



REPORT ON THE 2010 SUMMER SCHOOL

28 - 30 JUNE 2010

HOMERTON COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

ENGLISH, HISTORY and GEOGRAPHY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over 110 teachers of English, History and Geography spent three days at Homerton College, Cambridge, hearing talks from eminent speakers and academics and discussing why they should teach their subjects, what they should teach and how they should teach it. This report summarises the conclusions the teachers presented at the last day of the Summer School and the ensuing plenary discussion with Michael Chisnall (Adviser to HMCI, Ofsted), Liz Francis (Director of Workforce Strategy, Training and Development Agency) and Simon Lebus (Group Chief Executive, Cambridge Assessment). It also includes a summary of the opening panel of Sixth Form students, of the panel discussion with the Rt Hon Michael Gove, MP, Secretary of State for Education, and includes just some of the comments written by delegates at the end of the course.

The main themes emerging from the Summer School were:

- 1) **Enthusiasm for the Summer School and a commitment from delegates to act on the inspiration of the event** The evaluations and teacher presentations confirmed that, yet again, teachers have been extremely enthusiastic about being given the chance to spend time refreshing their subject knowledge through contact with eminent speakers and like-minded colleagues. There has been “immense practical value in sharing good practice” in the workshops and the feeling has been that “teachers who have been inspired and reinvigorated [at the Summer School] are taking their enthusiasm back into the classroom to the benefit of their pupils.” This has been confirmed by some 85% of delegates choosing to increase the challenge of the work in their departments in the wake of the Summer School and to opt into the PTI Schools Programme membership scheme which is built on the notion of subject rigour.
- 2) **More focus on subject training in Continuing Professional Development and Initial Teacher Training.** The Geography delegates summarised it thus: “CPD focused on subject knowledge is essential for all teachers ... and we would like to see more opportunities for all teachers, including trainees, to attend high quality lectures from academics in order to secure subject rigour and development”. The English delegates commented “The challenges are for ITT to attract the very best teachers and ensure that they become experts across the required breadth; for CPD to keep this expertise up to date and teachers deeply engaged with their subject”. Commenting that a wide-ranging review involving schools and Universities to consider training is part of the process of re-evaluating the curriculum, Liz Francis from the Training and Development Agency said “However, ITT does not have enough time by itself to cover every aspect of the training of a teacher; it must be seen as part of a continuous learning experience”. When asked how the Summer School might inform the Department for Education’s own provision of ITT and CPD, the Secretary of State for Education replied “You tell me. I’d love to know more... What can I do to help? Conversations about education should not be about finance and administration, but about what teaching will inspire the next generation”
- 3) **Greater linkage between schools and universities.** The English delegates felt that there was a need for more links between schools and universities to nurture greater subject expertise in the

system. One delegate summarised it thus: "Universities are saying that students coming from our schools are not well enough prepared for Higher Education; but our perception is that the Universities are doing little to interact with the schools". In response, Rowena Collins from Warwick University pointed to research days they are running and academic support for pupils and teachers at local schools. Kate Pretty from Cambridge University stated that there was indeed a problem with the curricular interface between schools and universities. She commented that although it wasn't anybody's fault, there was a danger of "lost generations of knowledge" coming from the vicious circle of students in Higher Education having been taken down a comparatively narrow curriculum at schools then not being willing to open up to non-mainstream topics at university, and thus leading to a further diminution of knowledge in future generations.

- 4) **Accountability measures that celebrate the best of what teachers do.** Reflecting on how rewarding they are finding new Key Stage 3 freedoms to enjoy a rich and challenging diet of literature, the English delegates asked "What systems would encourage brilliant subject-based CPD, challenging and rigorous courses for pupils, inspiring trips and visits, and deep thinking and coherence? Because the current system doesn't." Their view was that "the current specifications at GCSE and A Level offer a fragmented, often narrow and reductive experience." Responding to this criticism, Simon Lebus from Cambridge Assessment stated that "It is stupid to try and put everyone through the same door. We need a freer framework with many different types of qualification and assessment, tailored to the demands of individual subjects." Concerning school inspection, the Geography teachers felt that while they had been in the vanguard of embracing new technologies through the compulsory use of GIS, packages such as Google Earth and GPS, this was not adequately reflected in the school inspection regime. Summarising the general sentiment, the English delegates stated "We want to go beyond superficial analysis which allows schools to gloss over the surface and merely encourages teaching to the inspection requirements" In response, Michael Chisnall, adviser to HMCI, Ofsted, stated that "In the new framework there is intended to be a focus on the quality of learning and an emphasis on progress rather than on attainment...An inspector doing his job will ask the children themselves ... what they have learnt in a lesson that they didn't know before."
- 5) **Curriculum pressure on traditional but non-core subjects like History and Geography.** There was a prevailing feeling amongst the History and Geography teachers present that traditional non-core subjects like theirs were being squeezed out of the curriculum due to the increased demand on schools to provide, for example, personal social and health education, citizenship, enterprise education and vocational courses at 14-19. Passionate about their subjects, these delegates felt that students in all schools should have an entitlement to the greater understanding of the world around us that study of these subjects brings. The panel of sixth-formers agreed, stating that they thought that students should take one, if not necessarily both, of these subjects beyond Key Stage 3. Responding to this sentiment, Liz Francis (TDA) said "even if I am personally persuaded of the particular importance of the Humanities (as I am), there are many other subjects with compelling claims on curriculum time. In the end we have to strike a balance between entitlement and choice".

