



esa magazine

May 2011

What is it about sport?



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

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

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The Spanish umbrella association of school managers



Dear ESHA friends and School Heads all over Europe,

This month we've set a new step in the development of ESHA, the new ESHA interactive web portal has launched. The web portal will be an important instrument to connect school leaders in Europe. We will be concentrating on themes as ICT, quality, leadership, working conditions and more. (www.eshamagazine.com)

The web portal consists of a introduction platform, a working area and a community room, you can even add interesting videos to it on the Vimeo platform. As all portals, it will be useless if people are not using it. The web portal will have connection to the ESHA magazine

(www.eshamagazine.com).

We need a lot of people to subscribe to the magazine in order to attract sponsors that will enable us to increase the quality of the magazine and the portal. So please spread the news and subscribe today!

I was last week visiting, as ESHA president, the annual conference of NAHT, the English School Heads Association in Brighton. I've spoken with a lot of delegates, finding that they struggle with the same issues that I hear all over Europe, such as increasing demands on accountability, severe testing, bureaucracy, decline of financial budgets and the question how can we change our approach to kids who differ so much from what we experienced when we were young, etc etc.

Our ministers of education meet often in Brussels to discuss educational issues. We, European Educational Leaders, must have our own platform to provide the policy makers with better solutions than more and more testing and rankings to help us doing our work with great results. The latest Pisa rankings have shaken the policy makers in a lot of countries, making them more and more convinced that we all should focus on the Pisa items as reading, maths and science, because they all want to end up in the top 5 of the world. Without neglecting the importance of good reading, maths and science capacities, there is a lot more that educators do to prepare youngsters for their (unknown) future. How can we, for instance, change our teaching methods to meet the standards of technological developments as the social media, pinging, skype, wikespaces and a lot more that our kids already use? Why don't we allow kids to use mobile phones in the classroom if they use and learn with them throughout the days? How do we integrate the social media in our educational system.

A lot of these issues could be discussed on the new ESHA portal and in the Magazine. If you can contribute, please make yourself known, there are so many good leaders in European education, so many good results and ideas that we must spread them over all ESHA members. And do not worry about the language. Next school year the magazine will be published in the original language with an English version. So, please give us feedback on the Magazine and the portal to help us to make it more and more useful for school leaders in Europe. Let's do it!!! I know we can count on you! ◀

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'D' followed by a horizontal line and a vertical line at the end.

Ton Duif



Avoiding isolation

School leaders are passionate about what they do. Ask any headteacher why they took on the job and they will tell you that they wanted to make a difference. This short piece looks at the importance of avoiding isolation, or a narrow view, if school leaders are to achieve the impact they aspire to.

GREG DEMPSTER

GENERAL SECRETARY AHDS, SCOTLAND

In the words of Richard Elmore, a prominent American academic “privacy of practice leads to isolation, isolation is the enemy of improvement”. Of course, he says a lot more than that and while I have never heard him speak, nor pored over his work, this phrase resonates with me as an obvious truth and one which we ignore at our peril.

Elmore’s focus when saying “isolation is the enemy of improvement” was on classroom teachers. If they do not get out of the classroom from time to time to see what others are doing then they run the risk of becoming ‘frozen in time’ while the rest of the world changes

around them. Irrespective of how good a teacher they are they are unlikely to develop in their practice if they do not invite others into their classrooms, view other practice or discuss approaches with colleagues.

The same is true for promoted teachers. Indeed, many of my head-teacher members talk about the isolation of their role. After all, they are the only head teacher in their school and in many smaller schools they have no management team. Equally, other promoted teachers can also feel isolated by pressure from both sides. It is often described to me as feeling like “jam in a sandwich” – between staff and the headteacher. These feelings of isolation must be overcome if school leaders are to develop, grow and achieve all they can for themselves, their schools and their pupils.

In Scotland we have thirty-two local authorities which have a great deal of control over schools. They each have their own ways of doing things and as a result there are artificial barriers between members in one area and the next. AHDS seeks to help members build links with colleagues from other schools and other parts of Scotland so that they can hear what is happening elsewhere, what problems are common to all schools and how big issues are being tackled elsewhere. Until now we have done this through free face-to-face networking meetings (for people performing the same role or who are in the same type of school) and through targeted training sessions and conferences. Alongside any theme we are addressing we encourage and allow time for networking. We encourage members to Share, Compare, Reflect. We want members to **share** their experience and their problems. We want them to **compare** their situation and approaches with others’ circumstances. We want them to **reflect** on what they do and how they might use what they have learned to improve their own approaches or practice.

