

# Researching Education Bulletin

ISSUE 2

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“Educators should provide children the opportunity to knead knowledge...”  
(Paper on Page 20)



Welcome to the second issue SERA's, Researching Education Bulletin. This publication aims to provide you with current and concise articles regarding research within and relating to education in Scotland. In this issue we have drawn from the work of doctoral research students, University led research, and a partnership of both University and Local Authority enquiry. Notably, we have included commentary and analysis from two students undertaking their initial teacher education, one undergraduate, the other, postgraduate.

Common themes emerge across the five papers in this issue. Our first two, consider personalization of services and intervention. We would welcome further commentary and research from you in future publications, regarding your contextualization of support for children and families, across all educational contexts in Scotland.

The third and fourth paper in this issue, present competing dilemmas found within professional student placements. Mark Gillespie challenges us to consider the place of compassion within the student nursing experience; followed by an opinion article regarding the student teacher experience of behavior management. We would be interested in your perspective as to whether this clash of priorities and values is a common student experience.

Our final paper, by Gwen Morris, presents a critical analysis of the use and purpose of ICT within primary education. We would be interested to hear about further research and analysis regarding educational use of ICT, as an emerging field of enquiry and practice.

We hope you enjoy this issue,

Jennifer Ann Lang Kirkwood, on behalf of The Editorial Team

## Contents

- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| Page 2   | Early Intervention & the Parent Professional Relationship, By Hazel Whitters  |
| Page 6   | School Non-Attendance & Emotional Wellbeing Amongst a sample of Clackmannanshire Pupils: Summary Report, By Susanne Litts, Whitney Barret & Lesley Taylor |
| Page 14  | Do Academic Assessments Deter Compassion in Student Nurses?, By Mark Gillespie  |
| Paper 17 | Behaviour Management Dilemma of the Student Teacher: Some Reflections, By Colin Kerr  |
| Page 20  | Kneading Knowledge: An Analysis of How Knowledge Can be Created and Built Through the Use of ICT, By Gwen Morris  |

“Pupils highlighted external as opposed to within school factors as having the biggest influence on their decision to not attend...” (Paper on page 6)



# Early Intervention and Parent-Professional Relationships

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The purpose of this research inquiry was an investigation into the relationships between parents and professionals within the context of early intervention. The research focused upon the perceptions of service-users, as female primary care-givers, and service-providers, as multi-disciplinary members of an integrated team. The relationship of the parent-professional dyad was considered as a medium to implement early interventional strategies, and anecdotal evidence from parents and professionals indicated an inconsistency in implementation, which related to the use of inter-personal skills. This study sought to explore this issue by commencing an investigation at the microsystem level, and using practice to inform research.

## CALL FOR PAPERS

Call for papers for the upcoming SERA Conference (Wednesday 21 - Friday 23 November, 2012).

Presenters are invited to discuss recent research and educational research issues, related to the overarching theme of "Improving Education through Research."

Paper, poster, symposium, and workshop proposals are invited from:

- . Professional and early career researchers
- . Practitioners (e.g. teachers & management, SQH candidates, & Chartered Teachers)
- . Other Stakeholder Groups

Abstract proposals of around 250 words should be submitted by 1 May, 2012 using our online form at: [www.sera.ac.uk](http://www.sera.ac.uk)



## **Introduction**

Relationships are integral to human development. Early intervention involves implementation of strategies which incite a period of learning and development, and the relationship between a professional and parent is regarded as a medium to transfer emotional, informational and instrumental support (Heath 2004, 351-316, 319-322). The relationship may also be regarded as a motivational force to prompt a sensitive phase of development (Bowlby 1979, 13, 29-30, 41-45, 84-87, 124-127, 134, 154-155, 165-174, 181-186) and support a parent's progression from a status of involvement to engagement with services.

The study sought to explore the influences upon these relationships by commencing an investigation at the microsystem. The research question was:

"How do parents and professionals perceive the influences on relationships within the context of early intervention?"

### ***The study: context and research design***

The research study took place within a family centre in an inner city area of Scotland, which had a culture of poverty and low attainment, and the researcher was a practitioner in this setting. The sample groups were families,

termed *vulnerable* due to issues of addiction, mental health, and child protection, and an integrated team of professionals from the disciplines of health, education or social work. Semi-structured interviews were used to generate data from each sample, by capitalising on the use of verbal interaction as a common medium to the 30 participants within this setting.

