

Campaign for Real Education [CRE]

www.cre.org.uk

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

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01. Editorial

Restoring Respect for Teachers and Schooling

Traditional notions of respect for state institutions and their employees are in short supply these days. Schools are no exception. A teacher union survey of its members last year [NASUWT, Sept. 2023] found that 37% of respondents had experienced physical abuse or violence in the previous 12 months. 97% reported backchat and rudeness.

A more general lack of respect for what schools have to offer is made clear by persistent pupil absenteeism. Government data has recorded 22.3 per cent rate of pupils being 'persistently absent' for the most recent full school year [Daily Telegraph, 10 Aug 2023].

The figure is as high as 28.3 per cent for those in the secondary sector. 'Persistent absence' is defined as missing at least 10 percent of sessions in an academic year.

Gillian Keegan, the Education Secretary, has added to rising concern. Writing in The Times [10 May 2024] she highlighted the fact that school absences jump 20 per cent on Fridays. She attributes this to the impact of the COVID lockdown and an increase in the number of parents who are working from home.

More and more parents are also prepared to ditch schooling in order to take advantage of cheaper holidays during term time. In 2022-23. A record number of parents, 350 000, were fined for taking children out of school for unauthorised holidays [The Guardian 29 Feb 2024].

Nor is disrespect for schooling found only amongst pupils and parents. One detects it too, in the current teacher-recruitment crisis. Add to that, the record number of teachers who are leaving the profession before retirement, currently running at around 9 per cent, and it is clear that a lack of self-respect within the profession is also a growing problem.

If a country wishes to see its economy in 20 years' time it needs to look at its education system today. That is the considered judgement of the OECD [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development].

The belated restoration of classroom phonics for teaching literacy, argued for decades ago by the Campaign for Real Education, has been a rare success story in recent years.

Like most of the Western world, OECD tests measure our 15 year-olds as lagging 3 to 5 years behind the highest attaining pupils in the world – in the Asia Pacific. Our economies are in danger of following suit unless we fix our schooling, now.

The foundation for that improvement and ‘catch-up’ is a restoration of the respect for teachers and for schooling that is so evident in good schools both in the UK and around the world. It is especially true of those high-flying ‘super-star’ education systems of the Asia Pacific.

So, where do we start? First of all , we need to understand that in any school, someone is going to be in charge. It helps if it is the headteacher.

Churchill once observed that head teachers have powers at their disposal with which Prime Ministers have never yet been invested. They need to use those powers to ensure that it is good order that prevails and not an anarchic free-for-all.

How about dealing with absenteeism, for example, by having attendance recorded on a School Leaving Certificate that is available to prospective employers and universities?

Such a certificate could also cover behaviour and, even, respect for teacher and classmates. It might even be part of the process of transfer between primary and secondary school.

As a headteacher I found that it worked wonders to have a quiet word with a pupil or parent that I could be relied upon to write them an honest reference.

Discipline and good order, so craved by most pupils and parents, is the foundation for restoring to teachers the respect that they, in most cases, deserve.

To recruit, to motivate and to retain good teachers a substantial pay rise is going to be necessary. Not only will it enhance respect for the profession, but it can also be paid for out of the existing budget. Teachers currently constitute a minority of staff currently employed in schools. This is an absurd and untenable situation.

A reduction in teaching assistants will fund a teacher pay increase. With fewer classroom assistants teachers will need to use the more effective ‘whole-class’ teaching methods characteristic of Asia Pacific and once usual in the UK.

Well-ordered schools, improved teaching methods, better-paid and highly respected teachers, and the consequent rise in attainment would be ‘win-win’ for education and for the economy. Politicians writing general election manifestos should take note!

Chris McGovern

Chairman

02. CRE Education Manifesto for the Next General Election

Although pupil attainment in England compares well with much of Europe and with the US it lags well behind the educational 'super star states of the Asia-Pacific. Moreover, according to the OECD our 16 to 24 year-olds are actually less competent in the 3Rs than the older generation of 55 to 65 year-olds. The Campaign for Real Education believes that the time has come for meaningful change. With a general election soon due our manifesto is addressed to all political parties. It proposes change in six key areas.

1. The Curriculum

Diversity and choice within the curriculum and between curricula will enhance the prospects of our education system meeting the needs of the 21st century. It will, also, ensure that the best emerge.

