

NaPTEC Conference

Friday 22 September 2006

Dr Mary Bousted
General Secretary, ATL

- Data on performance relate to only three subjects (English, mathematics and science) and to only two age groups (seven year olds and eleven year olds)
- National tests show a considerable rise in children's performance in English and mathematics from 1996 to 2001 followed by a general levelling off thereafter
- Rise in test scores does not necessarily involve a rise in performance against national standards unless these standards have been embodied in the same way and to the same degree in successive tests. However, there is no evidence that this has been the case

- Ofsted has published no inspection evidence on either national standards or performance in relation to those standards. It has simply relied on reporting national test data
- A number of major research projects throw doubt on the considerable rise in performance show in the national test data (Richards, C. 2005, p.26)

(Workforce reform) will usher in a new professionalism for teachers, in which career progression and financial rewards will go to those who are continually making the biggest contributions to improving pupil attainment, those who are continually developing their own expertise, and those who help to develop expertise in other teachers....

Teaching is an intellectual profession, based on a high degree of general and systematised knowledge. This includes an in depth knowledge of:

1. learning: how pupils learn, potential obstacles to learning, pre-conditions and dispositions to learning; how learning develops; and
2. curriculum content: knowledge of subjects and the relationships between them, understanding of wider content such as the development of thinking skills, problem solving, questioning and group working, and a knowledge of how pupils' understanding of particular content grows and develops.

- The teaching profession is also practical, and has a wide range of practices and methods.
- Teaching has a basis in care and responsibility for pupils' learning, leading to the need for knowledge and understanding of pupils as individuals, their interests, needs and potential obstacles to learning, knowledge developed through assessment and through relationships with pupils, families, communities and other professionals.

The teaching professional needs knowledge about the complex and compelling forces that influence daily living in a changing world, including the political, economic, technological, social and environmental, in order to know that pupils need to learn both in the present and for the future.

...teachers have the ability to adapt teaching practices and methods to particular pupils, drawing on their theoretical understanding of learning, their knowledge of curriculum content and their knowledge of what pupils need. This professional knowledge and understanding is not static: it changes and develops over time.

Some of the change happens externally to the profession: knowledge of how the brain works or developments in subject knowledge; changes in political, social and cultural attitudes affect the way that subjects are taught, or ways that children are perceived.

Professionalism therefore implies a responsibility to the continued development of practical knowledge through reflection and interaction. To review the nature and effectiveness of practice, and to continue to increase understanding of the purposes and content of education, individually and collectively.

Teachers have always sought to maintain and develop their expertise, helped colleagues to review and improve their practice, and seen themselves as learning professionals. However, this has not always been easy to achieve. Underlying the new teacher professionalism is the aim that professional development is an ongoing part of the everyday activities of a teacher, rather than a separate activity which adds to the work load of teachers.

The new teacher professionalism espouses a culture of greater openness where all teachers are engaged in effective professional development which enhances pupil attainment and teachers' job satisfaction, and supports school improvement and teachers' career progression

Assessments of the impact of professional development need to take into account that it takes time for the benefits of professional development to be realized fully and reflected in improved classroom practice. They should not focus only on immediate results.

So what does this new concept of
new professionalism mean to primary educators?

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