Our approaches to helping members with this challenge need to move with the times too. ESHA is working hard to create opportunities for online collaboration between members – through its website, Linked-in, Wiki-Spaces and Vimeo. I will be promoting these tools in Scotland and hope that many of you will do the same in your own countries. It has to be remembered that these are simply tools to make links and to share or exchange ideas – they are not the solution in themselves.

The tricky part will be to build the value of these tools through continued engagement and then to harness them to provide real improvements in the work undertaken by our organisations and in the knowledge and practice of members in all our countries.

We encourage
members to Share,
Compare, Reflect.

Let's challenge isolation – for our organisations and individual members – and improve together. ◀

**TORONTO
CANADA**



Toronto Wide

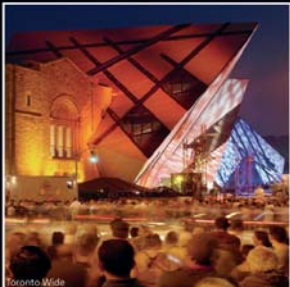


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15-18, 2011**



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Agenda

2011

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 6–7

SURFIRE Pro Rexi 2011 in Turku, Finland

October 12–14

Fourth German Speaking Region conference in Pécs, Hungary

October 20–21

NAPD Annual Conference in Killarney, County Kerry

October 27–29

ESHA Autumn GA meeting in Belgium

November 3

AXIA Convention in Spain

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 23–24

ASCL Annual Conference in Birmingham

March 28–29

Nordic School Leader Conference in Gothenburg, Sweden

October 29–31

13th ESHA Biennial Conference in Edinburgh, Scotland

Further education conference examines access, disability and special needs

The Conference Hall at Clontarf Castle Hotel in Dublin was comfortably crowded on March 23, for the first NAPD Further Education Conference. The focus of the event was on the inclusion of students with disabilities and/or special education needs in Further Education, which is generally provided by second-level schools and caters for age-groups from 16 upwards.

The Adult and FE Committee assembled a stellar line-up of expert speakers, who not only illuminated some shadowy areas of the topic, but prompted a lively and extensive participation from the floor.

MARYLIZ TRANT, NAPD

Mary-Liz Trant

Mary-Liz Trant, Head of the National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education [NAO] traced the steady growth in participation by students with disabilities and the demand for support over the last seven years, starting from a base number of 136 [in 2003-04] and rising steadily to almost 600 [2009-10]. The disability fund, administered through NAO, has provided a range of supports, such as

Assistive Technology [laptops, software], Human Resources [personal and academic supports] and Transport costs.



The largest category of students, in receipt of assistance, are those with Specific Learning Difficulties [51%], but a broad range of physical disabilities is also contained within the group of 597 students who were supported in 2009-10. While students with mental

health issues form a small category [3%], it was predicted by one of the speakers that this is set to grow significantly in the near future. She analysed the gender composition [Male 46%; Female 54%] and age distribution [the 18-23 year-olds are the most numerous – 63% – but there are high numbers under 30 [12%], under 40 [6%] and over [7%]. She broke down the participation of these students in various courses [see diagram]. The most popular areas are ‘services’, health & welfare, humanities and the arts.

The final section of her presentation picked up the issues that have arisen as this sector of students has grown in numbers and in complexity. As a contributor to the discussion pointed out, students in FE with disabilities are students and adults and inclusion is fundamentally treating them the same way as the whole student body. The issues are about curriculum, assessment, pedagogy, quality assurance, human resources, even if the specific needs may call for

specific measures. As Mary-Liz asserted, 'Further education is an intrinsically inclusive system.'

'Further education is an intrinsically inclusive system.'

As a growth area that is relatively new, FE faces challenges. The numbers accessing the Disability Fund are relatively low; they are scattered widely, so there is a lack of critical

mass to allow for the mainstreaming of supports. There are administrative anomalies which discriminate against part-time students and those in PLCs. Mary-Liz called for immediate action. The needs are there now. There's work to be done on setting participation targets [and reaching them], refining eligibility criteria to facilitate part-time students, building local support networks and progression opportunities for all FE students; generating greater recognition of the value and contribution of FE in Ireland.

Jennifer Doran

Jennifer Doran, Head of Research & Development with the National Council for Special Education [NCSE] spoke of the need for research, both at international level and in Ireland, is driven by the legislation [the EPSEN Act of 2004], and the need for 'new information, ideas

and views', for the systematic exploration and evaluation of current and new practices and for the formulation of policy.

The NCSE research framework has four major themes:

- the experiences of children with Special Educational Needs [SEN] and their parents;
- best practice and policies in provision for children with SEN;
- staff and support issues;
- improved data collection.

Jennifer told the audience that much of the focus in NCSE to date had been on primary and secondary levels, rather than on Further Education, but, citing the requirement of the Act that NCSE should 'review generally the provision made for adults with disabilities to avail of higher... and continuing education', she pointed to the increase of research activity since the creation of the research post in 2008, listing the research areas and summarising the activities to date.