- a. The current National Curriculum is a 'one size fits all' model based on age-related 'key stages'. We propose a more flexible structure that will allow pupils to progress between 'key stages' in accordance with their ability, regardless of their age and if desired by a pupil and his/her parents.
- b. There should be more flexibility within the secondary curriculum for children at 14+ to follow either a vocational or an academic pathway.
- c. The non-compulsory status of the National Curriculum for academies, free schools and independent schools should be extended to all schools.

2. National Assessment

- a. National tests at 7 and 11 should be retained but simplified, taking up less time to administer.
- b. GCSE currently exercises what is, in effect, a monopoly at 16+ and its credibility has been undermined by grade inflation. It should be replaced by national tests at 14 followed by a dual-exam system from 14 to 18 leading to either vocational or to academic qualifications.
- c. In order to prevent grade inflation all academic public examinations at 16+ and 18+ should be fully 'norm referenced'. This will mean that a specific percentage of candidates will attain each grade. The top 10% of candidates will be awarded an A-Grade, the next 20% a B Grade and so on.

3. Parental choice of school

Local communities, based on the jurisdiction areas of current local authorities, should determine, as far as is practical, the types of school that they wish to have within their locality. This should include, but not be confined to, mixed-sex comprehensive schools. Where parental demand exists, single-sex secondary schools should be provided or expanded. Where a community wishes to have grammar schools, these should be set up alongside high quality vocational schools. Bi-lateral schools, incorporating both academic and vocational sections should, also, be made an option

4. Early Years and Infants

As far as resources allow, the spending priority for the education budget should be with younger children where it is likely to have the greatest impact and to make the greatest long-term difference.

5. Teacher Training and Ofsted

- a. 1. At the heart of the UK's failure to match the best performing education systems around the world are our teacher trainers and Ofsted inspectors. For too long they have been promoting and enforcing failed teaching methodologies on our schools.

A 'root and branch' reform is needed of the rules and regulations under which they operate. We must ensure that trainee teachers can experience, and be encouraged to use, a variety of teaching methods, including traditional 'whole class' teaching that is used widely in the high-performing schools of the Asia-Pacific region.

- b. 2. Single or two-word Ofsted report judgements should be replaced by a mark out of ten in each area of inspection.

6. Higher Education

Too many young people are being encouraged to undertake university degrees courses that lead to disillusion, high personal debt and to under-employment or unemployment. Post-school vocational training and apprenticeships should be greatly expanded and should build on post-14 vocational courses at school.

Polytechnics should be restored to meet the demand for vocational courses. A reduction of university places by 50 per cent will help fund a restoration of means-tested grants to cover fees and living costs

03. Educational Propaganda and Cultural Self-Hatred: a Personal View by Dr. Piers Legh

Piers Legh is an author who is particularly interested in education and its relationship to British society, as well as political ideology and social trends in contemporary thought. He has taught British political history at the University of Manchester. His book *The Conservative Party and the Destruction of Selective State Education in Post-War Britain* was published by Bloomsbury Academic in 2023. The paperback version is due to be published in August 2024.

An article published recently in *The Times* newspaper [20 April 2024] revealed the endemic difficulties experienced by teachers within our multicultural society. A history teacher asked a classroom of mostly Muslim pupils if they hated Britain. Multiple hands shot up in response. Further discussion revealed a contempt and even hatred for the West.

The teacher further described how the modern curriculum constantly emphasises Britain's role in relation to slavery and colonisation. It holds an underlying assumption that if Britain routinely apologises for its past, pupils from diverse racial, cultural and religious backgrounds will be appeased, forgive and then move on. This is the default outlook within so many of our schools and universities.

A recent visit to my local library showed me how the brainwashing starts early. On prominent display within the children's section, an inoffensive looking publication entitled *Refugees* was clearly directed at children of an age who can barely walk.

It was complete with pictures of figures in dinghies and barges with the text emphasising the nastiness of those who are not wholly supportive of mass immigration. By its very nature, immigration is a contentious and deeply politicised issue. Yet such a subject is deemed suitable for being presented to toddlers and for thus deliberately manipulating them on a purely emotional level.

Showcased book, *Migration: Journeys Through Black British History* is directed at an older age group. It combs through several centuries to look for tenuous examples of black historical figures in Britain from the Roman period onwards. Unsurprisingly, it constantly highlights Britain's role in colonisation in relation to the British Empire, and only grudgingly acknowledges the more positive aspects of Britain's record.