### ***Findings and discussion***

Initial data analysis revealed five themes which supported categorisation of potential influences, and this article discusses the theme of culture. Cultural communications were placed in a category of emergent codes, and patterns within the use of terms were identified.

Parents and professionals favoured the term *chat* within the word combinations, and linked it to timescales. The participants' use of lingo from the local dialect imposed a sense of informality to the interactions. One parental participant gave information on a particular point of the chronosystem which she had identified as conducive to participation in this discourse with a professional. The participant emphasised that this type of verbal interaction could not be accessed within any other environments which encompassed her lifestyle.

## Early Intervention and Parent-Professional Relationships (continued...)

It seems that parents and professionals applied specific word groups to instigate a time for accessing emotional, informational or instrumental support. The family centre was observed to be a busy setting in which initial interactions between service-users and providers occurred in public, and it may be that a means of communication had been established which respected a parent's right to privacy.

Tomasello (2006, 261-275, 279-287) differentiated between learned communication, which becomes entrenched within a particular society, and personally constructed communications. The two sample sets gave responses, which appeared to demonstrate learned cultural communications.

Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006, 796-798, 800, 810-815) described the use of these types of techniques as accessing personal characteristics which encompassed a feature of demand. The authors (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) stated that the demand component of the verbal interaction was used to induce a response from a second party therefore it may be the case that parents applied this feature in the quest for support.

### Conclusion

The findings by Shotter (1993, 26-33, 36-41, 51-54, 111, 120-123, 179-182) on conversational analysis revealed that utterances have meaning within a particular genre, and a primary function of speech was suggested by Shotter (1993) as being an appointment or confirmation of a role.

It seems that service-users and providers within this context had developed a system of communication which adhered to the culture of the local community, and allocated roles and responsibilities (Handy, 1976) by inciting the advent of support within early intervention.

A personalised service is an inherent requirement for the social service sector in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Scottish Government 2008, 16-17, 29). The significance of culture has been recognised (British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, 2007) as the promotion of value within service implementation, therefore the potential impact from culture upon the parent-professional dyad of early intervention should be given due consideration.



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How does this compare to the context within which you work?

Would you consider the use of a similar questionnaire to determine student needs?

Would such a University/Local Authority partnership work in your context?

Please consider sharing your work and research with the REB audience in our next issue. Submission details can be found on page 17.

# School Non-Attendance and Emotional Well Being Amongst a Sample of Clackmannanshire Pupils: A Summary Report

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## Summary

The purpose of the research was to identify possible reasons for non - attendance amongst a sample of (off site educated )pupils as well as a more widespread investigation into emotional well being amongst pupils with a view to inform service delivery. A small-scale pilot study was carried out in an off site educational provision for secondary pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Pupils were administered an online Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) along with a questionnaire to assess reasons for non - attendance, based largely on Kearney (1996). The use of the online survey tool [Viewpoint](#) provided a creative way to investigate these themes as well as providing specific methodological advantages, such as the opportunity to target pupils with school phobia.

Pupils highlighted external as opposed to within school factors as having the biggest influence on their decision to not attend. Furthermore off - site provision pupils had better SDQ scores than may be expected in this population, suggesting pupils feel supported and secure within this setting.

## Background

### Non-attendance

School non-attendance and refusal is a persistent and concerning problem for Scotland's education system. The total rate of absence in Scotland during session 2009 - 2010 was 8.7% and specifically within Clackmannanshire the rate of absence was 8.0% (Scottish Government Statistics, 2011). Although this is a very slight improvement on previous years, the current figures are equivalent to every secondary school pupil in the area being absent for 30.4 half days out of a school session of 380 half

days. Non - attendance has lifelong implications for children and young people. Individuals who do not attend school are likely to experience more negative consequences later in life such as poorer outcomes in relationships, employment opportunities, economic difficulties and forms of anti - social behaviour (Kearney and Bensaheb 2006). Despite the significant impact of non - attendance for young people and society more generally, there is very little empirical work investigating possible interventions.

