

NEWSLETTER 4: REFLECTIONS ON ANALYSIS OF DATA COLLECTED FROM TEACHERS IN PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

These priorities reflect preliminary conclusions drawn following analysis of Work Package 2 data. A number of priority areas emerged that will impact upon the potential use of the course and toolkit. These are presented below:

Confidence is not just an issue for Newly Qualified teachers

One of the interesting areas to emerge from the findings was the recognition that senior teachers may lose confidence in their pedagogy in a very results oriented and change dominated school environment such as is found in the UK. Indeed the new teachers seemed far more confident of trying new ideas and being 'innovative'. The tool needs to address this through building mutual confidence in innovation and creativity between new and senior teachers. The newly qualified teachers need the opportunity and support to innovate safely and the senior teachers need to be a part of the process, supporting the changes both contributing and benefiting in terms of reinforcement of their own abilities and competences.

Change Management

The rate of institutional change in UK schools can be extreme. All of the Exeter High Schools (5) have very new head teachers and senior management teams. This level of change is bound to impact on the teaching staff and a toolkit to help ensure staff both new and older can be brought into the changes and feel that it is inclusive would be of great value. The toolkit should help with success factors such as:

- Managing risk
- Inclusivity in decision making
- Creativity
- Ensuring novice teachers are included within the processes
- How to mediate between the top-down push for results with the need for bottom-up innovation and freedoms

Thinking Schools

A Thinking School is 'an educational community in which all members share a common commitment to giving regular careful thought to everything that takes place. This will involve both students and staff learning how to think reflectively, critically and creatively, and to employing these skills and techniques in the co-construction of a meaningful curriculum and associated activities. Successful outcomes will be reflected in student's across a wide range of abilities demonstrating independent and co-operative learning skills, high levels of achievement and both enjoyment and satisfaction in learning. Benefits will be shown in ways in which all members of the community interact with and show consideration for each other and in the positive psychological well-being of both students and staff.' (Burden, 2006)

The thinking model offers a great deal in terms of innovation and inclusion as well as creativity. It offers a holistic model that can be management led and could form part of one of the tools.

Exeter University developed the ideas and is well placed to incorporate thinking schools ideas within the project. It is increasingly popular worldwide and Thinking Schools International is successfully transferring the practice to many countries including the Far East and EU.

Lesson Study

Lesson Study is a powerful, professional learning approach that dramatically improves learning and teaching and the practice and subject knowledge of teachers. Originating from the Chinese Confucian tradition, Lesson Study has 140 years of history in Japanese schools and is increasingly used in East Asia, the US and Europe. It not only produces dramatic improvements in pupil achievement and professional learning, but it is also very popular with all who experience it.

The Lesson Study model is of increasing interest to UK schools and again could form part of the Tool to draw in interest in the products of the project. It could be a theme to help tie-together the creativity and innovation theme.

Learning to Learn

"Since we cannot know what knowledge will be most needed in the future, it is senseless to try to teach it in advance. Instead, we should try to turn out people who love learning so much and learn so well that they will be able to learn whatever needs to be learned." *John Holt*

Learning to learn is a process of discovery about learning. It involves a set of principles and skills which, if understood and used, help learners learn more effectively and so become learners for life. At its heart is the belief that learning is learnable. It is increasingly a part of the UK curriculum at varying ages.

Continuing Professional Development

CPD is critical to the project and much that has been described falls within 'CPD' generally. Nonetheless the tool could look at how CPD ensures an inclusive and creative environment for novice and existing teachers learning from practices elsewhere. This fits with expressed ideas such as:

- Refresh and Inspire
- Enabling teachers freedom and creativity
- Coping with the current rather distracting and potentially harmful (to morale and confidence) assessment regime

Healthy Working Environment

Working to boost the more social side of teaching is difficult and there are clearly limits on where the school has a role in the life of its employees. However the school has a commitment to ensure a healthy working environment for its staff and ideas concerning how to ensure teachers when working outside of the school are still supported and feel a part of an inclusive environment that values their input is important.