A wealth of material is now available through NCSE. Cut-backs have limited the amount of printed reports but everything can be accessed on the website www.ncse.ie

Finally Jennifer drew some parallels between the access issues that affect the primary-to-post-primary stage and those that colour the transition to further and higher education:

- pupil-teacher relationships;
- peer relationships;
- funding/support schemes;
- teaching style, curriculum, learning methods & demands;
- physical and academic environment/method/ demands.

At this stage of the morning some key issues were emerging:

- The transition from secondary school to Further Education is a crucial process
- There's a huge responsibility for those working as Guidance Counsellors
- Given the range of opportunities as well as the specific needs of these students, the guidance counsellor need much more support than they have at present;
- There is a delicate balance that is heightened for people with special needs: the aim of the education is to allow them to function as adults; when do the carers, the significant others, the parents let go?

Dr. Michael Shevlin

Dr. Michael Shevlin from the School, of Education, Trinity College Dublin, described a major study, in which he is engaged, with colleagues from the University of Northampton and NCSE, of Access and Progression Experiences of students with disability and Special Educational Needs moving from compulsory education to Further and Higher Education [FE/HE].

The questions that are being asked:

- What are the access and progression paths?
- What are the roles of the educational institutions, individuals and health services in the preparation of students for this progression?
- What resources and supports are available?
- What are the experiences of the students with SEN is accessing and progressing in Further and Higher Education?
- What re the views of educational and health personnel?
- What are the major issues and barriers?
- What are the best practices?

Dr. Shevlin set the context for this research. He highlighted the

‘significant changes in learning environment, teaching approaches, peer and social networks’ which these students experience. The continuum of support is crucial, but the implication seemed to be that this is not adequate at present – the collaborative links need to be much stronger. He pointed out that, despite the legislative and institutional efforts to accommodate students with SEN, participation rates are still low. For example, he told the audience that in 2007-08 only 4.2% of all new entrants to higher education indicate that they had one or more disabilities. A further challenge lies in the fact that there is a low rate of employment in Ireland of people with disability.

A further challenge lies in the fact that there is a low rate of employment in Ireland of people with disability.

Central to the research are the interviews with stakeholders. From those some important themes have emerged. The preparation for transition to FE/HE from school is critical – when and how this happens, who is involved. This again highlights the high demands being made on guidance counsellor and whether they have the training and the resources to adequately cope with these demands. He summarised the key themes:

- concerns about the lack of viable options available when planning transition;
- schools have a key role in transition planning and co-coordinating support for learners and empowering young people to make decisions about their future education.

- the links and relationships between schools and other professionals such as social workers, and also with further and higher education institutions are key to the transition process.
- there is evidence that careers professional in England may not have appropriate training to work with young people with disabilities
- parents and carers of young people with SEN should be fully involved with the transition process.
- autonomy and empowerment for young people is a key issue in transition.

The school is seen as a critical agent and this process. Dr. Shevlin asserted this by presenting the possibility of 'positive' or 'negative' transition. From the interviews conducted with students, the issues of guidance, subject options and an uneasy relationship with the 'mock' exams emerged. So, too, did the disjuncture in the system – poor communications, linguistic and cultural differences between health sector, school sector, and university sector.

Jacinta Stewart

The final two presentations were linked by being both local [Jacinta Stewart is CEO of City of Dublin Vocational Educational Committee [CDVEC] and Rory O'Sullivan heads up Killester FE College in the same VEC] and visionary. The City of Dublin has established a Disability Support Service [DSS], in collaboration with the National Learning Network, ongoing as a pilot scheme since 2001. It administers a grant in order to cater for 200 students across 8 of the colleges in CDVEC.

There is a commitment to inclusivity: 'When we speak of inclusive education we refer to a mindset and a process of growth that allows all members of the organisation to participate and benefit fully in a working and training environment. This goes to the very heart of what VECs are about'. The Disability Support Service is seen as

part of an inclusive service to all students, which includes guidance counselling and crèche facilities.'

The supports on offer include:

- completing an Educational Needs Assessment with each student;
- preparation and submission of funding applications for arrange of student supports;
- support with study skills and time management;
- recommendation and sampling of a range of examination accommodations.

Two mainstays of the service are a *Principals' Manual* [see www.cdvec.ie under Publications] and a *Study Skills Manual* [also available for downloading form the website.