For example, when discussing how the Lord Chief Justice Lord Mansfield ruled in 1772 that since slavery was unlawful in Britain, no person could be

removed from Britain and sold into slavery, the text quickly jumps in to tell us that this did not mean enslavement did not still exist 'technically' for long periods afterwards.

A key question as to why so many black people later wanted to come here from the former colonies if Britain had been such a symbol of racial injustice is not asked, let alone answered. Only black individuals are given credit for ending slavery, while the role of English white people and their institutions is played down.

Furthermore, while claiming that race was 'invented' and has long been used to divide people from each other, the book does precisely this by giving a capital prefix to 'Black.' Meanwhile, white people remain in lower-case, with their own history of migration to Australia and New Zealand referred to merely in the context of the exploitation of indigenous peoples.

Another example of how self-abnegation is being culturally enforced occurred in early May 2024 when the trade and business secretary Kemi Badenoch argued that Britain's profits from colonialism and slavery formed only a small proportion of Britain's economic rise. In addition, she praised Britain's free markets, innovation and its liberal institutions as key components of its economic prosperity during the key 18th and 19th century period.

Soon enough, she was swooped on by David Olusoga of the University of Manchester and Alan Lester of the University of Sussex who accused her of promoting a 'culture war,' setting up 'a false dichotomy,' and of distorting history to suit political purposes. Never mind the possibility that proponents of the conventional narrative of Britain's economic success as riding on the backs of slaves could be held to be guilty of precisely the same charge.

Part of Badenoch's reason for providing a different interpretation of the past was to encourage developing countries away from the narrative of victimhood and the demand for reparations, and towards market reform, economic growth and innovation.

In addition, Lester claimed that a report by the Institute of Economic Affairs that supported Badenoch's contention had failed to consider the imperial economy as a whole. Clearly, such debates should be conducted in empirical rather than moral terms.

Nevertheless, it is clear that any public figure, particularly a politician, pays a heavy reputational price for pushing back against the required narrative of self-hatred, with their motives brought quickly into disrepute.

Given these examples, it is wholly unsurprising that we have arrived at a situation of radically disaffected pupils that the *Times* article described. There can never be any meaningful form of cultural integration when the fires of resentment and Western self-hatred are being assiduously stoked on this scale.

History teaching based on objectivity and empiricism has in large swathes been replaced by victim narratives masquerading as history that wrench the practices and attitudes of earlier times out of their historical context.

What solutions, if any, are there to this alarming state of affairs? Ordinarily, I would tend towards the view that autonomy for schools and universities, in which they are free to control their own affairs including curricula, is vital for educational freedom and quality.

Yet the teacher's article for *The Times* claims that Michael Gove's policy of academies and free schools being free to dictate their own syllabuses have fanned the flames of separatism and enabled certain schools to furrow their own cultural path completely.

Given our increasingly balkanised society, I now think that a degree of centralisation is vital for transmitting a balanced and objective knowledge of history, as part of combatting the vogue for victimhood and ideological narratives.

However, in considering this dilemma between centralisation and institutional independence, there is the problem that if we favour the former, those who promote destructive ideologies and who are currently embedded within the educational apparatus might be in an even stronger position of influence.

Yet there surely needs to be common guidelines for the furthering of a common culture that is proud but not uncritical of the Western cultural inheritance, and which is based on respect and acknowledgment of minority groups.

To emphasise complete autonomy for educational institutions free from central government is now a luxury belief that could only be maintained in earlier times when Britain was a culturally and racially cohesive nation.

We cannot afford that cavalier approach today. We need those public figures who grasp that we are in a cultural emergency to engage in drastic curricular intervention in order to oppose this culture of repudiation and thus attempt to arrest our civilisational decline. We cannot afford to do otherwise..

04. OECD PISA Assessments - the Fuller Picture

UK Ranking

	2000	2003	2006	2009	2012	2015	2018	2022
Reading	8	disqualified	17	25	23	22	14	13 [-10]
Maths	9	disqualified	24	28	26	27	18	14 [-13]
Science	5	disqualified	14	16	20=	15	14	15 [-5]

- Tests for the 2022 results were Covid affected and, hence, late in being published.
- Scores in brackets for 2022 indicate the fall in scores on the tests compared to 2018.
- The UK's higher ranking in the year 2000 may be explained, in part, by the smaller cohort of 32 participating countries compared with 80 in 2022.

