

## **Norwich Area Schools Consortium (NASC)**

### **Literature Survey by Tom Elkins**

#### **1. The TTA School-Based Consortia Initiative**

The work of NASC sits within the school-based consortia initiative sponsored by the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) and the Council for British Teachers (CfBT) between 1997- 2001. Four consortia (Leeds, Manchester & Salford, Newcastle and Norwich) identified themes which were designed to allow teachers to engage in and with research and involved partnerships in each case with a Higher Education Institution and a Local Education Authority. NASC was partnered with the University of East Anglia and Norfolk Local Education Authority. Each consortium produced interim reports and a final report, all of which are available from the Teacher Training Agency; the NASC final report is available on the CARE/UEA website ([www.uea.ac.uk/care/nasc/](http://www.uea.ac.uk/care/nasc/)). Annual reviews of the progress of the consortia were produced by the Teacher Training Agency (TTA 1999, 2000). A summary of the Consortia Overview Report is also available (TTA 2002).

Additionally, papers focusing on aspects of the initiative were presented at BERA conferences (Cordingley 2000, Cordingley 2001, Cordingley et al 2002). Participants from each consortium have written and presented papers, some of which have been published and some of which have been presented at conferences. A special edition of 'Pedagogy, Culture and Society' (Volume 10, Number 2, 2002) entitled 'Researching Disaffection with Teachers', contains articles based on studies carried out by NASC researchers.

#### **2. Educational legislation**

It is important to understand the educational norms within which NASC schools considered student disaffection. Six of the seven participant schools are non-selective all-ability secondary comprehensive schools which admit pupils aged 12-18 from a full range of socio-economic backgrounds: the seventh school is a special school for boys with emotional and behavioural difficulties. All seven schools are state schools and, as such, are bound by legislative requirements determined by the government.

The Education Reform Act (1988) introduced the national curriculum which prescribes subjects and programmes of study which must be followed compulsorily by all pupils, denying schools and teachers the traditional freedom they used to enjoy in determining the content and delivery of the curriculum for pupils aged between 5 and 14. The national curriculum introduced tests for all pupils at ages 7 (Key Stage 1), 11 (Key Stage 2) and 14 (Key Stage 3) to accompany the national examinations at age 16 (GCSE) and age 18 (GCE Advanced Levels). In 2001, a further regime of testing was introduced with GCE Advanced Supplementary

levels at age 17. While there have been modifications to the national curriculum and disapplication has been possible in some circumstances, teachers and pupils continue to follow the essential model which was determined in 1988. Current regulations of the national curriculum are published on an annual basis (DfES 2002). There have been many critiques of the national curriculum (e.g. Kelly, 1990; Barber, 1996; Griffith, 2000).

Two other important dimensions of conformity and accountability relate to the introduction of a new regime of school inspections (DES 1992, DfE 1993) and the publication of comparative tables of school performance (DES 1992, DfE 1993). OFSTED, the Office for Standards in Education, was formed, all schools were to be inspected at regular intervals and a criterion referenced inspection framework was established: importantly, inspection reports were, and continue to be, public documents, available to anyone on demand: these arrangements continue. Under the 'Parents' Charter' (1992), examination results were to be published, together with percentages of unauthorised pupil absence, to allow parents to judge the comparative effectiveness of schools. School performance statistics, commonly known as 'league tables', continue to be published on an annual basis- and continue to be criticised on the basis that they fail to take into account the demographic and social factors which impinge differently upon individual schools.

School discipline has continued to be a concern of successive governments. The Elton Report (DES 1989) provided both an analysis of issues relating to discipline and behaviour and suggestions to schools on procedures and strategies to overcome indiscipline. Pupil behaviour and discipline formed part of the OFSTED inspection framework and OFSTED published a paper on achieving good behaviour in schools (OFSTED 1993). Papers on 'Pupils with Problems' were published as circulars (DfE 1994). Concerns about pupil absence and exclusion from schools led to the publication of 'Social Inclusion: Pupil Support' (DfEE 1999), which offered guidance to help schools reduce the risk of disaffection among pupils.

