



esa magazine

March 2011

How do You Deal with Teacher Under- performance?



European School
Heads Association

ESHA magazine is the official magazine of the European School Heads Association, the Association for school leaders in Europe. ESHA magazine will be published ten times per school year. You are welcome to use articles from the magazine but we would appreciate it if you contacted the editor first.

Subscription

The ESHA e-magazine is free of charge. You can register through the internet at www.eshamagazine.org

The ESHA Executive Board

Ton Duif, (President) Chris Harrison, (past president) Clive Byrne, Jukka Kuittinen (Treasurer) Solveig Dahl (Secretary General)

About ESHA

ESHA is a Foundation that consists of 32 Associations of Heads and Educational employers in 25 European countries in primary, secondary and vocational education.

Contact ESHA

Visiting address: Nieuwegracht 1-3 Utrecht Netherlands

Postal address: Postbox 1003, 3500 BA Utrecht Netherlands

Website: www.eshamagazine.org

e-mail: e.dejong@avs.nl

The Editorial team for the magazine

Ton Duif (editor), Clive Byrne, Chris Harrison, Ellen de Jong, Roy Tedscoe.

This edition is sponsored by the AVS, the Netherlands.

Layout and design

Thoben Offset Nijmegen

www.thoben-offset-nijmegen.nl

In this issue

March 2011

- 4 Column Ton Duif
- 10 Guest Column Ian Bauckham
- 14 Agenda
- 16 How do you shape avid young readers?
- 20 How do You Deal with Teacher Underperformance?
- 26 Tensions
- 32 Individual and system



Dear ESHA friends and members,

It's a good custom in ESHA that the ESHA President gives a report of all the activities of ESHA concerning the past year, 2010.

The ESHA Executive Board started the year with a clear mandate, given by the General Board Meetings in both Dublin and again in Ohrid to change ESHA from a 'governance' body into an Umbrella organisation that would bring extra value to the individual members of our connected associations. In order to achieve this we have organised and developed an interactive web portal and e-magazine aimed to fulfil the following key ideas:

- To disseminate good practice to individual members.
- To establish a leadership network.
- To strengthen the relationship with Brussels.
- To build a leadership community for all European school leaders.

In our first Executive Board meeting in 2010 in Utrecht, we agreed on the new constitution of ESHA. Because of the fact that ESHA happened to be a Foundation instead of an Association, all General Board Members would have been held personally accountable for all the actions of the Executive Board, including any financial risk. We acknowledge that this would be unacceptable for all of us. Furthermore, it would enhance the working power of the EB if they wouldn't have to delay project development and wait for the accordance of a GB which only meets twice a year. The new constitution was agreed at the General Board meeting in the Amsterdam meeting in March 2010 and officially legalised by the notary in

July 2010. From that moment, the General Board was re-named the General Assembly and the Executive Board became known as just the Board. In 2010, the Executive Board consisted of 5 people; Ton Duif, President, Chris Harrison Past President, Clive Byrne, Executive Member, Solveig Dahl Secretary General and Jukka Kuttinen Treasurer. The Board and Assembly has been supported by Ellen de Jong (from the secretariat) and Bertus Bos, Financial Controller. Additionally, the General Assembly agreed to invest money from our reserves to enable the agreed changes to happen (the maximum amount was set at € 40,000 for 2010).

In February 2010, the ESHA board made the decision to submit a bid to the Comenius Programme, in order to try to raise funds from the EC to support us in developing and building the leadership network and an interactive portal. We quickly recognised that no one within the Executive Board had sufficient expertise and experience in how to construct such a high-value bid. Therefore, because of the intensive EC bureaucracy and the complicated procedures involved, we agreed to ask the PNO (consultancy) to help us making the bid. The total amount of money we would be asking for was approximately € 500,000. Had we received the grant the cost of making the bid would have been fully covered within the project costs for the whole procedure. The proposal was sent to the EC in time and as we all know it takes the EC 5 months to make the decision as to who would get a grant or not.