In 2003 the amount of data submitted for England was deemed inadequate and consequently the UK was disqualified from the analysis. Against a background of the Covid 'lockdown' disqualification was avoided in 2022 even though a third of England's schools refused to participate. Issues regarding the integrity of the PISA testing process in the UK are set out in the previous newsletter [Winter/Spring 2023-2014].

Although dragged down by Wales and by Scotland the ranking position of UK 15 year-olds on the most recent PISA tests [2022] has improved in maths and remained broadly stable in reading and in science.

An important adjunct to the 2022 data is that compared with 2018 the mean post-Covid performance across OECD countries fell by 15 points in maths and 10 points in reading. For science it remained stable. On previous tests, score changes had never exceeded 4 points in maths and 5 points in reading. Although the UK's ranking position relative to other countries has improved slightly its performance in terms of test scores declined significantly.

The OECD summarised the UK 2022 performance thus

- Average 2022 results were down compared to 2018 in mathematics and reading, and about the same as in 2018 in science
- Average scores returned, in mathematics and reading, close to their pre-2018 level, reverting all gains observed in the previous cycle. In science, the most recent

PISA results are close to the results observed in 2018, but below those of any previous assessment – confirming a decade-long decline that began around 2012.

Source: PISA 2022 Results: Factsheets United Kingdom 05 December 2023

The Education Secretary, Gillian Keegan, claims, however, that the results have ‘cemented’ England as one of the Western World’s top performing countries for education. “These results are testament,’ she added, ‘to our incredible teachers, the hard work of students and to the government’s unrelenting drive to raise schools standards over the past 13 years.”

The truth is, though, that these days the ‘Western World’ is very much second division in terms of performance on the PISA tests. A number of countries, mainly in the Asia Pacific, saw test scores rise during the Covid pandemic.

05. Myths of Empire: Essential Reading for Teachers

A new book on the old imperialism is about to face the full wrath of the new woke imperialism of our own days. In his *Imperial Measurement: A cosy-benefit analysis of Western colonialism* [pub. Institute of Economic Affairs] Kristian Niemietz dares to challenge the veracity of several myths about the impact of empire on economic growth.

Alongside Mary Seacole’s racist and imperialistic autobiography of 1857 it should be required reading for any teacher or trainee teacher. Schools, after all, are the heart of evangelical Wokeism.

It might, therefore, be something of an eye-opener for ‘educators’ to learn that the person voted the Greatest Black Briton was not averse to using the N-word and held some decidedly, pro-imperial, racist and un-Woke opinions.

These, of course, reflected the age in which she lived. During the Crimean War she put her life on the line for British Empire – a heroine, then, but of the old British Empire, not of the new Woke Empire.

Seacole’s autobiography demonstrates the folly of judging the past through a woke lens of the present: <https://www.conservativewoman.co.uk/chris-mcgvorn-mary-seacole-would-not-have-wanted-to-usurp-florence-nightingale/>

Facing up to this reality, however, can be difficult, even for as august a British institution as The Timesnewspaper: <https://www.conservativewoman.co.uk/was-mary-seacole-racist-the-times-and-an-idiotic-attempt-to-erase-history/>

Imperial Measurement is a well-argued, academic, refutation of a central tenet of woke ideology – that empire and slavery enriched colonial powers in general and the British Empire in particular. It turns out that the transatlantic slave trade was no more important to the British economy than brewing or sheep farming.

Sheep farming, in fact, added more value to our economy than sub-2.5 per cent added by slave-based sugar plantations.

Colonial trade, Niemietz argues, constituted a much smaller proportion of the UK economy than economic activity generated domestically and through trade with Western Europe and North America. Trade, in any case, accounted for only around a quarter of Britain's economic output.

Niemietz does not dispute the fact that the Empire provided modest gains for the British economy and that considerable profits were made by individual beneficiaries of colonialism.

He contends however, that these gains were offset by the military and administrative costs. He suggests that the British tax burden could have been cut by a quarter without the burden of Empire.

He also points out that many countries industrialised and became rich before, or without, establishing empires. Germany and Switzerland are referred to as examples.

Niemietz recognises that there will always be exceptions, such as the Belgian Congo, to his overall thesis. He also acknowledges that colonialism often left behind economic and political scars.