SUBJECT PRESENTATIONS

Conclusions of all the delegates' discussions at the Residential programme were presented by Teacher Leaders to a panel of educationalists on the final morning. The texts are reproduced below.

ENGLISH

The 2010 Summer School

There has been a clear commitment to our subject specialism this week, with speakers of high quality re-enthusing us and reminding us why we came into English teaching. Quality is at the essence of the PTI; and if we want quality teachers and a high level of pupil engagement, then we need quality CPD – as we have had here.

Sir Tom Stoppard talked to us about of the unique place of metaphor in literature and its power to stimulate the imagination. Dr Fred Parker reminded us about the power of stories: how they not only give pleasure but help us to deal with difficult things. They give us a vocabulary and a framework for making sense of a world of increasing complexity, enabling us as teachers to address our pupils' emotional education. Dr Gavin Alexander delved into the history of story with a fascinating exploration of the relevant etymology. He made clear the evolving links between 'telling' and 're-counting', and the transference of cultural concepts through story: 'to tell a tale is part of our human story'. Professor Helen Cooper considered stories behind the lines – of poetry. The simplicity of the verse she chose belied the complexity of the message it carried.

The seminars included Hester Lees Jeffries exploring Myths in Bits, where we were encouraged to find resonance and echoes of memory in Yeats and Shakespeare; and Robert McFarlane who took us through an altogether more disturbing narrative with the apocalyptic novel, *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy, inviting us to consider how the lean impersonal language resonates with a readership perhaps immune to the environmental disasters on our doorstep.

Our sessions in group workshops have been of immense practical value in sharing good practice, especially the one with the Royal Shakespeare Company that makes drama such fun. But the most important message came from the pupils who addressed us at the outset: six remarkable young people who were clearly inspired by the quality and vigour of their teachers to go beyond the textbooks and seek out knowledge for themselves. And that is the challenge for us teachers, to facilitate and inspire young people to seek out their own stories and their own way forward.

Kathy Johns

Challenges and Issues in English Teaching

The future looks very exciting for us as English teachers. There does appear to be a new freedom, certainly at Key Stage 3, to enjoy a rich and challenging diet of literature. So we have discussed the need for structures to be established to ensure that all our students are able to experience the breadth of great literature and, crucially, freedom within this to choose the right texts: texts which speak to and inspire us and our students. Our collective passion for nurturing a love of reading has been at the centre of much of our discussion, as has our aim in expanding the horizons and experience of our students by engaging them in a wide variety of challenging literature, stories ancient and contemporary, national and international.

We are in an educational world which prioritises skills and conceptual connections above the need for pupils to gain real knowledge. Those who design Initial Teacher Training and Continuous Professional Development need to consider how far they are helping to develop this essential subject expertise. The challenges are for ITT to attract the very best teachers and ensure that they become experts across the required breadth; for CPD to keep this expertise up to date and teachers deeply engaged with their subject; and for links between schools and universities to ensure that we work together to achieve these aims.

Inspections, League Tables and other accountability measures should be helping us to celebrate the best of what we do rather than chastising us for shortcomings against a predetermined checklist. Structures are needed to encourage teaching that best delivers exciting, enriching, challenging and deep learning for pupils. We want to go beyond superficial analysis which allows schools to gloss over the surface and merely encourages teaching to the inspection requirements.

What systems would encourage brilliant subject-based CPD, challenging and rigorous courses for pupils, inspiring trips and visits, and deep thinking and coherence? Because the current system doesn't.

The view of many teachers is that current specifications at GCSE and A Level offer a fragmented, often narrow and reductive experience. With modular courses and the loss of teaching time through the introduction of an AS year, the assessment system is promoting a bite-sized, one-size-fits-all model. This seriously hampers good teaching. So how can an assessment model be found which encourages depth, rigour, enjoyment and passion, and which gives back to teachers the freedom to teach?

Eve Meyers-Belkin

HISTORY

Why History matters

A key theme through all the lectures, seminars and workshops of this Summer School has been the question of why History matters. Lord Richard Wilson in his key note address stated that "No-one in public life should be in a position of power unless they have some grasp of why we are where we are." We would add that it is not just those in power who should have this understanding, but every citizen.

Michael Wood showed us how his latest project on uncovering the history of the village of Kibworth created a stronger sense of community among the local people who were involved in it and gave them a greater understanding of themselves.