The regulations described above circumscribe the ways in which school and teachers can address problems of disaffection. Under a spotlight of official and public scrutiny, the curriculum is prescribed, the publication of 'league tables' means that schools cannot afford to moderate or 'soft-touch' curriculum delivery, school exclusions are discouraged and inspection reports make judgments on the effectiveness of schools in maintaining standards of discipline and behaviour.

### **3. Literature on disaffection**

The literature relating to pupil disaffection is extensive and multi-faceted. NASC's focus was on teaching and learning and drew upon the real situations faced by teachers in mainstream schools. Hence this survey does not concern itself with the body of literature which investigates the psychological and sociological factors which might cause disaffection, nor

with that which deals with severely disruptive pupils who are taught in special schools or units. Galloway et al (1999) describe the 'cultural norm' within which teachers in mainstream UK schools work:

At classroom level, each teacher's task is to motivate and interest as many as 35 individuals who never asked to be there in the first place. In addition there is a cultural norm that teaching should be more than mere transmission of facts; it should involve children in an interactive process with each other and with the teacher. (p.16)

They found that teachers regard a large minority of pupils as presenting learning and/or behavioural difficulties and cite other research (e.g. Mortimore et al, 1988) which show differences between teachers within schools as to who the disaffected pupils are. They found that boys were significantly more likely than girls to be seen by teachers as under-achieving and displaying troublesome classroom behaviour.

Holland and Hamerton (1994) maintained that teachers made assumptions about who the most difficult pupils were, when lesson observations showed that the pupils they expected to see causing the most disruption were often not the ones observed doing so. Daniels (1999) surveyed the range of emotional and behavioural difficulties presented by pupils in mainstream schools. Morris (1999) has written a critical review of the literature on the scope, strategy and solutions in dealing with disadvantaged youth.

Given teachers' concerns about the 'large minority of pupils' who present learning or behavioural difficulties, it is unsurprising that there is a great deal of current literature which focuses on behaviour management and teaching and learning styles. Porter (2000) sets out various theories which inform approaches to behaviour management, which she describes as 'limit-setting' (e.g. Canter and Canter, 1992), 'applied behaviour analysis' (e.g. Alberto and Troutman, 1999); 'cognitive-behaviourism' (e.g., Kaplan and Carter, 1995); neo-Adlerian theory' (e.g. Balson, 1992), 'humanism' (e.g. C. Rogers and Freiberg, 1994); 'choice theory' (e.g. Glasser, 1998) and 'systems theory' (e.g. Molnar and Lindquist, 1989). All these theories, says Porter, have a philosophical base and it is for the teacher 'to select methods that share similar philosophies, rationales and goals' (p.13).

Cronk (1987) advocates an egalitarian relationship between pupils and teachers as the key to avoiding conflict and disaffection. Citing C. Rogers (1983), she says:

He appeals to teachers to recognize pupil-persons as trustworthy and to work with them in an egalitarian person-to-person relationship, rather than in teacher-pupil relationship founded upon the exercise of formal power (p.198).

This approach is what Porter describes as 'humanist' with the core belief that children are unique beings with the right to respect and the freedom to evaluate and make decisions about their own experience (C. Rogers and Freiberg, 1994).

Cooper (1993) studied the experience of a group of boys attending two residential special schools for students with emotional and behavioural difficulties. He argues that mainstream schools 'must provide opportunities to all of their students to be identified, both by themselves and others, in terms of their positive qualities and their potentialities for making a constructive personal contribution to their communities....the emphasis should be less on survival and control and more on cooperation and consultation' (p.5) 'The central message', says Cooper, 'is that individuals count and the effective school is organized around this principle' (p.246).

