

Bursting the education bubble

Welcome to the first re-named edition of Teaching Thinking and Creativity - now called 'Creative Teaching and Learning'. Inside you will find some great articles on a range of innovative approaches to the curriculum, plus a major cross curriculum project 'Create Your Own Country'. This project introduces some profound political and citizenship concepts to children in a fun and thought provoking way.

We also include our new e-learning section. The Rose Report's major contribution was to stress the importance of ICT in teaching and learning. Outside the education bubble, ICT and the internet have transformed every aspect of classroom life.

Despite billions of pounds spent on government-supported kit and software, not to mention BECTA's vast budget, e-learning is still seen as fancy, trendy stuff.

There are many reasons for this spectacular failure... not least that the style of teaching and learning prevailing in the classroom. Nobody really works alone in paid employment - we always work in more or less integrated teams. The one group of professionals that does work alone for the most part is teachers! Perhaps this is why the archaic 'single child at their desk' model of learning has persisted for so long.

Had collaborative and group work made it into the classroom before the 21st Century, the introduction of ICT into the classroom could have been much easier. It would have been sensible to allocate desktops to teams rather than to place them

in computer suites... a disastrous removal of the kit from the core teaching and learning day.

The dilemma has always been posed as every child should have a PC *or* that they needed to be located in suites. Collaborative group work would have cut through this dilemma like a knife through butter.

If the predominant mode of teaching were not the 'teacher at the front of the class expounding knowledge to passive recipients' model, would we have needed to spend billions of pounds on whiteboards? The research (suppressed) suggests they add nothing to attainment or the learning experiences of children over and above a blackboard. Their wholesale - and somewhat manic - adoption was really a re-enforcement of conventional teaching styles.

In terms of content, if we are mainly concerned with ploughing though academic concepts and knowledge with a teacher guiding us through written texts, why do we need computers at all? With this form of teaching, the teacher is a far better mediator than any online explication.

Put this way, the ludicrousness of yet another back-to-basics/return to academia push by a new government is made clear. It will just take the education bubble further away from the real world - and disenfranchise children who can't cope with forced, desk-based, academic teaching.

This lack of modernism within schools can be found in other spheres of public life. Failure to adapt our military establishment to the real world is proving a disaster in fighting terrorism based in failing states around the world. Hence the

call for a full military review that takes into account the changing realities of world politics and emerging threats.

Yet for some reason, this form of serious review, linked to the real world our children will be entering, is not deemed appropriate for education. But it has a profoundly demoralising effect on pupils as they realise how much of what they are learning will have little or no significance in their lives. Indeed, a recent study has revealed that even primary school starters are dismayed at backward classroom technology.

The profession has made great attempts to modernise itself in recent years, and has listened to reports from FutureLab, RCA and even the DCSF (the Openminds and skills based curriculum). Yet any gains made in changing teaching styles and locating curriculum content within more relevant contexts could soon go out the window. There will be some grumbling, but who will really resist? There is not a unified voice for teachers that will give them the professional clout of the medical profession - which fights back when their judgement about the best interests of their patients is challenged by government policy.

Creative Teaching and Learning and its sister publication, School Leadership Today, will resist the backward tide as best they can. But they need the support of teachers and headteachers who are trying to modernise British education. The teaching profession has been incredibly compliant over the last 20 years - isn't it time to take their courage in their hands and just say "No"?