The *Principals' Manual* is the outcome of 5 years of learning in CDVEC. It is both practical and comprehensive, as a selection of the topics covered indicates: Inclusive admissions policy; disability awareness; educational supports workers [ESW]; confidentiality; ethical guidelines; CPD; legislation; funding & resources; needs identification; funding application procedures;

'We each have our own unique learning style and knowing this is key. By identifying our learning strengths and weaknesses, we can find ways to develop strategies that work for us and avoid



methods which we find challenging.’ This is the principle operating in the *Study Skills Manual*. Chapters cover types of learner, memory, concentration & attention, motivation and study, active learning, language, organisation, essay-writing, examinations.

Jacinta concluded her presentation with two case studies of students with disabilities [one profoundly deaf and the other dyslexic] – how these affected their learning and the steps taken in CDVEC to enable them to learn and succeed.

Rory O’Sullivan

With the limitless energy, Rory O’Sullivan, not only the driving force behind the organisation of the conference, but became a last-minute substitute speaker. He took Killester [KCFE] as his case study. He profiled a college in which 102 students, out a total population of 800, have declared Learning Support Need. The commitment is to inclusive education – “Inclusive education is about improving the quality of learning for all students by dealing with all barriers to accessing, participating and succeeding in learning, whoever experiences them and wherever they are located throughout all aspects of the college – our culture, policies and practices. (Ainscow and Booth, 2002)”

With characteristic bluntness Rory summarised the strategy to achieving inclusion: ‘If students can’t learn from the way we teach then we must teach in a way that students learn!’

The journey towards inclusion is based on total commitment [You ‘cannot be a little inclusive’], a whole-college approach and close attention to the language of inclusion. The term ‘entry requirements’ has been superseded by ‘capacity to successfully participate’. In common with other speakers, Rory highlighted the need to allow this cohort of students to grow in confidence, based on autonomy, [something that is often difficult for people who have been so ‘minded’ by parents, guardians, carers] and to become independent learners.

The focus is moving from teaching to learning – and this requires new emphases – pre-course induction is vital; teaching and assessment methodologies have to be inclusive; ICT facilities are central to the process; as are the supports from the guidance counsellor, the Pastoral care team and the visiting Disability Support Officer. The journey has taken in many strategies – a staff development programme, an ‘inclusive environment’ for students, the focus being on making the institution and the physical building, work for and serve the needs of the students, not the other way round.

With typical acceleration, Rory cited three case studies of individual students with disabilities, who have been supported, and presented figures that show increases in student retention, improved FETAC results and PLC achievements. He ended on an emotional note, quoting

Gerry, a 51-year-old, who graduated from KCFE with a Certificate in 2006. ‘I felt over the moon at achieving something that I never thought I would achieve in my life.’

Rory drew together the elements of education in diagrammatic form [see below]. The concentric circles, with the ‘Student in the Classroom’ at the centre, represent the support systems that are available to those with disabilities or with special educational needs. The College provides for the welfare of the student, the learning supports and the basic inclusivity. These are complemented by

The term ‘entry requirements’ has been superseded by ‘capacity to successfully participate’

the wider systems within the College – Guidance Counselling, links to the family, ICT learning technologies etc. Co-ordinated teams – teaching, care, admissions work under the Principal and the Deputy. Beyond that – moving into the blue-shaded areas – are the services of the CDVEC, national and international bodies. .

Never complacent, Rory O’Sullivan is both critical of shortcomings and pragmatic about what remains to be done. There are many anomalies and inconsistencies to be ironed out. This was a valuable conference in that it enlightened a broad audience and created a platform for discussion of the many pressing issues. ◀

Learning to Learn
and to Love it.
Helping teachers in
building WINGS
for Lifelong Learning
for their students



- ▶ Do you think that motivation and joy to learn are crucial for learning to be successful and meaningful? ▶ Would you like a truly participatory school where all students have the opportunity to make the best of their talents and are prepared for lifelong learning and where enjoying learning is the rule, not the exception coming from the individual effort and creativity of motivated teachers?
- ▶ Would you like to contribute your ideas and experience for the improvement of school in Europe?

Then LLWINGS is for you!

LLWINGS is a European project aimed at promoting a new vision of school as the bridge to lifelong learning and active citizenship, through a focus on joy of learning and learning to learn skills as the lifelong learning wings.

Early development of learning skills and motivation to learn is the key to prevent ESL and ensure engagement in LLL in a universal perspective, but teachers need to be equipped with newly defined competences enabling them to lead this acquisition process, especially by mastering the integration of different learning forms, whose virtuous nesting is deemed a key strategy to enhance meta-learning processes and joy to learn. <http://LLwings.EUproject.org>.