Sean Lang then painted for us a vivid and disturbing picture of a nation without history. We would be like children, struggling to understand our world. We would be guided only by arrogance and prejudice when making decisions about the future. The argument that we can easily access what we need to know by using technology is a dangerous one, confusing information with knowledge. It is vital that information is processed with a background of understanding. One of the pupils from St Angela Ursuline echoed this point when she said in her presentation that we can only be confident in research when fully grounded in the subject.

We are not talking about any old History; not a mix-and-match of unconnected topics or a History subsumed in an integrated thematic course; but a proper, coherent, chronologically based study of the past – which, needless to say, requires time. Unfortunately, for various reasons, the picture of a people ignorant of history is not a flight of fancy. History in schools is under pressure. If education is about the transfer of knowledge and understanding of

the world we inhabit, as I believe it surely is, and if it is about preparing young people to be able to make important decisions and fully participate as citizens, then a coherent course of History must be taught in all schools to all pupils.

Liz Hutchinson

Teacher Training

The PTI Summer School has been well received by the History delegates as it has satisfied a desire for high level and rigorous subject-specific training. Enlightening as the lectures have been in their own right, the speakers have also been aware of our needs as schoolteachers and the workshops have enabled us to translate ideas into classroom practice.

Another strength of the Summer School is the experience of networking with other schools, enabling delegates to connect in a meaningful way with like-minded colleagues. Teachers who have been inspired and reinvigorated in this way are taking their enthusiasm back into the classroom to the benefit of their pupils.

But the PTI is more than just an annual Summer School. It is also developing a number of other approaches to teacher training with a strong knowledge component: the one-day courses, the Schools Programme, and now the Masters degree courses being planned at Cambridge and Warwick Universities. These together constitute CPD of the highest quality, prompting me for one, after a fascinating day with inspirational speakers on Charles I earlier this year, to revisit the topic and revise our schedules of work.

These initiatives deserve all possible recognition and support.

Joanne Bissell

GEOGRAPHY

Why Geography matters

We have devoted quite a bit of time this week to discussion of why Geography is important. Here are some of the reasons suggested:

- That it is topical and relevant to everyday life;
- That it questions why things happen, and provides answers in terms of both physical processes and social interactions;
- That it gives us a sense of place, both locally and globally;
- That it helps pupils to make decisions about their future and the impact they are likely to have;
- That it links with other subjects in a unique manner, to provide students with a co-ordinated understanding of the world around them;
- That it gives opportunities for experiencing the subject outside the classroom.

These ideas have been strongly reinforced at the Summer School: by the range of lectures from eminent academics and the lively debate that has followed, by the accounts of exciting mountain journeys given by our after-dinner speakers, Jake Meyer and Michael Wood; by the sharing of best practice between colleagues and the discussions of how best to engage students and help them to enjoy the subject and develop as geographers (for example a school project to map local crime hot-spots in accordance, first, with their own perceptions, and then

with the official data); and by our visit to the British Antarctic Survey. The stated aims of the BAS are: unlocking the past, understanding the present, predicting the future, exploring the unknown. There could be no better summary of the unique value of Geography, and all young people should be allowed to experience it.

Robert Lang

What we want for Geography

By general agreement, CPD focused on subject knowledge is essential for all our teachers. Geography as a subject never stops changing, in terms of both knowledge and concepts. We engage students with a changing world and we would like to see more opportunities for all teachers, including trainees, to attend high quality lectures from academics, as we have been privileged to do, in order to secure subject rigour and development.

Many teachers this week have commented on how traditional but non-core subjects like Geography have been squeezed out of the curriculum. The increasing demand on schools to provide, for instance, citizenship education, personal social and health education, enterprise education, and vocational courses at 14-19, has put immense pressure on curriculum time. Many schools and academies are also opting for a competency curriculum as well as a shorter Key Stage 3. We would like to see a curriculum which acknowledges Geography's central role in every child's education: one that puts geographical knowledge at the forefront and recognises its power as a subject.

The students that opened this year's Summer School made it clear that their most rewarding learning experiences happen outside the curriculum. Geography, like no other subject, offers a great variety of these experiences through fieldwork and curriculum enrichment. We would like this work by teachers to be specifically recognised during Inspections. This would give teachers a platform for negotiation with those Headteachers who are unwilling to release teachers to go on visits or to fund curriculum-enriching projects.

Field trips require a great deal of planning and preparation. Delegates this week feel frustrated about the new controlled assessment regime which requires a different field trip each year and favours students in schools with accessible ICT resources. Many prefer coursework as an alternative, as it offers students more choice and wider scope for investigation. We would therefore like the appropriate bodies to reconsider controlled assessment.

Geography has been a subject in the vanguard of embracing new technologies. It has moved into 21st century schooling through the compulsory use of GIS, packages such as Google Earth and GPS, as well as a range of other multi-media technologies. What we envisage in the future is an inspection regime that gives recognition for this work.

All we ask as Geography teachers is for acknowledgement of what the subject offers to all students in all schools, so that we can continue to enhance their learning experience.