Cooper was part of a team which initiated the PASE (Positive Alternatives to School Exclusion) project (Cooper et al, 2000):

Our assumption was that the solution (to avoid exclusion) lay in a particular orientation towards problems, including a belief in the school's power to make a positive difference to pupils' behaviour, a willingness to listen and learn from the perspectives of others- especially including the pupils themselves- and a commitment to taking whatever action possible to enhance the quality of pupils' engagement with all aspects of school life. (p.14)

After a series of case studies in which the researchers worked alongside teachers and pupils in six maintained schools, these aspects of teachers' and pupils' personal experience were identified as most effectively working towards inclusion:

- a sense of being valued as a person
  - a sense of belonging and involvement
  - a sense of personal satisfaction and achievement
  - a sense of being accepted and listened to
  - a sense of congruence between personal and institutional values
  - a sense of the personal meaningfulness of the tasks of teaching and learning
  - a sense of efficacy, of power to influence things for the better
- (p.193)

It is no accident that Cooper cites these findings as supporting Cronk's 'educational approach', which emphasizes 'respect for persons': the approach is humanist.

Rudduck et al (1996) undertook a longitudinal study designed to track pupils' careers during the last four years of secondary schooling. At a time when Rudduck says that the 'dominant concern is with enhancing the performance of pupils in the 16+ examination', pupils were

interviewed on 'school improvement' issues. Rudduck identifies 'three dimensions that are in tension' both in society and in schools: 'the need for a clear and acceptable social order; the need for improved performance; and a commitment to rights and responsibilities that reflect young people's social, intellectual and physical maturity' (p.73). Six principles are identified as making a significant difference to learning:

1. respect for pupils as individuals and as a body occupying a significant position in the institution of the school;
2. fairness to all pupils irrespective of their class, gender, ethnicity or academic status;
3. autonomy- not as an absolute state but as both a right and a responsibility in relation to physical and social maturity;
4. intellectual challenge that helps pupils to experience learning as a dynamic, engaging and empowering activity;
5. social support in relation to both academic and emotional concerns;
6. security in relation to both the physical setting of the school and in interpersonal encounters (including anxiety about threats to pupils' self-esteem). p.174

By implication, disaffection and lack of motivation will occur when the principles are not in evidence. Rudduck's premise is that pupils have a significant contribution to make in relation to school improvement and in this analysis moves closer to Porter's 'choice theory' which is exemplified in the work of Glasser (1998). Glasser emphasises the need for order in schools, adding the 'managerial purpose' of establishing and maintaining order to the humanists' aims of helping students establish their own codes of behaviour.

Bill Rogers (1998) advocates 'democratic leadership' on the part of the teacher as opposed to 'autocratic discipline'. He says 'while student rights, a democratic curriculum, cooperative learning, participation and equity, access and success are worthy goals of education, those goals need to be supported by a clear structure'. He offers teachers 'strategies for making the hard job of discipline and behaviour management in school easier', covering issues such as the definition and protocols of discipline, disruptive behaviour and teaching, planning and skills, building a positive classroom climate and dealing with the hard-to-manage class. His conclusion focuses on the factors over which teachers can have significant and effective control. These are:

- the way we organise our curriculum and present it to our students
- how we organize our classroom space and aesthetics
- the kind of rules and routines we make with our students
- the way we cater for mixed abilities
- the way in which we can build up workable relationships with our students (we'll even enjoy most classes and like most of our students!)
- the support network we can build with our peers

- the control we can exercise over our discipline and management style. (pp.314, 315)

There have been a number of surveys of pupils' views on the factors which motivate them and the factors which lead to disaffection. In addition to Rudduck's survey (Rudduck et al, 1966) and the PASE project (Cooper et al, 2000) which have already been cited, the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) used questionnaire surveys to elicit the views of some 1000 students in 100 schools (Keys and Fernandes, 1993). As far as teaching and learning practices are concerned, Keys and Fernandes say:

The study identified quite strong associations between students' attitudes and a range of aspects of teaching behaviour. High expectations on the part of the teacher, regular feedback, praise for good work and effective classroom discipline.... were shown to be associated with students' positive attitudes towards school and education.

