

Campaign for Real Education

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“Freedom to teach, freedom to learn, freedom to choose”

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Newsletter

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Editorial

How long will it take Damian Hinds, the new education secretary, to understand his portfolio and to learn the ropes? A sad truth about education ministers over the past few decades is that they are ‘slower learners’. It was thirty years or more, for example, before the penny finally dropped that phonics are the key to the teaching of reading. It has taken as long to work out that the GCSE exam lacks the academic rigour of O-Levels.

Mr Hinds is about to discover his new department’s latest ‘slow learner’s’ breakthrough. It is its recognition that textbooks are important. The Schools’ Minister, Nick Gibb, recently told the Policy Exchange think tank that the ‘long-term movement away from textbooks is something that might be about to go into reverse.’ He noted that only ten per cent of teachers in England use a textbook as a basis for their teaching as opposed to seventy per cent in Singapore. By the age of fifteen, according to the OECD, Singaporean pupils are three years ahead in terms of attainment.

Small wonder, then, that the DfE has, finally, become willing to learn some lessons from the Asia-Pacific. A few years ago it set up a programme for maths teachers from China to train teachers here in England how to teach the subject. Once upon a time we used to despatch missionaries to China to teach the locals about Christianity. The process

has now gone into reverse with Chinese missionaries landing on our shores to teach us about mathematics.

Just as we once sent texts to China to teach them about Christianity so the Chinese are now sending us textbooks to show us how to teach maths. The state-run China Daily newspaper seemed slightly perplexed. It quoted Collins Learning, the UK publisher of the Chinese textbooks as saying:

'To my knowledge this has never happened in history before – that textbooks created for students in China will be translated exactly as they have been developed, and sold for use in British schools.'

Singaporean maths textbooks are, also, attracting custom from some English schools. For those who can afford it, the after-school and privately run Japanese Kumon clubs apply a similar practice and repetition textbook method. Anything, but the British textbook-free 'death by a thousand worksheets' approach, is sought by parents and pupils.

Probably, Nick Gibb underestimates the extent to which the use of textbooks has declined in our schools and the damage this has caused. His support for their restoration is, nevertheless, to be applauded. He seems reluctant, however, to go beyond the role of a bystander. He comments on the action of our unfolding educational tragedy as though he is acting the role of the chorus in an ancient Greek drama.

He told Policy Exchange that the 'teacher-led move back to textbooks will be integral to ensuring that the national curriculum is as effective as we'd hoped.' He is right, of course, but simply hoping that the decline in textbooks 'might be about to go into reverse' is not enough. It is the triumph of hope over experience. Too many in the educational establishment are not onside, Nick!

A few months ago The Times Educational Supplement, mouthpiece of the Blob, referenced the minister's hope for the revival of textbooks:

'But a Tes-YouGov survey reveals teachers are heading in the opposite direction. One in 10 teachers say they use textbooks in more than half of their lessons – a drop from 13 per cent three years ago. And just 8 per cent of those surveyed think they will be using textbooks in most or all of their lessons by 2020.'

For years children have been paying a high price for the Government's inability to grasp what is going on in classrooms. For too long the Blob

has bullied ministers into submission when they have dared to contest failed educational orthodoxies. Around the world textbooks underpin the most successful school systems. This may be an unorthodox heresy to our Blob but the new education secretary should do whatever is necessary to ensure that our children have the same advantage.

BBC 2 'Generation Gifted' February 2018

'Generation Gifted' must be the saddest ever reality TV programme. The day-to-day evidence of failure within our education system is inclined to de-sensitise us to the continuing narrative of how bright youngsters from deprived backgrounds are at the top of the tree only when it comes to being betrayed by the closed minds of governments and the educational establishment.

This new BBC 2 investigation exposes the tragic waste of our greatest national resource – talented children. It focuses on a disparate group of gifted 13-14 year-olds who have two things in common – poverty and potential.

It will track their progress over the next three years. In terms of TV education programmes it is the best thing since Granada's insightful and epic "Seven-Up" series that commenced in 1964.

In many respects our school system betrays all children. Dumbed-down, knowledge-lite, undemanding lessons are the norm and leave us trailing well behind the best education systems around the world. The public examination system, now with its 15% 'pass' mark for Maths GCSE, lost credibility years ago.