Meanwhile, in March 2010, the first ESHA e-magazine was launched. The ESHA board is very grateful to all associations and contributors who have and continue to help us with good content for publication. In 2010 alone 7 magazines were produced. We have special thanks to Chris and Clive, who help us with the correct English language, along with thanks to NAPD, NAHT, ASCL, SUREfire, Skoledernen

and many others. Special thanks must go to Ellen who helped us gather all the content and articles and sends out reminders to potential column writers and other contributors. The full cost of the

The ESHA board is willing to move on, doing what has to be done, with the support and help of all members to help individual members and associations in their ambition to bring education in Europe onto a higher level

magazine in 2010 was paid by AVS – this means the working hours, the professional designer and the e-platform. For 2011 the aim has to be to sustain or cover the costs with sponsorship and advertising. In June 2010 we received a very disappointing and surprising message from the EC. We did not get the grant having missed it by just 2 points! We scored maximum on relevance and networking. The ESHA board decided that although this was a disappointment and setback, the Working Plan objectives and priorities meant that we had to find another way to make our changes happen, as agreed and planned.

our aim to bring European School Leadership closer together to increase the quality of European education by identifying, sharing and promoting best practice. He was immediately very enthusiastic

In June 2010, I met Fred Verboon and talked through with him about ESHA and

and sympathetic to our association's aims. I knew Fred from when he worked with Microsoft and in that time Microsoft supported the development of the AVS interactive portal. In August 2010, the ESHA board met and reviewed our strategic aims and ambition and decided to ask Fred to officially help us building the web portal. In August 2010, we received a call from Brussels that there would be an extra call for proposals to build a European leadership network for policy makers, educators and researchers. This program was intended for 4 years with the amount of funding set at € 500,000 for each year, € 2,000.000 over 4 years. To be successful we needed at least 20 countries to cooperate and with the help of Fred, the ESHA board decided to once again try to be successful in enlisting EC support. With little time and a lot of our member countries on their long summer holiday, we soon realised how short a time we had to co-ordinate activity, commitments and submit our bid before the deadline. Once again, although the proposal would necessarily involve further delay we were all confident this time it would be successful: we had 20 countries, we had school leaders, we had researchers (EERA, NCSL, NSA) and policymakers, all sending their letters of endorsement or agreements. Being so sure that this time it would work, we decided, within the financial mandate the GA give us in the financial budget, to go forward, make a start and begin to build a portal. One day before Xmas we got a letter of the EC confirming that we were unsuccessful with the bid application. Even at the start of January it was unclear what the situation was. During our contact with Brussels we found out that the whole programme was mainly meant for Policy makers in Europe and not for school leaders, although they welcomed our role and contribution and it is for this reason that the successful bidders (Greece) were asked by the EC to ask ESHA to participate. The ESHA board decided to be positive. For the year 2011 it means extra income for ESHA € 3,500 euro for the following years approximately € 35,000 a year.

In 2010 the ESHA board members have represented ESHA on several occasions, as the NEASP conference in Houston, The APPA conference in Perth, the conference of ESHA Bulgaria, Catalonia, NAHT, ASCL, Cyprus, NAPD and at the regular ICP meetings.

Besides three successful regional conferences, a peak for the year was our biennial conference in Cyprus in November 2010. Almost 600 participators from most European countries were present in Limassol. Special thanks must go to Panayiotis and his team, helping us organising a great conference with good keynote speakers such as Andy Hargreaves, Neil Hawkes and Petros Pashiardis. A wonderful venue, the sea and moderate temperature in November enabled us to work, enjoy the time together and to learn from each other from our theme: The successful school: a human approach to Leadership. The next conference in 2010 will be held in Edinburgh, Scotland, hosted by AHDS.

Dear friends

There's a lot more to tell. The ESHA board is willing to move on in 2011 doing what has to be done, with the support and help of all members to help individual members and associations in their ambition to bring education in Europe onto a higher level.

With the help of all associations and school leaders, we will prevail.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'T' and 'D' followed by a horizontal line and a vertical stroke.

Ton Duif, President of ESHA



Major changes and difficult times in English schools

The past year has been a time of very fast change in the English education system. A new government was elected in May 2010 following 13 years of Labour rule, and this coincided with a need to reduce government spending. The Conservative-Liberal coalition published its plans in a pre-legislative document in January entitled *The Importance of Teaching*.