Jonathan Gunzi

PANEL DISCUSSION IN RESPONSE TO SUBJECT PRESENTATIONS

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| Bernice McCabe (BMC) | Chair, Co-Director, The Prince's Teaching Institute |
| Michael Chisnall (MC) | Adviser to HMCI, Ofsted |
| Liz Francis (LF) | Director of Workforce Strategy, TDA |
| Simon Lebus (SL) | Group Chief Executive, Cambridge Assessment |

Presentations by subject leaders in English, History and Geography

BMC: Would the Panel like to give us some initial reflections on the presentations about these Humanities subjects and their importance?

SL: Speaking as a historian myself, I am very sympathetic. But there are a number of challenges in the way of delivering the sort of curriculum that is being asked for: for instance, the impact of technology on the understanding of the knowledge to be transmitted, and the definition of what that corpus of knowledge is to be.

MC: By happy chance I am a Geographer by training. The Humanities are what help children to make sense of their lives and the subjects provide pegs on which to hang their knowledge. The crucial factor is the quality of teaching. My own passion for Geography was instilled by an inspirational teacher at school; but it took me twenty years to get over bad teaching of literature. Taking the Humanities collectively, they are the glue which helps to shape how we are and how we lead our lives.

LF: You have chosen your panel remarkably well, because my subject is English. I just want to add a word of caution. Even if I am personally persuaded of the particular importance of the Humanities (as I am), yet there are many other subjects with compelling claims on curriculum time. In the end we have to strike a balance between entitlement and choice, in terms of both subjects and content. We must also learn from the lessons of the past; when the National Curriculum was first being shaped, the Historians could not agree even among themselves what should constitute the core of knowledge. We also need to look at accountability, and be sure that what we measure is what we value. We may manage to get the subjects and the content right, but then have it all distorted by a system of assessment which does not support it.

BMC: Is there, or should there be, a hierarchy in the value of subjects? Teachers tell us how difficult it is to work with a curriculum in which every subject is accorded the same value.

Martin Roberts (PTI): In 1988 it was just a straight fight between all subjects for space in the National Curriculum. Now we have had the opportunity to take a more measured view, and there is a philosophical consensus, at least in this room, that the Humanities are essential subjects because they are the key to understanding the human condition, and should have an assured place in the curriculum up to the age of 16, if not 18.

BMC: To go to the question at the heart of the presentations, what systems would best support and encourage subject-based CPD?

SL: Assessment should reflect and promote the best ways of teaching – as it evidently fails to do in the case of Geography fieldwork. It is stupid to try and put everyone through the same door. We need a freer framework with many doors, different types of qualification and assessment, tailored to the demands of individual subjects.

Chris Pope (PTI): There is a view that, with different exam boards competing for candidates, there is an academic race to the bottom.

SL: This is not an analysis I would accept. There are plenty of comparative studies which show that there is little difference between boards. There have, however, been concerns expressed by employers and others about the lack of cognitive knowledge in students coming through the system and this may be related to the emphasis that has been placed recently on equivalence between qualifications, and issues of equity and access at the expense of differentiation and challenge. A greater plurality in the assessment system would help to overcome this.

Flora Wilson (Fortismere Comprehensive School, London): One concern of History teachers is that the resources tend to be concentrated on the most popular modules, which has the effect of narrowing the curriculum and making it harder for any but the most confident teacher to tackle the more esoteric topics. How can this vicious circle be broken?

SL: History as a discipline has changed over thirty years, and nowadays there is probably too much emphasis on skills rather than knowledge. There is now more than ever popular interest in History, but more ignorance too. How are these to be reconciled? Assessment is not the only remedy.

Delegate: Is it right that public exams are an exercise in jumping through the hoops of assessment objectives?

Delegate: I am concerned about the dumbing down of questions. For instance, in a recent GCSE paper in English Literature, candidates were asked 'Is *Of Mice and Men* a sad book?'. For able pupils, these questions are so wide that they do not provide a suitable intellectual challenge.

SL: These problems come from having a monolithic exam structure, and at least we are now introducing a bit more diversity with things like the Pre-U as an alternative to A Level. The difficulty is that society has come to place a high value on equity and access and so people tend to be resistant to exams that differentiate more effectively because they involve failure as well as challenge. At least this is now recognized as a problem and perhaps the pendulum is beginning to swing back a bit.

Delegate: Turning to Inspection, we feel that there is a lack of clarity in the Ofsted schedule about the indicators that distinguish Good and Outstanding progress.

MC: In the new framework there is intended to be a focus on the quality of learning and an emphasis on progress rather than on attainment. In judging a lesson, the questions to be asked are: 'What skills and knowledge are the pupils learning in this lesson?' and 'What progress are they making over time – a term, a year a Key Stage?' To answer these questions, you also need a clear view of the levels that the pupils came from, so that you understand what progress should be being achieved. And the teacher has to make a proper assessment of the level of the pupils in order to pitch the lesson right. Monitoring lessons therefore requires a considerable amount of preparation.