His overall arguments, however, should at the very least, be part of the debate over colonialism that is currently convulsing our schools and universities. Given the stranglehold of Wokeism, this is unlikely since it does not fit the woke narrative.

The lesson of history is that there is no race-bar on human wickedness and suffering, just as there is no race-bar on human virtue. Rulers and ruled, slavers and the enslaved, colonisers and the colonised are much the same in terms of human nature.

The ghosts of a million or so UK citizens who died of starvation across a few years in 1840s testify to the fact that white UK citizens were not excluded from suffering.

Niemietz's book asks us to question woke assumptions about our imperial past. Reading it should be no more a shock to the woke sensibilities than facing up to the 'real' Mary Seacole.

06. Around 90% of Schools Are ‘Good’ or ‘Outstanding’ and Still Improving - True or False?

As a general election draws ever closer one of the proudest boasts of the governing Conservative Party will be that around 90 per cent of our schools are now rated ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ by Ofsted’.

The evidence certainly seems to support the claim. In 2010, when the Tories came to power in alliance with the Lib-Dems, 68 per cent of schools achieved these top two Ofsted ratings. By the end of the school year 2022-2023 that percentage had risen to 89 per cent.

What is more, since Sir Martyn Oliver took over as Chief Inspector in January of this year, far fewer schools have been graded below ‘good’. This finding comes from an analysis by *Schoolsweek* [15 May 2024] of the latest data available to them, covering 373 schools, across the first three months of 2024. A

ccording to Ofsted the continuing improvement is ‘good news for children’ and simply continuing an ‘upward trend in inspection outcomes over the last few years.’

A previous and much respected Chief Inspector, Sir Michael Wilshaw, does not agree. Last October he told the Commons Select Committee that Ofsted’s verdict that around 90 percent of schools are ‘good’ is ‘complete nonsense’.

He might have added that our best ever public examination results were achieved during Covid lockdown when schools were mostly closed. The latest PISA results suggest, moreover, that UK schools are falling further and further behind those in much of the Asia Pacific.

Is the Ofsted judgement that 90 per cent of schools are ‘good’ and ‘outstanding’ and still getting better, proven? Not quite.

07. New Guidance on Teaching Relationship, Sex and Health Education?

Pupils under the age of 13 should be given protection from certain aspects of current relationship, sex and health education [RSHE] in English schools.

This is the central theme of new guidance from the Education Secretary, Gillian Keegan. At the time of writing the guidance was due to go out for consultation.

Keegan is proposing to ban all sex education before age of 9. Between the ages of 9 and 13 content will be circumscribed and biological sex will have to be taught as a reality.

Teaching about changing gender will have to wait until age 13 and, if taught, must be presented in the context of a contested ideology with potentially damaging implications.

If the guidance is introduced with statutory backing, teachers will no longer be free to burden younger children with adult neuroses about gender identity or to traumatise under-13s with graphic sexual content.

The guidance comes at the behest of the prime minister who, last year, was alerted to parental concerns about lesson content that was age-inappropriate and akin to 'brain washing'.

Such measures to protect childhood have long been supported by the Campaign for Real Education. There is sometimes a divide between how children and adults perceive the world.

Too often, this divide is ignored or not understood by educators. That a divide exists was cogently articulated by the writer Isaac Bashevis Singer.

His comments about children's perceptions in their reading have much wider relevance. In his speech of acceptance for the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1978 he explained why some of his writing was for children:

.... There are 500 reasons I write for children....

Children read books, not reviews. They don't give a hoot about the critics....

They don't read to free themselves of guilt, to quench their thirst for rebellion, or to get rid of alienation.

They still believe in God, the family, angels, devils, witches, goblins, logic, clarity, punctuation, and other such obsolete stuff.... T

hey don't expect their beloved writer to redeem humanity.

Young as they are, they know that it is not in his power. Only the adults have such childish illusions.

It is, in part, the illusions of educationalists, however well-intentioned, that have determined the direction of travel for RSHE lessons in schools.

In order to safeguard their 'childhood' younger children need only be taught the 'Golden Rule' of treating others as they would wish to be treated. That is what they need and that is all they need.

08. Observations on the Contrast Between Teaching in South Korea and England

Now returned to teaching in England, the author of this article has many years' experience of teaching in South Korea. He has also taught in Africa. He writes, here in a personal capacity and not to reflect the views of the CRE. He is currently working as a supply teacher in the Midlands area

Introduction

South Korea is well known for an education system that has underpinned rapid economic growth and rising living standards over a relatively short period of time. Central to the success of its school system has been well-ordered and disciplined classrooms, at least whilst the process was underway.