For the first time in Britain, the new government is taking seriously the outcomes of international studies of educational achievement, especially PISA. England's performance in the 2009 tests was static in comparison with 2006, although the rank order in reading, science and mathematics fell. This was because other OECD countries have improved, while England's score has stayed the same. The position of Wales was significantly worse than England's. In the document *The Importance of Teaching* the government uses



Ian Bauckham

the falling position of England (Wales is independent in education) in the PISA tables to justify much of its programme of reform. This includes a rapid increase in the 'academies' programme. In effect, this means that schools are encouraged to apply to become independent of their local authority, which means they are funded directly from central government, and do not have to follow the national curriculum, or many other aspects of education law. Apart from curriculum independence, academies receive slightly more funding than local authority schools, because the portion of the money 'top-sliced' by the local authority goes directly to schools. Other aspects of the government's reform programme include changes to the training of teachers. The plan is to increase the role of schools in the training of teachers, at the expense of universities.

The government believes that training 'on the job' is more effective than sitting in a university lecture theatre listening to lectures about pedagogical theory. However, many professionals believe that there is a risk of losing much expertise, which currently resides in university departments of education, and also a risk that teaching is being

demeaned by being treated as a 'practical skill' rather than an intellectual enterprise. Reform of the Ofsted inspection system is also on the cards. The government plans to reduce the complexity of the inspection process, moving from about 30 separate judgements to only four (teaching and learning, leadership, behaviour and student achievement). Also, successful schools will be inspected much less often than others.

For the first time in Britain, the new government is taking seriously the outcomes of international studies of educational achievement, especially PISA

Alongside all these changes are serious budget pressures for many schools. In particular, the funding allocated to students aged 16-18 in schools

is being sharply reduced to bring it close to the funding levels which further education colleges receive for the same age group. In schools with large sixth forms (the section of an 11-18 schools which teaches A Levels and other courses for post 16 students) this will have a very grave impact, and some teachers will lose their jobs in many schools.

In summary, many of us welcome the new interest the government is showing in international comparisons, and many also welcome greater autonomy for schools. However, there is concern that an increasingly market-driven approach will disadvantage schools serving less advantaged students and increase social division, and many are also very alarmed at the spending reductions which schools are facing, with the potential threats to the quality of education we can provide.

Ian Bauckham

Chair – ASCL International Committee

Headteacher – Bennett Memorial School, Tunbridge Wells, Kent

Agenda

2011

April 7–10

NAESP convention in Tampa

April 18–20

Conference Slovenian Association Drustvo Ravnatelj

April 29–May 1

NAHT convention in Brighton

May 5–6

FEDADI National Conference in Valencia

May 6

NAHDS 1 day conference: Transition and Timing in Stirling

May 12

ASCL 2nd Annual Business management Conference in Birmingham

May 12

Cyprus Primary School Headteachers Association in Nicosia, Cyprus

August 15–18

ICP convention in Toronto
(registration now open, see advertorial)

September 23–24

ESHA Hungary Regional Conference: “New Skills in Leadership”
in Hungary

October 5

SLV NRW Germany Conference

October 12–14

Fourth German Speaking Region conference in Pécs, Hungary

October 19–22

Comenius Network Conference “Human Resources Management”, León, Spain. To register please visit our website www.leadership-in-education.eu

October 20–21

NAPD Annual Conference in Killarney, County Kerry

October 27–29

ESHA Autumn GA meeting in Belgium

November 3–4

NAHDS Annual Conference: CfE in Action: Leading learning in 21st Century in Dullatur

November 10–12

Convention Norsk Skolelederforbund in Oslo

November 18–19

ASD / Germany Conference in Kassel

December 9

Colloquium organized by ESHA France in Paris: “La gestion des ressources humaines dans les établissements scolaires en Europe”

2012

March 28–29

Nordic School Leader Conference in Gothenburg, Sweden

October 29–31

13th ESHA Biennial Conference in Edinburgh, Scotland

How do you shape avid young readers?

Good reading skills are quintessential to all learning. Norwegian pupils are coming along, but they still have some work left before they reach the desirable level of reading. How do we get there?

BY SOLVEIG HVIDSTEN DAHL,
PRESIDENT, NORWEGIAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL LEADERS

For starters, we should all admit that even the school need helping hands from society at large when it comes to solving this formidable reading challenge our young ones are facing. It is not dangerous to be happy. It is more dangerous to be over-content. Norway can enjoy the fresh PISA-results that show that the reading skills of pupils at class level 10 are improving. Apart from Finland, Norwegian pupil's results break even with the other Nordic countries. Further, they are slightly above average when compared to all of the PISA-countries. This is good news, and an important counter-message to all of those who have painted a solemn and depressive picture of Norwegian schools over the last years. Still, Norwegian pupils have not risen above themselves in terms of reading. They are only back at the same level as they were in year 2000. This proves



The importance of reading

that now is the time to not let go, we must keep a firm emphasis on reading in years to come.