Ruth Totterdell (PTI): There is a perception that a lesson can be judged as Outstanding without the children having actually learnt anything.

MC: An Inspector doing his job will ask the children themselves not just whether they have enjoyed a lesson but what they have learnt in it that they didn't know before.

LF: The increased flexibility in schools which the Secretary of State was talking about should make more time available for focusing on subject knowledge. There has been a change of emphasis from the time when Heads were really not very interested in subjects and CPD tended to concentrate on generalities like Assessment for Learning.

BMC: You would agree that it makes little sense to reform the curriculum without also changing the emphasis in the training of teachers? Do you think there should be more focus on subject expertise and current scholarship in the way that Initial Teacher Training is planned, as well as in CPD provision?

LF: Training and Professional Development have to follow whatever decisions are made about the curriculum and reflect changes of emphasis. A wide-ranging review involving schools and Universities is an essential part of the process. However, ITT does not have enough time by itself to cover every aspect of the training of a teacher; it must be seen as part of a continuous learning programme in conjunction with CPD.

Delegate: Universities are saying that students coming from our schools are not well enough prepared for Higher Education; but our perception is that the Universities are doing little to interact with the schools. How is this gap to be bridged?

Rowena Collins (Warwick University): At Warwick we are running research days with academic support for pupils and teachers at local schools.

SL: At another level of interaction, the Secretary of State has spoken about the desirability of HE getting involved with the reform of assessment. This won't happen just on the back of goodwill; it will need specific funding too.

Delegate: I was just thinking of simple things like making University libraries accessible to pupils.

Kate Pretty (University of Cambridge): That might be possible on a small scale, but providing access to University libraries for large numbers of schoolchildren would give rise to all sorts of problems and the funding base wouldn't be able to support it, especially when we are facing the need for major cost-cutting in the next few years. As for the curricular interface, we find it difficult to open up a broader curriculum for our HE students when they have been taken down a comparatively narrow channel at their schools and are as a result reluctant to leave their comfort zone. This is indeed a vicious circle because you soon run out of people to teach the non-mainstream topics and it becomes increasingly difficult to persuade an exam board to set papers when there is only a handful of pupils to take them. There are lost generations of knowledge and I wonder if we'll ever get it back. The Universities may have to change the way they teach and pupils the way they learn. This isn't anyone's fault. It is just a huge problem that we haven't found a way of handling.

Delegate: As a Head of Department, you find that most of the decisions about CPD are imposed from outside – such as the school management team's requirements for implementing certain whole school policies. This only leaves a very small residue for dealing with personal staff issues like subject development. My hope is that this may change if Ofsted's concentration on 'What are the children learning?' requires different priorities.

LF: We've had nine years or more of whole-school generalities in CPD; but the change now heralded away from generic issues like Assessment for Learning, which stem from Government intervention, should mean that

subjects become more important. The PTI and other such bodies must play their part in promoting the value of subjects and show how pupils benefit from them. It is not a good thing if what is most valuable in the Humanities is put on one side in the name of accessibility. That does not represent equality in education.

Delegate: Is there not a problem for the Secretary of State in the fact that he is promoting subject knowledge and at the same time giving Academies freedom to opt out of the National Curriculum – when their senior leaders may not have the same view of subjects at all?

SL: It is a dilemma; but such schools have first to earn the right to opt out. Even if opinion is moving back in favour of subjects, there is still an argument to be won and bodies like the PTI and subject associations have a missionary role to play. Not everyone is yet convinced and there may be plenty who still think that skills are where it's at.

Delegate: Do you think there should be a differential points system for different subjects and exams according to their perceived difficulty - as BTec/ GCSE, and soft/hard subjects?

SL: There are problems of equivalence for accountability purposes and we hope Ofqual will be able to find some solutions. League Tables are unsatisfactory because they are based on artificial attempts to show equivalence. Assessment in recent years has been bedevilled by the drive for interchangeability. This can only produce artificial results and it's much better simply to publish bare results which reflect the varieties of educational pathway.

Nigel Middleton (Villiers' Park Educational Trust): Educational cuts are bound to affect CPD budgets; and it is ironic that at a time when schools are being freed to do more and better CPD, there's going to be less money available for it. Does the Panel think that schools should accept having fewer teachers and larger classes in order to ensure high quality CPD?

LF: It is reassuring that in a recent survey of senior school leaders, CPD did not come anywhere near the top of the list of things they would be prepared to cut. They realise the danger of making cuts in this area.

David Riggs (Devenport High School for Boys): If Academies have the freedom to choose, and they decide to adopt a skills-based rather than a knowledge-based curriculum, how would this be viewed by Ofsted?

MC: Ofsted does not prescribe the curriculum and inspects many schools with quite different approaches to it. What we are always looking for is to see if the system, whatever it is, enables children to learn and meets their needs.

