Leading the Learning School: Building Learning Power in Action

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‘Learning to learn’: an idea whose time has come?

• ‘The test of successful education is not the amount of knowledge that pupils take away from school, but their appetite to know and their capacity to learn.’ Sir Richard Livingstone, 1941

• All skills will become obsolete except one, ‘the skill of being able to make the right response to situations that are outside the scope of what you were taught in school. We need to produce people who know how to act when they are faced with situations for which they were not specifically prepared.’ Seymour Papert, 1998

• Pedagogy should at its best be about what teachers do that not only helps students to learn but actively strengthens their capacity to learn.’ David Hargreaves, 2004
The BLP ambition

• To raise standards
  – as conventionally defined AND

• To raise engagement and enjoyment
  – by students and teachers
  – a renewed sense of purpose AND

• To raise young people all of whom have the appetite, capacity and confidence to face the challenges and uncertainties life throws at them
Education for the times

- From ‘automatic’ to ‘manual’ cultures
- Decline of family, church, ethnicity
  - Where to find ‘identity’?
- Access to chat-rooms, porn, drugs
- The signs of stress –
  - Escapism, depression, anxiety, superficiality
- Education is the cultivation of life resource
  - Not footling about with A to E
Leadership for L2L

• **Vision**: What would our school look like if we were doing everything in our power to put the development of generic transferable learning power at the centre of everything we do?

• **Practice**: Where is the little more we could do to turn the rhetoric of ‘personalising learning’ into a tangible, moment-to-moment reality for everyone in the school?
  – without breaking our backs, or jeopardising our existing successes and stability
Fullan’s Five Facets of Leadership…

• 4 processes
  – Understanding change: respect for complexity
  – Building relationships: mobilising energy
  – Creating and sharing knowledge: co-construction
  – Making coherence: integration

• And a direction
  – Moral purpose: clarity and commitment

• Why leadership is different from management
  – Magnetic (not reactive), strategic, subtle, creative
Inspiring, mobilising and sustaining commitment

• Leadership is about creating a sense of purpose and direction. It’s about getting alignment and it’s about inspiring people to contribute… Sir Michael Bichard, DfES

• The litmus test of all leadership is whether it mobilises people’s commitment to putting their energy into actions designed to achieve improvements. Michael Fullan
Beware cheap imitations…
tinsel and tokenism vs. transformation

- **More tests and grades**: spoon-feeding makes dependency
- **Forcing literacy standards**: damages dispositions
  - Reading pleasure is vital for life success
- **Grading by ‘ability’**: bright but brittle students
- **AfL**: ‘closing the gap’
- **New technologies**: jazzed-up on-line textbooks
- **Student voice**: vending machines and toilets
- **Learning to learn lite**: stand alone courses; hints and tips; learning styles; neurobabble
Worthwhile attitudes to life: cultivating

- Curiosity – wondering, questioning, critical
- Bravery – bold, persistent, resilient
- Exploration – attentive, focused, researching
- Experimenting – tinkering, practising, redrafting
- Imagination – fanciful, playful, intuitive
- Discipline – logical, methodical, ‘crafty’
- Relating – collaborative, receptive, independent
- Thoughtfulness – self-aware, reflective, adaptable
Changing the language

- Shifting the language from ability, effort, conduct, and achievement to
  - The process of learning
  - The development of learners
- From ‘work’ to ‘learning’
- From ‘is’ to ‘could be’

- ‘For nearly twenty years it has been known that students with more elaborated conceptions of learning perform better in public examinations at age 16’ NSIN RM13
Changing classroom chat

- How did you do that?
- How else could you have done that?
- Who did that a different way?
- What was hard about doing that?
- What could you do when you are stuck on that?
- What would have made that easier for you?
- Where could you get help and ideas?
- Is there anything else you know that might help?
- How could you help someone else do that?
- How could I have taught that better?
- How could you make that harder for yourself?
- Where else could you use that?

- used routinely / sometimes / rarely in your school?
Changing the walls

- Learning posters
- Our learning heroes
- Students’ drafts
- Staff learning
Change the mood

- Creativity cave
- Stilling the mind
- Magical events
- 10 minute MFL
- Winning self-directed time
So what are Lead Learners?

- **Magnets**: holding BLP as a key priority
- **Water-thinkers**: looking for gaps, not rocks
  - Water always wants to go ‘down’…
- **Ally-finders**: promoting and protecting learning champions; working with resistance
- **Experimenters**: continually initiating and encouraging small experiments; ‘confident uncertainty’; questioning
- **Monitors**: developing and trialling new indicators of success
- **Ventilators**: fanning the breeze of change (peer coaching; mentors; networks)
- **Exemplars**: being a visible explorer in all aspects of life
Putting Deep Learning at the heart of school

• ‘In times of change, learners will inherit the earth, while the learned will find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists’ Eric Hoffer

• ‘Since we cannot know what knowledge will be needed in the future it is senseless to try to teach it in advance. Instead our job must be to try to turn out young people who love learning so much, and who learn so well, that they will be able to learn whatever needs to be learnt’ John Holt
Questions: finding the little more

• What could I
  – Keep doing?
  – Do more of?
  – Do less of?
  – Start doing?
  – Stop doing?

“Imagination is the true magic carpet.”

Norman Vincent