Why is reading 'per se' so important? Research shows that students, who manage to read and interpret different written assignments properly, gain enthusiasm for what they are reading, and thus perform better academically. Reading skills can aptly be described as the key to all knowledge, basically. In learning good reading skills, the experience of joy and personal investment is needed. The enjoyment of reading naturally depends on whether or not you master it. Mastery is primarily created through amounts of practice, and the implementation of so called reading strategies. But this is easier said than done. Too many pupils struggle with how to read properly and numerous defeats at early age sadly create disillusionment and resent towards reading.

The starting point should, the way we see it, be to ignite what we call the “spark of reading” as early as possible. We say that the best teachers should be deployed at the lower levels in primary school. Experiences teachers manage to map out those of the pupils who are in the danger zone, in terms of having a hard time learning to read, and may execute proper counter-measures. As school leaders we are in charge of the overall pedagogic direction of our

learning institutions, and from experience we know that an emphasis on building reading skills at an early level is crucial for academic success.

Still, schools need help to solve this challenge. It has been scientifically proven that parents can make a big difference when it comes to motivating their children. This goes for reading training as well. Parents and schools must not act as counterparts, and quarrel over who has the responsibility for the children’s learning skills, but instead

collaborate. If a broad specter of influential adults advocates the importance and joy of reading, we have come a long way.

Norwegian Association of School Leaders has several suggestions as to how we should put an even bigger emphasis on reading, both in schools and in society at large. Collaboration between the classrooms, homes and other arenas is as mentioned the way to go. Teachers and parents should at every meeting devote time and

This proves that now is the time to not let go, we must keep a firm emphasis on reading in years to come

energy into discussing their young ones reading skills. Tips and advices on how to motivate and teach reading techniques should be exchanged. Parents should be able to ask: “How can I facilitate a good learning-to-read environment for my child”? Equally, schools should be able to ask: “How should we adapt the teaching of reading skills to your child’s fields of interest?” To put it simply, team work is needed.

This points out one area where we believe a great potential for better reading skills lies dormant. We must, as schools and other adults, promote attractive and relevant literature for children and young ones. Age, sex and fields of interests generally determine what people like to read, children included. Access to interesting, varied, and maybe suspenseful literature that manages both to enlighten and amuse the young ones, should be advocated in schools. Who knows? It might be that the restless boy, who starts out with Transformers comics in primary school, might end up reading Tolstoy in high school? It is all about igniting the “spark of reading” It’s all about creating a link between reading and personal fulfillment and – quite frankly – enjoyment.

As a society we should grant authors of children’s literature both more recognition and salaries. A close collaboration between school libraries and the classrooms is also important. Different movements who promote an emphasis on reading should be supported. All of us should once and for all recognize the importance of raising the bar in terms of reading skills among children. Competent teachers, parental engagement and a broad societal collaboration are the keys.

We are not in doubt. Manuals or biographies, novels or science reports, it does not matter what you read, but that you read. The spark must be ignited, and then we take it from there. Within every pupil there’s an avid reader waiting to be set free.

Cork course tackles the critical question:

How do You Deal with Teacher Under-performance?

Legal-island provides lively and informative instruction for Principals. Derek West observed and offers a flavour of the proceedings.

Mr A has had a long tradition of difficulties in exercising proper control in class. The Principal has passed his class on many occasions and hears a lot of noise, shouting and general mayhem. There have been periodic complaints over several years from parents but none has been prepared to follow the formal Complaints Procedure. Certain reliable students have indicated that the teacher is unable to control the class. Approaches from the Principal have met with responses that the students are ill behaved, that the teacher gets a lack of support from the school management. The teacher seems unwilling to accept responsibility for discipline and control problems in his class, even though his pupils do not have similar problems with other teachers.

Do you find anything familiar in this story? Did you ever encounter the like? If you did, how did you cope? On January 26, as I was sitting in



How to keep order in class?

the Silver Springs in Cork, at the legal-island in-service course for school leaders, *Dealing with Teacher Underperformance*, I endured palpitations of recognition, as this scenario chimed with memories of my early days in charge, and blushes of embarrassment as I recalled how pathetically I dealt [or rather dealt not] with my own Mr. A.