.. However, the results of our research suggest that many teachers were not lavish with praise, that a minority of teachers were 'fairly easily satisfied' and many pupils did not talk individually with their teachers about their work. (p 65)

These findings are consistent with other studies on school effectiveness (Rutter et al., 1979, Mortimore et al., 1988) which were synthesised and categorised by Weindling (1989). Weindling cites high expectations by teachers, visible rewards, effective monitoring of progress, effective discipline and good classroom management as factors which contribute to effective schools. In respect of classroom management, he cites 'a high proportion of lesson time spent on the subject matter of the lesson (as distinct from setting up equipment, dealing with disciplinary matters, etc.); limited focus within sessions; intellectually challenging teaching; high proportion of teacher time spent interacting with the class as a whole as opposed to individuals; lessons beginning and ending on time; clear explanations; clear and unambiguous feedback to students on their performance and what is expected of them; ample praise for good performance; continual monitoring of students' progress; minimum disciplinary interventions'.

Most schools operate a formal system of rewards and sanctions. Two early studies of the use of rewards and sanctions (Highfield & Pinsent, 1952, Burns 1978) highlighted differences in perception between teachers and pupils as to which incentives and deterrents were effective; McNamara (1985, 1986) and Caffyn (1989) showed that teachers believed punishment to be more effective than rewards. Bain and Houghton (1991) examined the effectiveness of a whole school behaviour management programme on teachers' use of encouragement in the classroom and Harrap and Holmes (1993) collated teachers' perceptions of their pupils' views on rewards and punishments.

These findings communicate mixed messages, but in more general terms there appears to be a consensus that rewards are more effective than sanctions in motivating pupils. An early study of pupils' attitudes (Johannesson 1967) established that praise is a better motivator of pupils than blame and current thinking. Rutter et al (1979) in a major survey of school effectiveness, found that 'all forms of reward, praise or appreciation tended to be associated with better outcomes' while Mortimore et al (1988) found that a positive school climate puts more emphasis on praise and reward than punishment and control. Cooper (1993) undertook a case study of 'Valley School' which emphasised the value of using rewards and Wheldall and Merrett (1989) analysed the use by teachers of praise and reprimands. Circular 10/99 'Social Inclusion: Pupil Support' (DfEE 1999) advocates rewarding achievements ('positive recognition of individual pupil, class or year group achievements in good attendance and behaviour, through mentions in assemblies and awarding certificates or prizes') as a means of motivating pupils.

The current emphasis on behaviour management tends to ignore those pupils whose disaffection does not manifest itself in deviant behaviour or in obviously poor work. The PASE project (Cooper et al. 2000) was 'concerned to acknowledge the plight of those students in school who are neither formally excluded, nor seen as behaving in ways which might put them at risk of exclusion.' Pye (1988) describes these pupils as 'invisible', 'forgotten', 'lost' and abandoned in 'Nomansland'.

The literature on disaffection appears to establish a reasonable consensus on the conditions in schools and classrooms which lead to better motivation of pupils. There is a methodological debate as to which theories of behaviour management and which teaching and learning styles are most successful. The view of Porter (2000), whose analysis was cited at the beginning of this section, is that once teachers are familiar with the theories and underlying philosophy and recommended practices, they can generate their own theory which helps them describe, explain and predict student behaviour and how to respond to it. It is the generation, if not strictly of theory, then of ideas based on observation and enquiry, which dominates the NASC research.