Questions

If you have any questions on this project, please send an email to info@euproject.net



29 - 31 October 2012
Edinburgh



Our outline programme is as follows:

Day 1 (Monday 29 October 2012)

- 8.30am – 9.15am Coffee
- 9.15am – 9.45am Welcome by AHDS President; musical welcome by primary pupils.
- 9.45am – 10 am ESHA President's address
- 10 am **Keynote Speaker No. 1**
- 11am – 11.30am Coffee
- 11.30 am – 1 pm Workshops – Approximately 10 groups working on a range of different education themes which will take the focus of Keynote 1 and reflect on it in the context of education.
- 1 pm – 2pm Lunch
- 2pm – 3.30pm Workshops – repeat of above
- 3.30pm Coffee
- Free time to explore Edinburgh
- 6.30pm Reception in Scottish Parliament. First Minister to host the reception which would conclude with wine in the Garden Lobby.
- Evening Free time.

Day 2 (Tuesday 30 October 2012)

- 9am – 10 am **Keynote Speaker No. 2**
- 10am – 10.30am Coffee
- 10.30am – 11.30am Workshops ; arrangements similar to Monday
- 11.40am – 12.40pm Workshops – repeat of above
- 1.30pm – 5pm School visits:
Nursery; Primary; Secondary; ASN(e.g. Donaldson School for the Deaf or Royal Blind School); Independent; College (e.g. Telford College)
- 7.15 pm Gala Dinner (reserved the refurbished section of The Museum of Scotland – to include tours of any key exhibitions). Welcome by piper(s). Soft musical entertainment during meal. Between courses, demonstration of 2 Scottish country dances, Highland Fling, Sword Dancing, etc

Day 3 (Wednesday 31 October 2012)

- 9am – 10am **Keynote Speaker No. 3**
- 10am – 10.30am Coffee
- 10.30am – 12noon Facilitated networking to help delegates build contacts with others from similar schools in other countries. In our bid, we said:
“Central to the Conference would be the message that we must all learn from one another if we are to improve our

practice – we would use the Conference to promote long lasting individual connections between ESHA members.”

For this session, members would meet in bands determined by school size and within sectors to start to build links.

12 noon
1pm

Closing ceremony
Lunch

Keynote speakers

To attract high numbers to the conference we need to offer the opportunity to hear from very high quality speakers of international renown. We believe that this is crucial if the conference is to be a success.

Our working theme is 'connecting leadership' with the idea that sessions should focus on leadership, motivation, change management and address the point that we need to learn from each other to be the best we can be.

We are trying to secure conference sponsorship before we approach our keynote speakers as our choice of speakers will be closely related to our budget – we want to produce an excellent conference but we also want to ensure that the conference fee is affordable for delegates.

What has been done to date?

- Venue booked – The Edinburgh International Conference Centre (EICC)
- Relationships built with the EICC and Edinburgh Conference Bureau to support development of the conference.
- Letters/commitment of support from the Scottish Government, The Provost of Edinburgh, the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland, the Centre for Educational Leadership in Edinburgh University and others.
- Costs explored.
- Draft programme developed for consideration by conference committee drawn from AHDS National Council.
- Domain names purchased for dedicated website.
- Website content being developed with the aim of launching the website in late Spring 2011.
- Dedicated travel portal complete and ready to go live when our website does.
- Dedicated accommodation booking service in place and ready to start accepting bookings when our website goes live.
- A range of venues have offered quotes for our Gala Dinner.
- Advanced discussions with a single sponsor (unfortunately they have pulled out and we have to start the process again).

Greg Dempster
March 2011

What is it about sport?

While Physical Education [PE] is a mandatory part of the school curriculum in Ireland, the vast bulk of activity on the playing fields is extra-curricular and is driven by a huge force of volunteer teachers, who give up long hours after class. Derek West, renowned couch-potato opens the discussion of what sport means to the young people in Ireland, and Pat Rossiter gives a sense of how it works on the ground.



DEREK WEST

What an opportune time to be talking about sport! Ireland is still basking in the glory of that sweet cricket victory over England, feeling good about ourselves, some of the Celtic confidence restored, proud to be punching above our weight, even if we petered out as the series went on!

Hungry for Heroes

And we thrive on this feeling when it occurs in rugby, or football, or cycling, mountaineering, sailing, whatever... We've been hungry for heroes stretching back to the mythical warrior, Cuchulainn, and up to the generations of athletes, golfers, jockeys, cyclists, hockey players, show-jumpers and all the mighty men and women of our native games – Hurling, Camogie and football.

The mighty contribution...

But I am fascinated by the part that school plays in all of this, turning out the sportsmen and women, who become the stars and the champions, as well as the recreational players. There's probably no other area in Irish education where the links between schooldays and adult life are so strong, right across the country.

Unsung and unpaid

There are all the teacher-coaches who give so much of their time, skill and enthusiasm to make it happen, warming the cockles of the parents' hearts, winning the praise and gratitude [sometimes] of Principals. For the most part, they are unsung and unpaid.