A litany of failures

What a litany of failures: fudging the issue, dodging the confrontation or feebly and impotently addressing it – and that was ME! Mr. A trundled on to retirement, not oblivious of the mayhem [indeed he used to get very angry and frequently shouted at the students] but stuck in habits of ineffectual teaching, flash floods of rage and

a kind of debilitating gloom. When I tried to address these failings with him he went into denial and indignation. Away from the classroom he was a charming and cultivated man, but he was simply not cut out for teaching and yet, by the time I became Principal, it was too late for him to contemplate a change of profession. My own search for CPD [this was the early 1990s, when there was not a lot on offer] was driven by the question: “How do you deal with teacher underperformance?” and after lots of one-days and two-days and even a three-year post grad in educational management, I still didn’t have an answer.

Coming close to the answers

Legal-island, combining with NAPD in Cork, came very close to providing some answers – too late for me, but not for the attentive cohort of school Principals at the Silver Springs.

A fully-developed legal procedure

The first part of the answer lies in the fact that there is now a fully-developed legal procedure, which has arisen out of the Education Act [1998], Section 24 [3] that deals with the suspension and dismissal of teachers and which asserts the responsibility of the board of management and the Principal ‘for the quality and effectiveness of education and the management of staff.’

Some THOUGHT-PROVOKING, enlightening sayings:

- *I have sacked teachers.*
- *You have to be sure you’ve ticked all the boxes.*
- *You have to be ready for sleepless nights.*
- *You have to be ready for the isolation.*
- *You can’t deal with everything all the time.*
- *You have to live with the outcome.*
- *You need the stomach to take the process the whole way,*

if need be.

- *The mood of the staff can swing from condemnation to defence.*
- *‘Informal’ is not ‘ad hoc’.*
- *No one should be a judge in their own cause.*
- *Hear the other side.*
- *Evidence loses its value over time.*
- *It’s nothing personal – it’s business. Don’t bring your emotional baggage along.*
- *The [desired] standard is ‘satisfactory’.*
- *The teacher has a professional obligation to engage with the process.*
- *These procedures are without prejudice to the right of the teacher to have recourse to the law to protect his/her employment.*

John Stevenson, author of *The Head’s Survival Guide*, took the participants in masterful fashion through the five stages of this elaborate process. And elaborate it surely is if it is allowed to progress to Stage 3, Stage 4 or Stage 5. The overarching advice is to try and resolve issues early and promptly, if possible at Stage 1, the Informal Stage. [Not that it is informal, because in the interest of fairness, transparency, natural justice and reasonableness the Principal must put the teacher on notice that s/he is embarking on what could be a five-stage journey towards dismissal.]

An effective way of addressing the problem

The legal status of this procedure requires that it is marked by clarity, due process and impartiality, but the marvellous thing about it is that offers the Principal an effective way of addressing the problem and the teacher a possible helping hand, in terms of support, training etc. The PDST [See page 30] offers information about the range of supports that are available.

John Stevenson's presentation was lucid and logically-structured and, as usual, the legal-island resource pack left participants with a wealth of excellent material [the overhead slides, check lists, a pro-forma and a series of short papers on the topics raised on the course]. But the real benefit of the day lay in the interactive participation of the Principals in attendance. There was plenty of time to tease out, through Q & A, the information conveyed by Powerpoint and, even more so, to look at scenarios [the one with Mr. A was the first of four] in groups and in plenary. The questions were analytical, the thinking was sharp, creative and to the point because Principals identified with the experiences and exerted energies in coming up with possible solutions.

Extracts from a glossary

- fairness (n.) there must not be the slightest whiff of prejudice;
- proportionality (n.) ultimately, if there has to be a sanction, it must 'fit the crime'; excess will be undone at appeal;
- paper-trail (n.) essential if a complaint is going to stand up. [There are a number of important side-issues here about record-keeping, personnel files and documentation]
- improvement plan (n) this is the central aspiration, that out of the process will come agreement by teacher and Principal on [i] the perceived deficiencies in professional competence' [ii] the required improvements expected of the teacher and [iii] a deadline for completion. The Principal will be expected to administer this plan, as well as identifying the supports and/or training, internal and external that will be available to the teacher.
- Specific (adj.) This is how it has to be – in laying out the complaint; specific items, specific to the teacher; can also be used as (n.) for example make sure you deal in specifics.
- Natural justice (adj. and n.) The natural sense of what is right and wrong, the governing principle.

