nationality or ethnicity to be convenient proxies for culture. However, it is surely far too simplistic to say that all students of one particular country will have the same cultural experiences. Such students can without doubt recognise cultural references, trends, expectations, norms and values in each other. But any one country includes myriad cultures and sub-cultures that are ever shifting. And cultural experiences need not be reduced to nationality and/or ethnicity. Layers of socioeconomic standing, gender, religion, sexual orientation, age and many more will intersect to generate new cultural challenges and experiences which students ought to be prepared to navigate as they try to make sense of their own identities and those of the people with whom the come into contact.

What are the Purposes of Intercultural Education?

In his concluding remarks, Hassim (2016) suggested that intercultural education is essentially about helping young people to learn to get along with each other. This point offers a useful reference point which all educators within any given school can relate to. There is often a perception that teachers and other educators are hesitant, at the least, to engage with the notion of intercultural education because it is somewhat tricky ground. To illustrate this, in his concluding remarks Dr Alan Walker (2016) referred to 'The Forest of Intercultural Confusion'. Yet, if we accept that it is about learning to get along with each other, then there will be many aspects of the curriculum and co-curriculum which already serve this same aim, and therefore help cater to intercultural education.

However useful the above simplification is in terms of understanding the contributions of intercultural education towards students' relationships with others, we should take care to expand upon this and also to recognise other purposes. Firstly, if an aim of intercultural education is to get along with other people, how widely does our definition of 'other people' extend? During the conference, I was part of a discussion in which some of my peers argued that our international students are interculturally competent by virtue of their being in an international school. One peer stated that, on the whole, students tend to get along with one another despite their different cultural (*read 'national'*) backgrounds. I shared that, while this may be broadly true, it is perhaps reflective of the fact that an international school might generate its own culture which most students become very adept at belonging to. This shared culture tends in part to reflect the fact that they can readily access certain experiences, goods and commodities that some other children of their age are unable to. The real test is whether or not our students would be able to relate to and 'get along with' with people from, for example, a remote, rural village in Thailand, or a government-run school not even one kilometre away from their own school. Are they yet equipped with sophisticated enough empathy and understanding to reach through any apparent cultural barriers that are as likely to hinge upon socio-economic status as anything else?

Secondly, we ought to avoid assuming that our students tend to learn interculturalism just by virtue of proximity to people of different backgrounds. Bill Parker (2016) states that schools should seek to move away from the accidental to the deliberate. One of the other definitions of transculturalism is being able to see yourself in the other. Empathy is such a vital ingredient of intercultural competencies that we need to create deliberate opportunities for students to learn their own empathies. They need to be invited to actively challenge their preconceptions and prejudices and find ways to recognise not only themselves in the other, but also to recognise and appreciate why others may have different views and values to their own.

The Oxfam 'Curriculum for Global Citizenship' (2006) draws attention to a number of important curricular 'strands' including empathy, a sense of common humanity, 'social justice and equity' and the 'ability to challenge injustice and inequalities'. Being able to traverse overlapping, changing and complex cultural boundaries – as in the transcultural - is one thing. But if our international students are able to develop genuine empathy for others, they also ought to feel motivated to do something in response to broader issues surrounding social (in)justice and (in) equality. I would like to assert that a significant purpose of intercultural learning, therefore, is to prepare students to be able to contribute important changes to the societies which they will be citizens of, whatever and wherever those societies may eventually be.

Preparing Students to Use their Intercultural Understanding and Empathy Effectively

Many teachers do not feel very well prepared to properly explore cultural difference with their students, let alone issues such as those related to social justice. It is tricky ground because such topics may be deemed sensitive given the wider context of the society an international school is located in, and the potential perceptions and biases of the adults in the community including the students' parents.

In response to the above concern, teachers need not have all the answers regarding discussions of culture. A solution is to create respectful spaces for identifying and challenging prejudice and cultural assumptions, for example, with clearly agreed guidelines such as active listening and open-mindedness. If this happens, the teacher's role can be one of facilitator of an open enquiry to which all students are equal participants. This is not to say that this is an easy role to occupy in itself. However, there is usually a wealth of experience within schools that could be further explored to create such 'safe spaces' for open discussion and inquiry such as 'circle time' activities amongst younger students and 'Philosophy for Children' for older children.

To really develop empathy with people outside of our own school communities it is necessary to provide meaningful opportunities for students to interact with other people. One of the most obvious ways of doing this is through a commitment to Service Learning. Ann Straub (2016), International Advisor for the Council of International Schools, argues that community service is best done locally because you can really get to understand the needs of the community – something which may not be as easy to realise with community service projects directed at further flung destinations. She also emphasised that for service learning to work well, it should be thoroughly connected to the school's curriculum and guiding statements, it should be regularly followed by structured feedback and critical reflection and it should be continually monitored in terms of progress made towards developing global citizenship. It seems clear to me that this is an aspect of schools that has rich potential for further development so as to build meaningful intercultural learning opportunities as part of a broader intent to encourage global citizenship.

Finally, it is important to directly involve students, and possibly alumni, in the planning and evaluation of intercultural programmes which should ideally be co-created by educators and students. Student voice and student participation is a vital ingredient of any successful school, especially so with regards to intercultural learning. As the ones who are trying to make sense of the complex cultural exchanges of which they are potential agents of change, students should be consulted in terms of what their experiences of intercultural education have been so far, what they think the purposes should be and what their recommendations would be for developing deliberate opportunities that would engage them while serving agreed aims.

Conclusion

It is important for educators to consider the highly dynamic and complex intercultural experiences which our students are coming to terms with, and notions such as 'third culture kids' and transculturalism are helpful in drawing our attention to this fact. At the same time, educators need to be mindful not to oversimplify representations of students' intercultural experiences.

Intercultural education serves a number of important purposes, including learning how to get along with other people. In this article I have drawn attention to further, significant ambitions: to equip students to be able to make meaningful changes to the societies they will be a part of, to recognise and respond to social injustice and to develop empathy for others who may be different to themselves for a host of reasons.

Finally, there are three possible strategies which could be effectively employed within an international school to help meet the aforementioned aims. Firstly, to create respectful, enquiry-based spaces in which students are able to challenge their prejudice and assumptions. Secondly, to expand the role of service learning with an emphasis on

local communities where possible. And finally, to ensure that students actively co-construct the curriculum and co-curriculum for intercultural learning alongside their educators.

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