### **NASC literature**

NASC drew upon earlier work undertaken by two key players at the Centre for Applied Research in Education (CARE) at the University of East Anglia (UEA), John Elliott and Paul Doherty, both of whom were influential in guiding the work of NASC's teacher researchers. Elliott (1997a) surveyed the literature on student disaffection, examining deviance theories, cultural transmission theories and process theories and arguing that disaffection should be seen as a problem about the relationship between curriculum, schooling and society. His view was that teachers play a major generative role in the transformation of their students' experiences of schooling and that teachers should be empowered to undertake imaginative curriculum experiments. Denied the

opportunity to make 'imaginative curriculum experiments', NASC work focused on the teacher's 'generative role'.

A further stimulus for NASC's focus on disaffection was the doctoral research being carried out at CARE in UEA by Paul Doherty under John Elliott's supervision. Doherty sought to develop collaborative research methodology and engaged students actively in the process of research. His aim was to find research questions that addressed the problems of practitioners and participants. Both Elliott and Doherty presented papers at the 1997 BERA Conference (Doherty 1997, Elliott 1997b) on the topic of disaffection. Doherty's unpublished dissertation (2001) is a detailed case study based on his work on one of the NASC schools.

A variety of research questions were developed at school level which led to a number of practical initiatives being deployed in different NASC schools. The summary of the final report (2001) lists key activities, among which were:

- examining the methods by which teachers mediated and represented the curriculum in practice;
- gathering evidence from surveys and creating qualitative and quantitative data sets about classroom and school practices and teacher/pupil perceptions of such practices;
- in-depth analysis of the data sets for use in the comparative assessment of different methodologies;
- assembling detailed case records of specific initiatives, using classroom and peer observation; pupil tracking; pupil questionnaires; interviews with teachers, pupils (and, in one case) parents; interactive learning methods;
- working to create sympathetic learning environments and considering the possibilities for change in the curriculum to aid in countering disaffection;
- actively engaging students in processes for attitude and learning improvement.

The emphasis is on teaching and learning processes, gleaned information from students on what leads to their motivation and disengagement, and on teachers focusing on teaching methods and classroom management skills to create a more positive learning environment. NASC did not focus exclusively on severely disruptive students, but recognised that disaffection was a complex phenomenon potentially identifiable in many aspects of student behavior.

Gutteridge (Elliott & Zamorski, 2002) set out to discover teachers' identification of the categories of behaviour exhibited by students in his school who were considered to be disaffected. Teachers were asked to think of a student whom they considered to be disaffected and to assess the applicability of twenty-six statements to that student's behavioural characteristics: there was agreement on twelve statements. Gutteridge's survey supports the findings of Galloway et al (1999) in that the majority

of teachers in his study chose a boy as their 'subject' and in finding that there was disagreement in identifying the characteristics of disaffection.

Elkins (NASC 2000) noted the characteristics of six effective lessons he observed in his school which are convergent with the success factors cited by Weindling (1989). Binney & Lewell (NASC 1999) compared pupils' perceptions of teaching and learning styles with those of teachers and established agreement as to which teaching styles and modes of classroom management were most effective: the characteristics of effective lessons included clear instructions, directions and demands on the part of the teacher, the use of praise rather than threats and tasks broken down into manageable stages. Again, these conclusions are convergent with the findings of other studies (e.g. Mortimore et al, 1988)

A NASC investigation of teacher attitudes towards rewards and sanctions (Clarke & Freeburn 1999) acted as the stimulus for a major enquiry into pupils' attitudes towards the use of formal rewards and sanctions systems in the NASC schools, described by Boddington et al (Elliott & Zamorski, 2002). This survey has produced what is probably the largest data base on this topic and shows a range of pupil opinion on the use of credit systems and other incentives as well as punishments.

Another major study by Oakley (Elliott & Zamorski, 2002) investigated the phenomenon of students who underachieve and who are not actively engaged in learning, whose behaviour is passive and does not challenge the authority of the teacher (Cooper et al, 2000; Pye, 1988). These students were classified as 'RHINOs' (Really Here In Name Only). The research sought to identify these students, to examine their learning and motivation and to explore intervention strategies which could enhance their experience of school. The key finding was that their responses improved significantly when they were given individual attention. The study by Brown and Fletcher (Elliott & Zamorski, 2002) established that students in one foreign language class were not disaffected as the teacher had thought, but were engaged in the processes of learning, albeit disruptively in some cases. These two studies challenge the hypothesis that disaffection and disruptive behaviour are convergent in all cases.