Within that mass of pupils who are being let down, those most cheated, as 'Generation Gifted' makes clear, are talented and intelligent children from deprived backgrounds. For them there is no postcode escape to the catchment area of a top performing state school. Private tutoring, let alone a private school, is out of the question.

An escape route for Jada who lives in Handsworth (Birmingham) would be transfer to grammar school at the age of 16. Her teacher advises against it. Too many posh kids driven to school in Land Rovers! She is likely to feel out of place. Better stick to what you know and where you belong, is the anti-aspirational message. Fortunately, Jada can see though

the well-intentioned deceit: “It doesn’t matter what class you come from because there’s a ladder and you can climb it.”

The sad truth is, though, too much talent from underprivileged backgrounds is being wasted. It is a disgrace! Our country needs to maximise the potential of young people, not stifle it. Children need to be educated in line with their aptitude. Academically able children like Jada need a grammar school education. This could be provided by a massive expansion of grammar schools alongside a new generation of technical/vocational schools. Alternatively, comprehensives could be reorganised into bi-lateral schools providing alternative pathways in line with aptitude.

‘Generation Gifted’ shows that Shakira from Tamworth has artistic talents that would be best developed in a school or school stream that focuses on the technical/vocational pathway. In contrast, Kian from Hartlepool needs a grammar school to nurture his academic gifts.

Sadly, what these children need is not available. A ‘bog-standard’ comp education is all that is on offer. True, some of the teachers we see in action are admirable, even inspiring, in terms of their good intentions but, in the long term, most of their gifted charges are never going to break free of their backgrounds and fulfil their potential. They desperately need to be taught alongside other children of similar aptitude.

If you watch the programme be prepared to let your blood boil with outrage. Far better to watch, however, than to follow the Blob and look the other way:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b09s7mnh?ns_mchannel=YT&ns_source=bbc_two&ns_linkname=description_link

Who wants to be a teacher in 2018?

The number of children in secondary schools is set to increase by over half a million (20%) within a decade. Primary schools have been coping with increased numbers for several years, caused in part by immigration.

Fortunately, children of first generation immigrants are inclined to be more motivated than most other children and this is having some beneficial consequences. Anyone wishing to understand why under-

privileged youngsters in London out-perform similarly deprived children in other parts of England need look no further than the far greater percentage of immigrants in the capital. They boost educational standards. Worryingly, though, white working class native kids are lagging further and further behind. Too often, it seems, the assimilation of non-natives, however commendable, can sometimes happen at the expense of other children.

Ironically, in my experience, it is immigrant parents who are most concerned by standards of behaviour and of teaching in some of our schools. Mostly, they stay quiet, however, out of respect and gratitude for the country that has adopted them. They understand that, to paraphrase Cecil Rhodes, being granted the right to live in the UK or, better still, British citizenship, is equivalent to winning first prize in the lottery of life.

Their gratitude, however, will not solve the issue of a burgeoning school population. Larger class sizes would be one solution. Not only would this be cost effective, it would force teachers to use the traditional whole-class, teacher-led, classroom methodology that characterise the educational super stars of the Asia Pacific. The educational establishment and, indeed, most parents are, however, very hostile to increasing class sizes and it is not on the Government's agenda.

Instead, in order to sustain our addiction to child-centred methods of teaching we are going to need many more teachers. Sadly, our schools are not only second division, internationally, they are very expensive.

Since it has recently been announced that applications for teacher training have fallen by a third in a year, the government has quite a task ahead. We are not, of course, only facing a recruitment crisis. If anything, retention of new teachers is an even greater challenge.

Back in 2015 a teacher union was claiming that almost four in ten teachers were quitting the profession within a year of qualifying. The Government challenged this claim but accepted that almost a third of newly qualified teachers left the profession across the five years from 2010 to 2015. Ofsted said the true figure was, indeed, four in ten, and its boss at the time, Sir Michael Wilshaw, declared it a "national scandal". If anything, it is likely that matters have deteriorated since 2015.

Record numbers of teachers are, also, leaving the profession mid-career. We are failing to recruit, to retain or to motivate teachers at a time of a

booming pupil population.

A desire to work with children and a love of subject are the factors that bring most teachers into the profession. At secondary school level, a mathematician wishes to teach maths, a linguist expects to teach a foreign language, a geographer wishes to teach geography, and so on. New teaching recruits for primary schools expect to teach a range of subjects but still to be, essentially, teachers of a largely academic curriculum.