For equally well-ordered learning environments to become the norm in UK I believe that it may be necessary to fine parents of pupils who stop others from learning.

Schools in England Hire Their Own Teachers

One of the main differences between British and Korean Schools is that in England schools hire their own teachers. I have been to many teaching job interviews with interview panels made up of teachers often with a 'preferred candidate.'

It's not unusual to go from one end of the country to another for an interview, only to be told, "Well we wanted to hire a woman" (even though presumably they'd read one's resume), or that one is overqualified with a master's degree, when the person they hire only has a 'pass' degree.

In England I've observed that this leads to cliques building up in the schools who will hire their friends etc. while excluding those who may be better qualified or experienced. (In my college days there was a well-known circle of drug users and dealers, and when I was doing my PGCE training, I found they were all working in one school.)

In turn this leads to a lot of staffroom bullying because, knowing they are not necessarily the best teachers, the clique will then defend their position by making accusations and generally interfering, trying to make a hostile environment for teachers they see as a threat to themselves, usually because the outsiders are better qualified or more successful in the classroom.

In South Korea teachers are interviewed and hired by a central, local bureaucracy, which then assigns the teachers to the state schools, and their performance is then monitored through reports from the senior staff. The schools didn't have any control

over who is sent to them. The teachers, therefore, have to find ways to work together as a group for the common goal of helping the pupils to learn. Teachers are then rotated to a different local area school every four years, so there is less possibility of factions building up in schools, whose main aim is to protect their own jobs and interests.

Supply teachers in England are assigned by private agencies, so is it conceivable that full and part-time teachers would be assigned the same way? Of course I have also met many very dedicated and helpful teachers in England, but I have also encountered the situation described above many times.

The Specialised Class

In Korea pupils who are disruptive or have behavioural difficulties are put into one class, and teachers take turns to teach the class. I taught such a class. This way it is easier for teachers to develop strategies and programmes to help these pupils with their problems.

Whereas in England the disruptive pupils, some of whom clearly have neurodevelopmental disorders (for example ADHD or Tourette's), are scattered throughout the school, often one in every class, where most of the other pupils treat them as entertainment and therefore they become a distraction, which usually compounds their problems.

So, the teacher has to spend most of the class time just trying to bring some sort of order to the situation. Teaching assistants often concentrate solely on trying to distract the disruptive pupil(s), or in the end just trying to remove them from the class.

As one teacher pointed out to me, "It only takes one pupil misbehaving to ruin a class." A one-hour class of over 30 pupils represents an average of less than two minutes per pupil of teacher attention. Deducting from that the 10 or 15 minutes it takes to call the register to make sure no pupils are truant makes it even less.

If one pupil decides to act aberrantly and the rest of the class treats him as entertainment the teacher will then spend most of the remaining time trying to deal with it, i.e. calling teaching assistants or other teachers to have him removed. The teacher is also held responsible for the pupils' behaviour, for example, if the noise disturbs other classes.

It is extremely frustrating as a teacher seeing pupils who want to learn, but not having any time to answer their questions or help them. Can anyone learn in this toxic environment?

Parents' Day and Teachers' Day

Korean culture generally focuses on the team and the group over the individual. Although this can have disadvantages, I noticed that while England has a national Mothers' Day and Fathers' Day, Korea has Parents' Day and Teachers' Day.

On one Teachers' Day in Korea I was given a bunch of flowers by my pupils, and when I was carrying it home in the street, people were asking me, "Are you a teacher?" I, therefore, realised there is a general respect for teachers which is generally lacking in England.

During the lockdowns there was some recognition here of teachers as 'key workers,' but continually in the media teachers are personified as adversaries, such as the Pink Floyd lyrics: "We don't need no education," and Bob Marley singing: "Don't let them fool yer,' or even try to school yer,' and The Police: "Don't stand so close to me," which are continually playing.

Recently I heard a radio DJ invite listeners to contribute their memories of their teachers' nasal hair. I would go as far as to say in some schools there is a culture of absolute hostility towards teachers from pupils and parents. It's no surprise to me therefore that teachers in England are being stabbed or physically abused in other ways in addition to the general abuse.