Defining the ethos

Apart from Physical Education [PE], this vast area of activity is barely acknowledged in the 'official' curriculum and yet sport is at the core of almost every school, as what binds the community together [joy in victory; commiseration in defeat], what defines its



ethos and its culture. While the student-trek to and from school [like snail, unwillingly] will often be marked by ‘letting the side down’ [ties at half-mast, holes in jumpers, protruding shirt-tails, written-over school bags – all that subversive resistance to uniformity], when it comes to the semi-final the school colours, the school crests will be embraced with total enthusiasm, manifesting themselves in banners, scarves, flags, face-painting, brandished defiantly in the faces of the particular foe-of-the-day, a 99% attendance vociferously ‘keeping the side up’! It’s a heady, brilliant outpouring of ardour – even the geeks and nerds and couch-potatoes can be guaranteed to be moved to participation – an amazing phenomenon.

Ruddy faces and muddy knees

Of course there is the spin-off of *Mens Sana in Corpore Sano*. We want our young people to be fit and healthy; we don’t want them laying down the rolls of fat that promise premature demise. [Obesity has become a major health problem in this country] It’s so rewarding to see the ruddy faces and muddy knees of homeward-bound kids who’ve exerted every muscle on the playing field – rather than the pasty faces of the furtive smokers, those skulkers in corners! The health card is an important one – have fun, keep fit – not a lesson that their elders are always good at following!

Health warning

Then there’s the healthy competition – ‘Play up! Play up! And play the game!’ – all that Henry Newbolt sense of fairness, commitment, sportsmanship. The bloody noses, the ankles in plaster are badges of honour and the stoic acceptance of defeat can be as valuable as the magnanimity in victory. But is it all that healthy? Some of today’s sports heroes, the role models, offer some dubious practices on and off the pitch. Can we separate Tiger Woods’s tricks,

Wayne Rooney's wanderings, the antics of Ashley Cole from their prowess as players? Can we protect our young people from the ubiquity of performance-enhancing pills and potions? How can we prevent the dirty tricks [that still persist, even under the vigilance of the TV camera] and the defiance of the umpire's authority from trickling down to the five-a-side in the school hall?

Some of the fanaticism which, at worst, leads to pitched battles between rival supporters on the streets near the stadium on match day, can permeate the sidelines of the minor cup match, when the red-faced dads [and sometimes the blazing-eyed mums] urge their offspring to 'Take him/her out!!!'

Credit where credit is due

The sports club has been a great focal point in many communities. The work of the Gaelic Athletic Association [the national organisation for football, hurling, camogie] in building an infrastructure that binds counties and provinces, towns and villages, is a wonderful example to other sporting organisations. The inclination towards sport is born on the playing fields of Edenderry and Mayfield, Castlebar and Clonakilty and schools must take most of the credit for providing these nursery slopes.

School Principals have to take credit for keeping PE on the agenda and on the timetable, hanging in there in a crowded curriculum – no easy task – waging an endless battle of wits with the draft-dodgers who hide behind colds, flu, periods, allergies to water, AstroTurf, hockey balls and nuts.

Fight for facilities

The fight, too, for facilities goes on and on. Enterprising individuals have pushed for the AstroTurf playing surface and the sports dome [developing all kinds of entrepreneurial skills to net the government

grants], while others, less successful, are still indignant [‘what sports hall?’] and some watch in despair as their facilities deteriorate towards demolition, due to age and lack of maintenance funding. It’s certainly not a level playing field.

Danger on the ‘dark side’

Apart from the 5-a-side, there’s the dark side of sport. The recent exposure in print and in the courts of abusive predators of the swimming world turned a spotlight on the issue of children’s safety. The changing rooms may be more secure places now – though it’s hard to see how that can be totally guaranteed – but the anxiety and need for vigilance has certainly tarnished the innocence of old. You don’t put your arm around the inconsolable defender who let the vital goal in; you don’t drop those last two kids home from the training session; you can’t check the showers to see if they’re killing each other or simply not washing. You keep the door ajar at all times: what a shame that it’s come to this.

Heart and lungs, arms & legs!

Yet the drive and enthusiasm persists. At my age I get puffed running for the bus, but I have golden memories from half a century ago [God!] of the feel of my spiked runners on the grass track as I gave heart and lungs, arms and legs, to sprinting for the tape. What a glorious exhilaration! What release! What a sense of well-being. We owe it to our children to make that kind of experience accessible, a meaningful part of a balanced curriculum. School is where it does happen and can happen. ◀

It's Not about Trophies

Pat Rossiter, principal of christain brothers school, New Ross, co. Wexford describes a 33-year love affair with schools rugby.