Traditionally pupils with attendance problems were thought to be displaying two *forms* of behaviour; truancy, which was associated with behavioural problems and school phobia, which was associated with emotional problems and separation disorder (Lauchlan, 2003). However, this distinction has been found to be unhelpful as children who do not attend school will often display characteristics of both truancy and school phobia (Berg et al. 1993). As such, each pupil has to be assessed on an individual basis. The focus of the study changed from the behaviour the child was displaying, to the underlying reason that was influencing the decision to not attend school.

Although the literature on this topic is rather inconclusive, there are key concepts that nearly all researchers cite as being important to any successful non-attendance intervention. These are early intervention, support from parents, support from school, a multi-disciplinary approach and intervention programmes individual to each pupil. However, before interventions can be decided upon, a thorough assessment of the pupil must be conducted. Several assessment tools have been developed, the most researched of these tools being the School Refusal Assessment Scale (SRAS - R) developed by Kearney and Silverman (2001) to assess the strength of the four functions of non-attendance:

- **Function 1: Avoidance of stimuli that provoke general negative activity**

This suggests the child is refusing to go to school because of a stimulus for example the school bus. This stimulus may lead to the child experiencing physical symptoms such as nausea, headaches, behaviours such as poor sleeping patterns and emotional behaviours such as shaking and crying.

### Paper Continued...

#### **Function 2: Avoidance of aversive social or evaluative situations at school**

A child may avoid going to school because of more specific negative situations such as exams or if they feel they do not have any friends. In this situation the child may show similar feelings and behaviours as those in function 1.

#### **Function 3: Attention seeking behaviour i.e. to seek attention or to reduce the feeling of separation anxiety**

Here the children may have temper tantrums or exaggerate symptoms of illness to induce sympathy from adults.

#### **Function 4: Pursuit of tangible reinforcement outside of school**

Common reinforcements include watching TV, sleeping late, visiting friends, shopping, using / abusing drugs or alcohol.

#### Computer aided surveys

The availability of online survey software puts Clackmannanshire Council in the advantageous position of being able to use a more creative and engaging method of assessing the reasons for non-attendance. For a generation of young people, technology, particularly the Internet, has assumed a substantial stake in their social and educational lives. Viewpoint ACASI (Audio Computer Assisted Self - Interviewing) is a web-based method developed specifically to engage children and youth and help them to communicate their views, opinions and feelings. Several studies have found that Viewpoint is a useful tool to access sensitive information from young people (Morgan and Fraser, 2009) and that young



#### **PAGE 14** **Do Academic Assessments Deter Compassion in Student Nurses?**

Are there common dilemmas and experiences amongst professional students on placement?

What enquiry have you engaged with during your practice?

Consider sharing your work and research with the REB audience in our next issue. Details for submission can be found on page 17.

(continued)

people rate their experience of using Viewpoint highly (Davies and Morgan, 2005). Clackmannanshire Council Psychologists have previously conducted a pilot study to investigate the effectiveness of Viewpoint in obtaining young people's views (Barrett, Dent and Rodgers, 2011). The results from this study suggest that young people may be more likely to complete sensitive questionnaires using Viewpoint and that motivation to do so is greater than for traditional paper and pencil questionnaires.

In particular, there are several advantages to using Viewpoint software when assessing non-attendance. Children and young people are often reluctant to provide their opinions on certain topics and the topic of non-attendance is one that may normally be subject to self-report bias as children may be fearful of getting into trouble. The anonymity of a computer assessment rather than one administered by a teacher or other professional, may well reduce youngsters' reluctance to answer honestly.

Viewpoint is also useful in cases where the young person has language difficulties, as questions and answers are read out to the pupils by default. Young people wear

headphones whilst using Viewpoint and if the sound is distracting them they can turn down the sound but keep the headphones on. This means that children will not feel embarrassed if they do not understand what to do as the help provided for them is discrete.

Another advantage of Viewpoint is that it is designed to be engaging for young people through the use of graphics and other interactive features. Young people can play around with the layout of the questionnaires so it suits them. Young people can also take game breaks whilst they are completing questionnaires, which can go some way to relieve the boredom young people may experience when filling out traditional paper and pencil questionnaires (Barrett, Dent and Rodgers 2011). Further, there is no time limit on completing the questionnaire meaning participants can work at their own pace. Viewpoint is also useful for assessing youngsters who do not attend school at all, as questionnaires can be delivered via the internet, thus minimising disruption to their routine and without the introduction of any new adults.