Stephen Miles (PTI): Not all educationally valuable things are measurable in Ofsted terms, and not all measurable things are educationally valuable. The culture of accountability of the last decade has undoubtedly held back such things as innovation, passion and enthusiasm in teachers.

MC: Fair comment. Inspiration and passion are keynotes of the PTI, and Ofsted inspectors should be able to recognise and commend them. Ofsted certainly does not intend or expect to stifle creativity. It does not have a view on modes of teaching – these are for the school to determine; but it will make a judgement on whether they are alive and effective. In any case, in Section 5 Inspections there is no report on subjects; but we do publish general subject reports every three years, and these I commend to you.

Delegate: What if children cannot articulate what they have learned, when the lesson is Outstanding in other respects?

MC: The important thing for us is not the judgements we make about particular lessons so much as those about the general quality of teaching and learning in a school, and there are other ways of doing that, which vary according to the age and ability of the children: we look at work, we look at the interaction of teachers and pupils, and above all we have the school's own judgement in the Self Evaluation. Our prime concern is always students, students, students.

BMC: We do seem to be moving into a new era, and we appreciate the fact that you three panellists have had so many approving things to say about what the PTI stands for. So, looking ahead, what do you think we have to be optimistic about?

SL: There is clearly growing support for a more knowledge-based approach; but curricular change will need the involvement of HE and employers and others with an interest in educational outcomes. As for assessment, I think there will be a reduction in the rather mechanistic regulatory regime and support for a wider range of assessment instruments.

MC: Michael Gove is on record as saying that he wants Inspections to have a sharper focus on Teaching and Learning, Leadership, Behaviour, and Safety – although it is Parliament that makes the final decision about what is inspected. Inspections should then be seen as part of your CPD, and when it comes to deciding departmental targets next year, keep in mind the essential question: not 'What has the department got to do?', but 'What will be the benefit to the students?'

LF: The main reason for optimism is that we have a Secretary of State who has said, here and elsewhere, that he wants to see teachers taking more control of what happens in the classroom. But after decades of compliance and regulation, this change cannot happen overnight. There is a long way to go, and making it work will require us to look also at the role of Heads, at assessment and accountability.

PANEL OF SIXTH FORMERS - SUMMARY

The panel consisted of six VIth Formers, three from Cardinal Newman Catholic School, a comprehensive school in Sussex, and three from St Angela's Ursuline School, a large Technology College in Newham, East London. Two were studying English Literature, two History and two Geography, although not all of them were intending to continue with these subjects at University.

They were asked to talk briefly about why they were particularly interested in their chosen subject and how that interest had been fostered by their teachers. Common features in their replies were references to:

- the enthusiasm of the teachers which rubs off on the pupils;
- a rich programme of supportive extracurricular activities, such as visits, exchanges and field work;
- the opportunity and encouragement to work independently and come to their own conclusions, once their teacher had given them the instruments for doing so;
- the ability to relate their subjects to what was going on in the world around them, whether it was the eruption of a volcano in Iceland, the incidence of post-war genocide, or just the ungrammatical wording of an advertisement;
- the regular exchange of ideas in discussion with other students, whether studying the same or different subjects.

In further conversation with the audience of teachers, the points they made included:

- the importance of continuing with either History or Geography (but not necessarily both) beyond Key Stage 3;
- the patchiness of the transitional path from GCSE to A Level;
- the usefulness of learning a Modern Foreign Language in supporting a range of other subjects.

When, finally, they were asked what advice they would give to the new Secretary of State, they said that:

- it was a really bad idea to cut the funding for education;
- he should ensure that education was inclusive and offered the same opportunities to all;
- politicians should keep away and leave it to the teachers.

PANEL DISCUSSION WITH THE RT HON MICHAEL GOVE MP

Tuesday 29 June

Chris Pope (CP)

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP (MG)

Hannah Swindells (HS)

Dr Kate Pretty (KP)

Stephen Miles (SM)

Chair, Co-Director, The Prince's Teaching Institute

Secretary of State for Education

Sixth-form student, Cardinal Newman Catholic School

Principal, Homerton College, University of Cambridge

Co-ordinator, PTI Schools Programme

HS: On the Panel of Sixth Formers yesterday, the closing question we were asked was what message we would like to convey to the new Secretary of State. The responses were:

1. It is a really bad idea to cut the funding for education;
2. Education should be absolutely inclusive, giving the same opportunities to all;
3. The Government should keep out of it and leave it to the teachers.

Would you like to comment?