Culture and mind-set have to change

Some key principles emerged. The procedures alone are not enough. They have to be part of a radical change of culture and mindset in schools. Teachers have to come to terms with a much more open professional framework and with the whole concept of accountability. 'Every teacher is personally accountable for his/her own behaviour and work performance'. This will entail a willingness to participate in professional evaluation and appraisal, to be open to seeking or receiving help.

The school [the Principal in particular] has a duty to support, train, assist the teacher in trouble, to explore all avenues. But in the event of all informal efforts failing, there is the procedure.

It has to become part of the culture of each school, from the staff-room to the board room. There were suggestions that in-service or staff meetings should be dedicated to ensuring that all teachers are aware of the existence and nature of the procedure and that it has now become an integral part of the teaching profession.

Tensions

There will still be huge tensions around this issue. It was acknowledged in the second presentation of the day, by Antoinette Vahey, Solicitor, that the counter-charge of bullying is often levelled at the Principal [her task was to take the audience through the steps needed to ‘protect yourself from allegations of bullying’]. Her presentation uncovered a legal minefield! Enormous care and caution are required – as well as recourse to professional advice.

BY JOHN STEVENSON

Persistence by the Principal can be interpreted as harassment. Tone of voice may become a minefield. The medical certificate can become a means of not having to face the music. The very language used can spark sensitivities. ‘Informal’ is really quite far removed from ‘informal’ and may have the troubled teacher reaching prematurely for the union representative; a nod is not the same as ‘yes’ [even when it was an admission of a truth, that in one case, was later retracted!].



Being bullied by your principal

But the days of the Principal as Lone Ranger, trying to solve alone the problems of the world, or at least of the school, have come to a timely end. It's now a question of being ready to implement and master the procedures.

The videos

And then there were the videos – five fictionalised versions of a Board meeting with the underperforming teacher. We all became avid TV critics. It wasn't a question of the acting, settings, costumes or lights. We suspect the cast consisted entirely of legal eagles and none of them in the running for an Oscar. But they allowed us all to sharpen our observations, to spot the obvious/deliberate errors and the natural justice process being wildly abused.

The first video was about a kind of kangaroo court, in which the teacher, arriving for what he thought would be 'a chat', was ambushed by a report he hadn't seen, charges of which he was ignorant, prejudices already in place ['No smoke without fire!'] and no facility to be accompanied by a colleague or union rep. This served as a vindication of the need to involve the board of management in a training process to deal with underperformance.

The stages in brief

- The informal stage: Principal advises the teacher orally of concerns; resolution through dialogue, if possible. Teacher is given copy of relevant documentation. Principal explores with teacher underlying cause[s] and advises about available supports. Important: records, due procedure, appropriate evidence, presumption of innocence.
- Initiation of the formal process: Invoked when concerns remain or competence issues are sustained. Principal advises Chair of Board, provides a written report. Teacher receives copy of report and opportunity to provide written response. May lead to Principal defining Improvement Plan for the teacher [discussed at meeting]. Timeframe: three months (minimum) for teacher to rectify the perceived deficiency.
- External Review: Board asks Chief Inspector to a review of teacher's work [This stage has not yet been reached in any school] Documentation, supports, class visits, Inspector's report, teacher responds, board [the employer] decides.
- Hearing: Board, teacher and up to 2 representatives [colleague, union member, NOT a solicitor]. Teacher given 7 days notice and has opportunity to make his/her case. Board makes judgement on basis of evidence. Written notification of outcome.

- Appeal: Teacher has right of appeal against proposed action of the Board. Independent appeal panel, appointed by board; independent Chair from Minister's panel; Reps from Management Body and nominee of union.

Video 2 had the teacher making swift exit amidst his allegations of being bullied by the Principal and claims of work-related stress. There was no offer of adjournment [the board would go ahead in his absence], no-one to accompany him, no clarity.

The very language used can spark sensitivities

Video 3 featured the entrance of a Portia, [but it's not appropriate for a solicitor to be at this 'kind of – internal – forum'], who mount a grand-stand pre-emptive strike at the board.

In Video 4 the Principal was part of the tribunal, thus breaking the principle of impartiality, and the teacher was ambushed by past peccadilloes which were not in the report under review 'but we might as well deal with them now'.