Sexual Harassment Policy

In England the rule is that children should have no physical contact with teachers, which on the face of it makes sense, but is difficult to implement.

For example, if a teacher trips over a pupil's bag and accidentally touches their shoulder, the pupil is then in a position to make a complaint behind the teacher's back to the school's safeguarding officer, and the teacher will be suspended (without pay if they are supply teacher) and investigated, and the complaint may well go to the governing authority.

Some disruptive pupils, therefore, try to put themselves in physical positions where it is difficult for the teacher to avoid contact with them, or they may just behave provocatively in the hope that the teacher will make some physical contact with them.

They will also outright lie and threaten the teacher: "You'll get the detention." In Korea the sexual harassment policy, which was clearly defined by the government while I was teaching there, specified (obvious) parts of the body which should never be touched, but parts such as shoulders, etc., were not included. There were not, therefore, the same number of complaints, or amount of intimidation of teachers by pupils.

Electronic Devices

The problem of pupils bringing electronic devices into classrooms and then being distracted by them exists in Korea, but there are usually blanket policies to counter this, and it's not as prevalent as what I've seen in British Schools. Here each school has its own policy, so the problem varies from school to school, and some have none at all.

Pupils will continually distract others by showing them TikTok memes etc. Even if the school has a policy, pupils can become extremely hostile if they are told to stop using them, like addicts facing withdrawal. They may even threaten the teacher with false safeguarding accusations.

In addition, although schools spend large sums on computer rooms and technology, pupils may ignore the curriculum work assigned and, instead, just look at social media or play games on their phones or tablets, even vandalizing the school's equipment.

Children now appear to have a thirty-second, or less, attention span - the same as a TV commercial as one teacher pointed out to me. Anything that takes time or effort, not providing instant gratification, is met with cries of: "This is boring!"

Depending on the school's budget, its own equipment may be old or even obsolete, or inadequate in other ways. Pupils, for example, may not be able to hear the audio. If the school's technology goes wrong classes can become violent, even riotous.

Most schools now have to employ an IT technician, who will come after a while if he isn't on another job. Generally the South Korean government is eager to invest in its education system and schools have up-to-date equipment and teachers are willing to cooperate to keep each other 'tech savvy.'

Safeguarding Policy

Apart from its general sexual harassment policy, I wasn't aware of any 'safeguarding' policy as such in Korea.

Although there were a few examples of teachers abusing their positions in the many years I was there, it was rare, and the pre-employment background-checking policy was made much tighter (including blood tests) during my period of employment.

In England, however, I found that some schools are obsessive about 'safeguarding' to the point where teachers are being profiled by staff and pupils, especially if they are 'white' and male. By this I mean that teachers assigned as safeguarding officers

are continually entering classes to check up on other teachers, and the pupils are made well aware of that and what teachers are not allowed to do.

This has also become entwined with the 'woke' political agenda, popular with some teachers, which encourages pupils to see themselves as 'social justice warriors,' who 'virtue signal' by making accusations against teachers.

For example, if a white teacher reprimands a pupil of a minority ethnicity, they can be accused of being a racist for not simultaneously reprimanding a white pupil. If two girls start fighting, and the teacher tries to stop them, the male teacher can be accused of being 'sexist' for being against 'women's boxing.' In one class a pupil grabbed a rainbow flag and ran around the class waving it, to much merriment from the class, and then ran out to join his friends playing in the corridor.

These examples may sound ridiculous but these and similar ones have happened regularly. I also know of other teachers who have been accused by pupils of disgusting crimes, which the police became involved in, and even went to court but were eventually proven to be untrue.

Also, due to 'safeguarding' a lot of staffroom bullying takes the form of pre-emptive-strike accusations, with the safeguarding officer acting more like a policeman/woman than a fellow teacher.

It has exacerbated an atmosphere of pupils' suspicion and hostility towards teachers. One teacher told me she had been knocked unconscious, and others have shown me their bruises. Generally, many of the teachers I have met are tired and dispirited, talking of working on an "escape tunnel" i.e. another job or early retirement, and referring to the school itself as a "zoo".

Of course, nobody will disagree that children need to be safe, but I am only asking if it is possible to run an education system with these kinds of continual interruptions? Also what are the children learning, if not that they can get out of the consequences of any bad behaviour by lying behind the teachers' backs?