MG: I completely agree. On your first point, we would like to see an increase of spending on education; it is a sign of a civilised society that more people should spend more time on education. But we find ourselves in a difficult economic climate where too much has been spent in the past and we now have to face tough choices. All the same we intend to protect spending on schools as much as possible. Within the education budget, it will be things like the quangos and advisers that bear the brunt of the cuts, not the front-line teachers. I also agree that teaching should be left to the teachers. But there is still a role for government, in identifying and celebrating what has proved most successful: the best methods, the best teachers, the best text-books. In that way we can help to spread best practice. And certainly education should be inclusive. Historically, it was regarded as sufficient to educate just a small minority really well, in order to run the country, and the rest had to make do with a barely adequate education. Now that is rightly regarded as not only morally wrong and offensive but also economically stupid. If we look at other countries that have been successful, we see the need to educate everyone to the highest level. We have to challenge the idea that people from a worse background have to entertain expectations of a lower educational provision or that the curriculum has to be made relevant to those expectations. All children should be assumed to be inheritors of a great tradition – the best that has been thought and written.

HS: Is that what you are aiming to achieve through the Academies programme?

MG: One of the reasons why Academies work so well is because they proceed on the assumption of the highest expectation for all children. The drive towards Academy status is a sign that we trust professionals to take control of what's happening in schools.

HS: Would it not be better to focus more on schools where pupils are struggling, and do more to raise their expectations?

MG: The impetus behind the Academies programme is system-led improvement, where teachers inspire teachers and Heads inspire Heads, where the stronger lead the weak. Such mentoring also leads to two-way improvement, since there will always be aspects of the weaker school that are actually better than your own. Interaction and collaboration are at the heart of driving improvement across the system. So let us celebrate success, while ensuring that the successful feel an obligation to help others improve.

SM: One thing that teachers have often said to us at past Summer Schools is that their profession is in danger of becoming demoralised and disempowered by constant government intervention. How can you help to ensure that teachers are encouraged to take back responsibility for what goes on in the classroom?

MG: Where choices have arisen, I have always tried to act in favour of giving teachers more control. On certain things the profession was near unanimous, for instance over the ineffectiveness of the General Teaching Council. So we have cut it. The National Curriculum is, by general consent, too prescriptive; so we make it simpler. There is too much bureaucracy in the Inspection process, and too much emphasis on gathering data rather than appraising the quality of Teaching and Learning. Teaching needs greater recognition for its skills. People develop as teachers by seeing other great teachers in action and being observed in turn. Their Continuous Professional Development should not be one-dimensional, but multi-faceted, with equal opportunities to develop subject knowledge, skills and leadership. All teachers, at whatever level, are part of the intellectual life of the nation and should see themselves not just as people who deliver lessons but as advocates for their subject.

KP: Cambridge is the only remaining University to own an awarding body – OCR; and so it has a particular interest in the teaching in schools. We have an increasing concern about the gap between A level assessment and what is required of students in Higher Education. Part of the problem lies with the curriculum, but it is the assessment system which is most in need of overhaul. The OCR longs to make changes but is subject to too many external constraints. So if there is to be a debate about the development of the curriculum and assessment, will Higher Education and assessment bodies be involved?

MG: The short answer is 'Yes, of course'. A Levels need to be seen for what they are: a preparation for Higher Education, and a tool for ranking aptitude so that Universities can choose suitable applicants. So Universities should certainly have a decisive role in shaping the mode of assessment. We think that the standard model will be a terminal exam after a straight two-year course in the Sixth Form, designed to enable pupils to acquire knowledge in the round and apply it in a sophisticated way. It may be that some Universities, because of the nature of their courses, will choose to stay with the AS/A2 model. But there will not be a single compulsory obstacle course which requires too much time being spent on preparation for assessment at the expense of acquiring subject knowledge and developing an interest in it. A Level should be something you really enjoy doing.

Liz Hutchinson (History, PTI): How would you try to resolve the dilemma between the sort of flexibility which gives schools and teaches greater freedom, with opportunities for inspirational teaching, and a prescribed curriculum which would ensure every pupil's entitlement?

MG: We need to slim the curriculum entitlement and cut back on later accretions which have made it top-heavy. There will be a review in which the teaching profession will be not only involved but will be the dominant voice. What we will be aiming for is a National Curriculum which will stand comparison with the best internationally; we want to learn from countries which have done best in terms of intellectual achievement in various subjects at various levels, combined with fairness and equity. Greater freedom from state control tends to bring better curriculum development and better take-up of important subjects.

Ruth Totterdell (Geography, PTI): As teachers of History and Geography, we think that these subjects are an essential part of every young person's education and would like to know what you intend to do to see that they are on offer in every school to every child, whatever their circumstances.

MG: I agree about the importance of History and Geography. Contrary to the recommendations of the Rose Report on the Primary Curriculum, I am in favour of strong and discrete subject disciplines, which can then lead on

to the exploration of connections between subjects. In my view, the History curriculum is not about imposing a set of values or judgements about the past, but about understanding chronology and the connected stream of events. This can then provide an underpinning for the understanding of other subjects such as Geography and English Literature. Effective cross-curricular teaching can only happen if you start from a basis of secure subject knowledge.

CP: That seems an appropriate moment to open up the discussion to the floor.

Peter Shears (English, Cardinal Newman School, Sussex): I was glad to hear you say that Ofsted should be concerned with celebration; but you must be aware that it doesn't feel like that for the teacher. It is much more likely to be a source of stress. Could not the expertise of HMI be better used to encourage good practice?