In the final video, the board got all their ducks lined up in a row. Natural justice was at last seen to work!

Apart from livening up the latter part of the afternoon with an element of entertainment, the videos helped to stress the precise and complex nature of this process – if it is to work, the procedure has to be observed and implemented with precise attention to detail.



For further information on courses or how to obtain the resource pack:

Legal-island

email: events@legal-island.ie; www.legal-island.ie;

t: +353 1 4013874

PDST: The Professional Development Service for Teachers [PDST] is the newly-created service, combining teachers from primary and secondary schools in a single integrated support team working regionally under the national Director Paddy Keays. Address: Blackrock Education Centre:

email: bec@blackrockec.ie

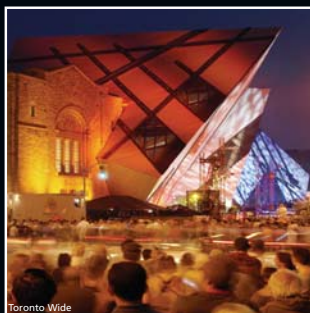
t: +353 1 2365000

f: +353 1 2365050

**TORONTO
CANADA**



**AUGUST
15-18, 2011**



International Confederation of Principals **WORLD CONVENTION**

Leading Student Achievement: An International Odyssey

REGISTER
ONLINE AT
WWW.ICP2011.CA



Individual and system

Some reflections on the accessibility of the Dutch education system.

BY LEO LENSSEN PHD

Introduction

Discussions on the ‘accessibility’ of education, which encompasses how the education system and the individual interrelate and the factors that shape the associated outcomes, need focussing on the interaction between government policy and the individual. The study on which this article is based explores the impact of Dutch educational policy in general and the education system in particular on the development of the individual in recent decades.

The empirical data analysed are distilled from the autobiography of the author, which formed an integral part of the research project. Because of his personal experience as a pupil, student, educator, teacher, headmaster and school administrator education is a dominant feature in the autobiography. Consequently, the domain of education could be termed his natural habitat. Viewed as a reflection of an individual’s life course, the autobiography motivated a study into the impact of context factors on the development of the individual and serves as a case study offering

information and insight into a person's life, including the choices made and subjective feelings. In this respect, the acquisition of knowledge and understanding is more important than developing explanations or finding proof.



Historical context

The historical development of the Dutch education system offers insights into the background of these specific characteristics. Viewed from a historical perspective, the Dutch education system has been both defined by and is the result of the competing socio-political interests of civil society actors and of the government – with ‘ownership’ of the education system at stake. In this ‘arena of education’, the antithesis seems to have become the overriding principle

governing ties in this sector. Government policy and the space it allowed for private initiative resulted in the development of different types of schools, school curricula and high-status schools (which in principle also affirmed one's status). Post-WWII political and socio-economic development enabled the government to tighten its grip on education. The central ideology at the time was that the

government could use education as a means of achieving its social and emancipatory objectives, thus fuelling the country's economic growth at the same time. Both meritocratic principles and the principle of accessibility served as key guiding principles. The policy culminated in the implementation of the 'Secondary Education Act' (Mammoetwet) in 1968 and later the 'Adult and Vocational Education

Act' (Wet educatie en beroepsonderwijs (Web)), the latter which established Regional Training Centres (ROCs), in 1996. These two developments embody 30 years of government education policy rooted in the philosophy of engineering society.

The Dutch education system takes social environment into account in such a way that it cannot be characterised as meritocratic in principle

Findings

According to the results of various relevant studies, social environment in the Netherlands continues to be a key predictor of both academic success and the nature of an individual's subsequent professional career.

The Dutch education system takes social environment into account in such a way that it cannot be characterised as meritocratic in principle. The system is highly stratified and the fundamental and systematic distinction between vocational education and academic education plays a key role. This feature appears to contribute significantly to the predictive value of social environment and the consolidation of social relationships.

The barriers separating social classes appear to be fairly tenacious, fuelled in part by the education system.

Allocation and selection objectives dominate the Dutch education system, as part of which the diploma embodies 'an opportunity for empowerment'. The allocation objective is most apparent in the dominance of the labour market orientation in the education system's structure and design. Each of the system's properties seems to thwart the meritocratic aspects of the system, partly creating circumstances in the Dutch education system in which the principle of accessibility seems to be subordinate to other objectives, including selection and allocation.