The prescription of a modern foreign language within the national curriculum at the time of NASC's work was perceived by a number of NASC teachers to be a particular source of pupil disaffection. Boddington and Doherty (NASC 1999) considered an alternative curriculum for students who were displaying high levels of disaffection in modern foreign languages, Larner (NASC 1999) investigated the idea that students' apparent reluctance to study languages might be influenced by negative attitudes on the part of their parents, Clerehugh (Elliott and Zamorski, 2002) examined the use of ICT as a motivator in language lessons. Interestingly, all these studies (and that of Brown and Fletcher, (cited above) identified teaching and learning styles and aspects of behaviour management as factors that tended to outweigh the specific challenge of the subject itself.

The NASC studies which have been described can be accessed via the website at [www.uea.ac.uk/care/nasc/](http://www.uea.ac.uk/care/nasc/). The articles edited by Elliott & Zamorski (2002) can be read in the special issue of 'Pedagogy, Culture and Society', Volume 10, Number 2, 2002, entitled 'Researching Disaffection with Teachers'.

## **7. The way forward?**

Slee (1995) aims to retrieve and reconstruct school discipline as an educational concept, rejecting the 'unproblematic acceptance of indiscipline as a student-centred problem. He is particularly scathing of the way in which 'schools and classrooms have been vulnerable to the seductive appeal of quick, fix behaviour management programmes, typically, North American, to bolster assertive or decisive pedagogies and quell the disruptive student body' (p.164) and external school improvement formulae and behaviour policies. He argues for a school-centred approach, allowing all the participants in an individual school to consider the impact of school structure and procedure upon the satisfaction of their needs. He sets out an 'Educational Needs Discussion Grid' in which the basic needs of all the constituents (belonging; security and safety; competence; usefulness and power; excitement and enjoyment; hope) are set out on one side of the grid and the differential impacts of schooling are set out as 'domains' (philosophy, ethos and values; pedagogy; curriculum; organization) at the top of the grid (p.184).

Crucial to Slee's grid is the 'domain' of the curriculum, which Elliott (1997) argued was central to the issue of student disaffection and denied by the strait-jacket of the national curriculum. The Education Act (2002) opens up possibilities to schools and teachers hitherto denied over the past fourteen years. The Bill introduces a new 'power to innovate', inviting schools and LEAs to apply to the Secretary of State to undertake pilot projects for a period of up to six years. Partnerships are encouraged, as evidenced by the Networked Learning Communities programme. The tone of the proposals is radical:

To support schools to innovate and develop new ideas, we want to remove barriers that stand in their way, and free them to adopt new approaches. The Bill will sweep away some of the regulations that have in the past been a barrier to new ideas. (3.1)

It remains to be seen whether intention will be translated into action and whether deregulation will be sustainable in an age of accountability.

## **8. School-based research**

The literature on school-based research is extensive. As an introduction, Hopkins (1993) offers a guide to classroom research, Nias and Groundwater Smith (1988) look at teachers as researchers and Elliott (1991) focuses on action research for educational change.

The work of NASC researchers is contained in a special edition of 'Pedagogy, Culture and Society' (Elliott and Zamorski, 2002). Of interest in this context are the articles by Doherty, Burns and Haydn, Zamorski and Bulmer and Elliott, Battersby et al, which examine the issues of collaborative research.

Literature relating to the Teacher Training Agency's School-Based Consortia initiative is identified at the beginning of this survey. Activity theory (Engestrom, 1987) was used as a tool to monitor and explore the relationships, activities, outputs and outcomes of the initiative.

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**November 2002**