MG: One of the best things that Ofsted did was to publish a booklet celebrating twelve outstanding schools and looking at common features in them; but there aren't enough examples of that kind and too often their subject reports emphasise the negative. We need to turn that around and seek to replicate examples of excellence.

Jacqueline Pearce (History, The Gordon's School, Surrey): Are you drawing up a list of prescribed History topics?

MG: No – but the debate about what should or should not be taught is interesting and well worth having, even if only as a journalistic game. Politicians shouldn't be prescribing at that level; but they should be ensuring that all children understand chronology and connectiveness, and get a balanced view of events.

Alison Richards (English, St Wilfred's School, London) : It is clear from our experience here and from the PTI Schools Programme that such focus on subject expertise, current scholarship and working with like-minded teachers is hugely beneficial for us and our students. How could you use events of this kind to inform your own provision of Initial Teacher Training and Continuous Professional Development?

MG: You tell me. I'd love to know more. If I didn't know the PTI and you told me what it was and what it did, I'd leap in the air for joy. The wonderful thing is that the PTI offers training led by professional teachers, and you believe in it enough to give up your time and come here to deepen your subject knowledge. So what can I do to help? It is teachers who should determine how they can do their job better, and I'd like to see more teachers featured in the media being passionate about their subject. People are drawn into teaching because someone has inspired them and they want to hand on the torch. Conversation about education should be not about finance and administration, but about what teaching will inspire the next generation.

Bernice McCabe (PTI): Thank you for your kind words about the Institute and your very welcome statement about putting power back into the hands of the teachers. The trouble is that, after decades of compliance with regulations, there's a long way for the profession to move. We believe that we have our part to play in this; but how can our model be used more widely to empower and invigorate other teachers?

MG: I'm just anxious that my endorsement of the PTI shouldn't undermine your credibility with the profession. But if there things we can do institutionally to help support the PTI, let me have the shopping list. Furthermore, I invite all delegates here to let me know your views on what you think we should do to give you greater control in the classroom, and to improve Inspection and Assessment. It is remarkable how often, on reading things bearing the PTI imprint, I have said to myself 'Yes, that's it'.

Gareth Davies (Sawtry Community College, Cambridgeshire): As you say, success breeds success; but failure breeds failure. How can you address the problem of bad schools in disadvantaged areas which good teachers tend to move out of and so make worse?

MG: It is a challenge for me and for the profession. But we can allocate more resources to such schools, so that, for instance, a premium can be paid to the teachers, and longer hours or Saturday schooling can be introduced. Second, the Teach First programme, whatever you may think of it, has raised the quality of those entering teaching, and this is a trend we must try to encourage. And third, it must be made easier to start new schools in disadvantaged areas, with a relentless drive to raise standards for all children; and those with the gift of leadership to achieve that must be given the freedom to do so.

SELECTION OF QUOTES FROM DELEGATE EVALUATIONS

"This has been the most useful, inspiring and enjoyable educational course I have attended."

"It has been an honour and a delight to take part."

"We have felt valued and appreciated – much needed in this demanding profession."

"We need more of this sort of opportunity to enrich and invigorate the teaching experience."

"It helped me to escape the focus which has become narrower and narrower in school and broaden my horizons, helped me to get back in touch with why I went into teaching English, and reminded me of the value of the subject."

"I have gained a few new ideas from other teachers and gained insights into new approaches to old topics. A chance to get out of the classroom and engage in academic debate. The chance to see through the eyes of a student again after 30 years is a priceless privilege. Thanks!"

"All of the lectures were excellent! The access to academics is an opportunity that we quite simply struggle to get, and to be able to engage with some of the current/up to date thinking on the "big issues" was exciting."

"Superb! Enthusiastic!! Great balance of big picture and awareness of teachers' needs."

"The course has reaffirmed my conviction in the value and significant contribution humanities has to make to a full and rounded education."

"The aims of the course were well-met. It was excellent to hear the academics talk about research and share ideas with colleagues."

"I found all lectures to be thought provoking and enjoyable and appreciated the opportunity to learn from the academics."

"The aims and objectives were very well met. Excellent focus on the importance of the subject and getting teachers re-animated about teaching Geography. Sharing with other teachers was Brilliant!"

"The student panel was really insightful - confirming my perspective ideas on what students want! I thought this was excellent."

"I found all lectures a joy to be in! Being in the presence of experts in their field was a privilege. We use late Middle Ages for A Level so I kept up with that, I have never taught the other two, but loved the stretch of the old grey matter. I've felt like an academic tourist who has had a delightful mini-break!"

"This course has really boosted my confidence and re-inforced all of my beliefs in the value of my subject as so many people feel the same way and have the same drive / focus / goal."

"Thank you very much for a great 3 days. It's very well planned and very useful too. It's how all CPD, in an ideal world, should be!"