Observations

Obviously, no generic causal conclusions can be drawn, as the empirical data of this study is not suitable for this purpose. However, the autobiographical data offers insight into the nature and impact of circumstances that have not been investigated as part of the quantitative studies. In addition, personal perspectives/value orientations were just as important as regards the choices made and the nature of the later professional career. This means that these personal circumstances, as well as socio-cultural background, apparently play a substantial role in the actual course of one's academic career. The positions achieved seem to be influenced by individual characteristics and perspectives at least as much as by, for example, one's social origins.

The manner in which the Dutch government structures the education system more or less reflects government education policy. The government's views and objectives are apparent in the network of schools and other educational provisions, regulations and legislation. This also applies specifically to the accessibility issue. The analysis of characteristics, aims and effects of legislation, taking into account the assessments and outcomes of the law, leads to the

Management and control, efficiency and allocation are recurring elements

observation that the ideological considerations largely defined the development of that legislation, which specifically aimed – in vain – to increase ‘accessibility’ sufficiently. Hence, this study motivates a more detailed look at the issue of which conditions an education system should satisfy in order for it to maximise and optimise accessibility. Its structuring and design should, in any event, take

account specifically of the individual perspectives and ambitions of young and adult users. However, this ‘individual factor’ is often disregarded in legislative implementation strategies.

The concluding observations focus on the system’s characteristics, developed over time, that seem to negatively impact both the system’s performance and the meritocratic objectives. The study reveals that while the issue of accessibility has been a policy consideration during certain phases of the history

of educational policy, other objectives were given higher priority in legislative practice and its implementation at the institutional level. Management and control, efficiency and allocation are recurring elements in this. Moreover, the associated policy instruments in use appear to be lasting features of the system: selection based on social origins and suitability for school, examinations and certification, and a highly stratified education system that distinguishes between academic and vocational education.



These outcomes serve as the basis for the supposition that the structure and design of the Dutch education system primarily serve socio-political interests and are the result of a power struggle among interest groups. The relative underperformance of the education system can potentially be attributed to two key factors: the historically immanent and apparently lasting features of the education system and the disregard for the ‘individual factor’: the choosing and acting individual.

Reconsideration and reevaluation of the principles of the education objectives seem therefore desirable. There should be a shift away from allocation and selection objectives, particularly with a view to preparing people for the labour market – which will prolong existing status relations as a side effect – to the principle of accessibility. Can a system that asserts being a coherent network of educational provisions effectively respond to societal complexities on the one

hand and the perspectives/orientations, ambitions and circumstances of individuals on the other? A reformulation of the principle of accessibility could, based on the outcomes of the study, improve the performance of the system by taking better account of personal circumstances and offering more space for value perspectives/orientations of both students and providers of education services.

From: Lenssen L., Hoe sterk is de eenzame fietser? A research to the relation between individual development and accessibility of the Dutch educational system. (2011, Antwerpen-Apeldoorn)

Résumé Leo Lenssen

Leo Lenssen was born on July 8, 1947 in Utrecht, the Netherlands. After primary and secondary education, he received teacher training and was awarded a full teaching certificate. He worked as a primary school teacher in Rotterdam. Next, he taught Dutch in various levels of secondary education in Utrecht. In this period, he was awarded the secondary school teaching certificates MO-A en MO-B in Dutch, as well as the Master's Degree Dutch Language and Literature.

From 1980, he worked in managerial and executive functions in education. He ended his executive career in August 2004 as president of the Management Board of the ROC ASA (Institute for intermediate vocational training with locations in Amsterdam, Utrecht and Amersfoort).

He has written several publications in (specialist) journals, newspapers and books on (school) leadership, supervision and inspection, funding issues, managerial relations between education and government, educational developments in secondary vocational education and training, the Act on Education and Vocational Training, identity questions, quality assurance, educational innovation and finance.

As of November 1, 2006, he is lecturer (associate professor) Public Entrepreneurship at the InHolland University.

In March 2011 he graduated on a thesis about accessibility in Dutch education.

Contact information

Leo Lenssen PhD

Lindenlaan 61, NL-3737 RC Groenekan

The Netherlands

E-mail: leolenssen@hotmail.com

Tel: + 31 6 300 640 70

www.leolenssen.nl



European School
Heads Association