It just so happens that I have been coaching rugby at schools level for thirty-three years. I was never particularly good at the playing the game (a useful referee maybe) but in my former school I helped to build the game from scratch. There we produced four teams annually, and after thirteen years we had some success in terms of winning titles. But clearly it wasn't about winning trophies in the early days, and indeed from the nineties onwards it was still a love of the game and a worthwhile pastime which kept us going.

Never mentioned There is a side to coaching which is never mentioned in books and manuals. Only one team can ever win on any given day. You will

lose and you had better accept that fact. There are days after losses in school matches where the knock-on absenteeism at training becomes hard to take. You always show enthusiasm to those who show up, though you may not have the opportunity to remedy the problems of the previous match because the guys who need to address those issues don't show up. They don't even tell you.

From a personal standpoint I now know that the reason I coached rugby in school was to offer a pastime to the boys and to let them express themselves after a day in the classroom. We undertook tours to England, Wales, France, Belgium and the Netherlands and to Canada. We had good times. I can easily say that the guys who played derived great fun and benefitted hugely in a character-building way. Some incredible personalities and leaders came to the fore.

One of the knock-on effects of our success eventually was the



recognition the school gained in rugby circles in Leinster [one of the four provinces in Ireland] and further afield. Clubs came knocking and some players were recognised at a higher level.

The backing of Boards Without the backing of the school Board of Management and the three Principals I had the pleasure to work with, this would all have been a waste of time. They were 100% behind everything we did. They saw the benefits. We had amazing parental support. A culture evolved, so much so that nowadays past students, now back as key teachers in the school, head up the rugby and keep the tradition going.

I was single then, so training after school four days a week, games on a Wednesday and Saturday were easily accommodated.

Back to Alma Mater Nine years ago I moved to CBS Secondary New Ross, my old *alma mater*. We currently field two teams and there is enthusiasm and no little talent. We are a much smaller school and therefore haven't got the strength in depth to compete at a high level. We train once, after school on Monday for an hour, and play games on Fridays.

The boys love it. I am now Principal. I coach the under-fourteen team. They have a lot of potential. I still derive the same satisfaction as over the past thirty odd years. I am no less enthusiastic, and the well of inspiration is the boys. However the pressure of work means that I don't have the same mental time to prepare sessions, and I have to make sure that I have no other business when matches are scheduled. Trying to balance all this is difficult.

Therapeutic training Having said all of the above there is nothing more therapeutic than arriving up to training on a Monday, after an action-packed, busy day and my head full of tasks which still have to be done before bedtime, seeing the boys stream into our playing fields, a

half mile from the school, and see the enthusiasm for training on their faces. You get to see so many different aspects of their personalities. My colleagues are excellent in accommodating the boys when they are away. There is a small group of actively supporting parents. Our playing kit is sponsored by a local past pupil, transport to away games is covered in our school budget. We, like all active rugby schools, get a grant from the Leinster Branch of the Irish Rugby Football Union [IRFU] every year which we use to pay for a physiotherapist for games. I am not suitably qualified to coach and also cater for injuries. This way I feel far more relaxed about that aspect of the game. Our physio, Ray, is superb. Earlier this year I told the senior team that I wasn't enough up to speed to take them on to a different level. In truth I had not been giving it all they deserved. The senior team is now coached by a superb coach.

Chance to wear the jersey and aim high We cannot underestimate the value of sport to schools. I am not talking about all-conquering, massively high-profile teams. They serve a purpose as well I suppose. In our school, of one hundred and seventy boys and eighty girls, we try to let everyone who wants to play and wear the jersey do so and aim for a high standard. We definitely succeed in that. In fact the boys who would not have a pedigree previously make massive gains physically and socially.

I guess that a supportive management, colleagues and buckets of energy are all essential ingredients. The benefits to the individuals and to the school community are enormous. We endeavour to produce good role models and certainly sport, outside of class time, gives us a chance to develop the other aspects of a holistic education. For me personally it is a very enriching experience.

You certainly cannot take any of the above for granted. ◀

Why we need to talk!

It is very evident that there is widespread interest in what other countries do in their Education systems. The very existence of ESHA well illustrates the point, as does the fact that you are reading this as part of an international education magazine.



JOHN FAIRHURST, 2011 PRESIDENT ASCL
UK ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL AND COLLEGE
LEADERS

Education, as so many other things, is being globalized. Of course, we all enjoy responsibility for our own schools but we are all under the same pressure to keep abreast with a world that is changing so quickly.

At school level, the quest to keep abreast is an exciting one: technological innovation has changed so much – not least, the attitudes and expectations of the children we teach. However, the technology offers so many new, different and exciting ways to convey our message that inevitably we are all beginning to alter our methods of instructing (and testing) the young.