There is what can only be described as a witch hunt operating in some schools today. Pupils can now bully teachers, especially those who try to impose any kind of authority - "You'll get the detention!" So, is it any wonder that there is an epidemic of antisocial behaviour in England when they leave school?

As a teacher I, personally, would not have a problem with having CCTV installed in classrooms, etc., as it would save a lot of the time spent on investigations, and disprove false accusations. holiday

In England the long holiday is in the summer. The original reason and historical reason was that children would be able to help their parents with farm work. During

the long summer break, however, many children become bored, and some get involved in antisocial behaviour, such as vandalism. For example, in my area children are lighting fires just to see the fire brigade turn up to put them out, so that the children could video it for YouTube.

In Korea, however, the long school holiday is in the winter, and the schools set pupils a lot of homework, so they do a lot of useful learning and don't get bored. Also the cold weather is a deterrent to going out of their homes to create mischief, and it means the schools don't have to pay for heating.

Economic Awareness

In South Korea, most pupils are aware of the economic realities of their country. It has a history of wars with Japan, China, and North Korea, so they know that their economy needs to be kept strong to maintain its independence. generally Most pupils are focused on studying for their graduation to get to university.

In England however, too many pupils don't even seem to even know why they are in school, or what the letters GCSE stand for, and think they can wait to start studying for their exams even the day before, relying on luck.

What they do think is important however are soccer results and celebrities such as Kim Kardashian, which they endlessly discuss during study times.

Corporal Punishment

I worked in Africa for three years teaching IGCSE and both the schools I worked in practised corporal punishment. This has been illegal in England since 1986, and no one, including myself, would want to see it return.

However, certainly when I was a pupil in the 1960s and 70s, and during my African experience I was well aware that everyone in the schools knew that there was a line not to be crossed by pupils, so the punishment was rarely used. Since the line here was removed in 1986 it has not been replaced by anything, and I have witnessed more bullying, racism, sexism and pupils trying to stop others from learning than I ever did before.

Pupils can behave violently and know they will receive no penalty other than a detention and only, then, if the school has a policy. If they attend they will probably just play games or be given a cup of tea.

At worst, they can be expelled from the school, which some welcome. Sometimes, these children eventually end up in jail. Involving the parents often only means that they will side with their children.

My solution to the problem, which I've discussed with many people and who agree with me, is to fine the parents of pupils who stop others from learning, especially by abusing teachers, in order to transfer the responsibility for the pupils' behaviour from the teachers to the parents.

Teaching Assistant Situation in the UK and South Korea

Teaching assistants do a good job but much of what they do is trying to deal with discipline issues. They are not in a position to give any kind of punishment so they deal with misbehaviour by being nice to the pupils or removing them from the class by tempting them away with cups of tea etc. which only reinforces the problems.

They cost the schools money that could be spent on teachers. In my middle school experience in South Korea I was never aware of need for teaching assistants and never saw any in the schools.

Summary

Although South Korea is not 'Shangri-La,' everyone in the country seems to be aware that natural resources are limited and so they have to continually develop their economy in order not to starve, as happens in North Korea. Decades ago South Korea decided to catch the Third Industrial Revolution (c.f. Alvin Toffler's The Third Wave).

This involved micro-electronics etc., which created a lot of high technology industries (e.g. Samsung, Hyundai, LG) that required a highly educated workforce. The country, therefore, invested in its education system and became one of the world's highest scorers on the OECD's PISA assessments tests for 15 year-olds in maths, literacy and science.

Suggested further information:

- **The Third Wave** by Alvin Toffler [1985]
- **Teacher Therapy** (USA): <https://www.youtube.com/@TeacherTherapy/videos>
- **Made In Japan** by Akio Morita [1987]

11. No Comment

...the ways in which financial resources are used seems to matter more for student performance than the level of investment in education

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TES 14 May 2024

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The Sun 22 April 2024

McDonalds bans entire school from a branch 'after pupils abuse workers and diners.'

The Mirror 23 Oct 2023

Pupils in Wales perform only as well as disadvantaged children in England - IFS

The Guardian 21 Mar 2024

800 students, including primary school pupils, fined or prosecuted for vaping offences

The Straits Times [Singapore] 26 Oct 2023

Two-thirds of Northern Ireland's pupils say the curriculum does not prepare them for leaving school

Belfast Telegraph 1 Jan 2024

China forces all high school pupils to do military training

The Times 9 May 2024