The reality of what confronts them can be quite a shock. Too little conventional subject teaching and an overload of politically correct ideology – gender intelligence, racism, sexism, drugs, British Values, the evils of Britain’s imperial past, feminism, health and safety, equality of outcome, the need for safe spaces and for trigger warnings, non-appropriation of other cultures, inclusiveness, offensive terminology such as ‘he’/’she’, sex education, social media and technology addiction, etc.

Teachers these days have to be social workers, psychiatrists, substitute parents, dieticians, drugs counsellors, health and safety consultants, nurses, equity and inclusion managers, restorative justice coordinators, behavioural therapists, race and ethnicity officers, mental health and trauma counsellors, marriage guidance advisors for parents, advocates for children in cases of domestic violence, directors of community relations, sex therapists, technology and social media gurus and so on.

Bright young graduates are getting the message and too many are shunning the profession altogether. Those who expect the brain washing to cease once the teacher training is over are soon disappointed by the long hours of teaching and preparation, the abundance of stress, and the cultural conformism that requires a suspension of the intellect.

We have a recruitment and retention problem against a background of growing numbers of pupils but beyond the pc zealots, who wants to be a teacher in 2018?

Suffragettes, Suffragists and what we teach our children about the Representation of the People Act 1918

British men, too often, get a raw deal from history teachers. Slave traders, colonial oppressors, witch hunters, war-mongers, blood thirsty tyrants, oppressors of women and so on are just part of the bad press aimed at persuading children that ‘male’ and

'malevolent' are often not so far apart. It comes as no surprise that Jack the Ripper, is amongst the most popular online model lessons for teaching the nineteenth century to Key Stage 3 pupils (age 11-14).

Men are now losing out in the commemorations surrounding the centenary of the 1918 Representation of the People Act. In yesterday's CW Belinda Brown demonstrated the extent to which votes for women was tied to the attainment of full male enfranchisement by that same Act. She added that it was the non-violence and non-feminist good sense of Millicent Garrett Fawcett's National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) that won the day for women, not the Suffragettes. The latter were little more than a fringe group of largely self-serving, feminist fanatics.

As Belinda explained, however, this is not a narrative supported by today's feminists. They prefer the suffragette myth and, sadly, it is this 'approved' narrative that is taught in schools. It was set out in the 2015 star-studded feature film, 'Suffragette', the first to be shot in the Palace of Westminster. A host of teaching resources backed up the movie, including a Guardian feature on "How to teach...the suffragettes."

As the teaching materials make clear, the 1918 Act should be presented as the victory of oppressed females, represented by the suffragettes, over dominating males, of justice over injustice, of liberty over subjugation. In some ways this is, indeed, part of the story although, ironically, the first woman elected to Parliament in 1918 declined to take up her seat. It is, however, far from being the whole story. If anything, suffragette violence set back rather than enhanced their campaign.

Even where the Millicent Fawcett and the suffragists are included in the story, pupils are unlikely to be taught much, if anything, about the central importance of male suffrage in the 1918 Act. That does not fit the feminist version of history.

Alongside 8.4 million women, 5.6 million working class men were enfranchised by the Act. It would have been more had so many not been casualties of the Great War. These un-enfranchised men

had been at the core of the British army fighting on the Western Front and elsewhere against Germany and its allies. They are the forgotten cannon fodder that fought and died for King and Country even though they did not have the vote.

When we teach children about the 1918 Representation of the People Act, partial truths are not enough. They have a right to be taught about the poor bloody infantry who deserved the suffrage as much as any so-called suffragettes.

No Comment

‘Over a third (37%) of female students at mixed-sex schools have personally experienced some form of sexual harassment at school.’ ‘It’s just everywhere’ - A study on sexism in schools – and how we tackle it’, commissioned by the National Education Union and UK Feminista, Dec 2107.

‘This glorifying of the suffragettes is all part of a general rewriting of history to suit the prejudices of the Left-wing cultural revolutionaries who have now got control of almost everything in this country.’ Peter Hitchens, Mail on Sunday 11/02/2018

A recent YouGov poll found that the British public thinks that RE is a subject scarcely more important than Latin, which the public, wrongly, does not care about at all. The Guardian 16/02/2108

'The new times tables tests don't test depth of knowledge - it's purely recall' TES headline 14/02/2018