The same technology is giving us the capacity to explore more readily the developments and experiments in other countries. It is very good news indeed that ESHA is now capitalizing on the possibilities of sustaining an open dialogue of School Leaders across the EU. We can all learn from each other and knowing that something – something possibly too radical for the conventional thinkers at home – has been tried, tested and seen to work elsewhere can significantly empower us when we argue for that policy change in our own school or education systems.

However, there is another development, which is not necessarily as positive. For in this brave new world, it appears that economic and political power are drifting away from us ... to the East. Our politicians are understandably anxious not to let that happen and most of them see education as the key. Further, they have the same new tools of international communication... and PISA scores to sharpen their sense of urgency.

Thus Barack Obama in his 2011 'State of the Nation' address spend a sizeable proportion of that speech on education. He called the

The right-of-centre Government in the UK is famously quoting Sweden's "Free Schools" and America's "Charter Schools" as justification for its own (ideologically driven) privatization agenda.

publication of the PISA results for the United States (which were mediocre, but not disastrous) as a "sputnik moment" that justified his declared need to shake up America's schools. It was, he said, imperative so "... that the next Google or the next Microsoft is an American venture."

The right-of-centre Government in the UK is arguing on very similar lines – and is famously quoting Sweden's "Free Schools" and America's "Charter Schools" as justification for its own (ideologically driven) privatization agenda. In England (Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland run their own systems) schools are being encouraged to opt out of Local Authority control, and to become "Academies" financed (rather favourably) by public money, but essentially independent in all other respects.

Yet, the truth is that the Swedes themselves do not believe that the "Free Schools" have made much, if any, positive difference. In many cases, they came about because remote rural communities were faced with Municipal "rationalization" that would, on economic

grounds, close the small village school and bus the children elsewhere. So the “Save our school!” campaign took on responsibility for running the school itself, outside of Municipal control, but with a budget drawn from public funds. This was a pragmatic solution to a political problem and little to do with educational standards.

But, if anything, or so my Swedish colleagues tell me, standards in the “Free Schools” are not that good. 10% have closed through falling numbers and poor results and some are saying that Sweden’s decline in its PISA rankings are a direct consequence of the failure of the “Free School” sector! (If any Swedish reader feels differently – please say so in an article in this ESHA Magazine. For because that is the central purpose of this magazine – to promote dialogue and understanding across national frontiers!)

In the United States, an extensive academic study led by Stanford University explored the outcomes in over 5 000 Charter Schools and came to similar conclusions: a high percentage of failure (12,5% – higher than in Sweden) and results that were no better than average and, in many cases, actually weaker.

Yet our politicians, in England, are ignoring this evidence and simply pressing ahead. Some truths are just too inconvenient to acknowledge!

Which brings me back to ESHA and its importance. For if we do not ourselves know what is being tried elsewhere, if we do not have our own networks and contacts to explore what is really happening in other parts of the world, then we will be defenceless when our political masters try to manipulate us and the public opinion around us. ◀

Conditions and models of school leadership in Europe

MANUEL PERELLÓ AND JAUME PRAT

In Spain school leadership has always been very different from the whole Europe. Schools are ruled by teachers, chosen by teachers, formally by the school board, where teachers, parents, students and other staff represented each section. So being a head teacher has always been a temporary job for a teacher, who hardly ever had some chances to deal with leading a school. Obviously we need a big change and this is the reason that moves FEDADi to make a survey about the conditions and models of school leadership in Europe. We want to show to our politicians how it runs in Europe and try to make them understand that they have to change the laws.

It would be very pleased if you could answer the following questions in the following days. You can answer the questions separately or by groups of questions.

1 About head teachers recruitment

- Which are the requirements to be hired as a head teacher?
- Have head teachers been teachers before, how long for?
- Is it compulsory to have been deputies or assistants to become head teachers?
- Is it pre-service training compulsory to be recruited?

2 About recruitment procedures

- Who chooses the head teacher?
- Is it done through an objective process?
- Does the choice depend on the curriculum of the head teacher?
Is it compulsory to write a project about the school?

3 About training

- Which are the different kinds of training: pre-service, in-service.
How long are they? Which are the main subjects dealt with?
- What kind of organization is in charge of head teachers training?

4 About the leadership model

- Could you describe it in a few words

5 About the school management structure. How are the responsibilities distributed?

- Which are the management positions within the school?
- Are management positions chosen by the head teacher?
- What about middle management positions: coordinators of a level, head of department
- About teachers
- Can a head teacher hire and fire teachers?
- Can a head teacher decide about salaries?
- Can a head teacher assess teachers?

Please send the answers to mperellobeau@gmail.com ◀

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