Study Aims The aims of this study were:

- to identify the possible reasons for non - attendance in a sample of secondary aged Clackmannanshire pupils
- to provide a clear picture of the emotional well being of a sample of secondary aged Clackmannanshire pupils
- to act as a pilot study for a possible more widespread investigation into attendance and emotional well-being amongst all secondary aged Clackmannanshire pupils

## **Methodology**

### *Participants*

The participants in this study were all pupils in the Clackmannanshire (THE OFF-SITE EDUCATION PROVISION). THE OFF-SITE EDUCATION PROVISION supports secondary school age children (11-18 years) who have difficulties coping in mainstream education due to a range of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Twenty-seven out of a possible thirty nine pupils completed the questionnaire. Eighteen of the respondents were male and nine were female. Respondents ranged in age from 13 to 16 years. The majority (19) of respondents were on full-time placements in THE OFF-SITE EDUCATION PROVISION with six on the alternative curriculum programme and two others receiving home tuition.

### *Procedure*

Parents of pupils completing the survey were sent information and consent forms a week before the study took place. The research student arranged an appropriate time with the off-site education provision Head Teacher to go into classrooms to run the questionnaires for pupils on the computers. All pupils were given an information sheet and consent form which included their log-in details, they accessed the web page themselves and were then encouraged to navigate their way through the questionnaire independently. The pupils who received home tuition were asked to complete the survey by the teacher who visits them at home. These pupils were given the same information sheets as the pupils in the classrooms and their teachers were given a set of instructions to help the pupil complete the survey. The pupils then accessed and completed the questionnaires via the internet



## Questionnaire

Ten attendance questions were added to the exiting Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ: Goodman et al., 1998) from the Viewpoint library. The questionnaire ranged from specific attendance questions to more general emotional and behavioural questions including topics such as bullying and social inclusion. The attendance questionnaire was developed by drawing on a number of themes reoccurring in the literature such as parental engagement, flexible curriculum and the four functions of non - attendance developed by Kearney and Silverman (1990). The attendance questions were designed to allow explicit and straightforward assessment of the factors influencing school refusal and a multiple choice or scale format was used to address most of the areas that commonly create reasons for a child to refuse to go to school. There were also several open ended questions which acted as an opportunity for the pupils to mention anything not already covered.

The questionnaire was piloted on a convenience sample basis by two teenage boys who provided feedback regarding the wording of questions and the options available as answers. As a result, the questions were slightly revised.

The final questions included in the study and the reason for their inclusion are provided in Appendix 1 in the extended paper available on the SERA website. The detailed results/tables are also available in this longer version.-

## Discussion

More than half the young people surveyed admitted not attending school when they were meant to, and the majority said that their parents were aware this was happening. However, very few cited within school factors such as not getting on with their peers or feeling scared or sad, as reasons for their non-attendance. The only within-school factors that featured were being able to make lessons less boring and being able to choose what classes they had and when they went to them, or having access to more practical subjects. These are fairly standard, general, 'catch all' complaints all pupils level against school.

The majority of the sample cited wanting to be with their parent / carer instead as a major factor or external reinforcers such as seeing friends, watching TV etc as the main reasons for their non-attendance. It would appear, therefore, that the young people within the off-site education provision

who took part in the study feel safe and secure within their school environment and the reasons for their non-attendance are related to separation anxiety/ family issues and the lure of tangible reinforcers rather than school per se. These results would appear to provide further support that the environment within the off-site education provision is perceived by its pupils as safe and supportive. Barriers to attendance would appear to be related to family dynamics and the community environment the youngsters are exposed to.

In addition, the young people surveyed reported fewer emotional and behavioural difficulties on the SDQ than might have been expected in such a population. On the SDQ, some difficulties with meeting new people, being in new situations and with controlling anger were noted. This suggests, perhaps, that whilst these youngsters have their emotional and behavioural needs well met within the school environment of the off-site education provision and they feel secure within this setting, they feel they struggle when they are outwith this setting. This would probably be most true in relation to their anger control. Future resources should perhaps be targeted at transitions and helping the young people to generalise the skills they have learned beyond their immediate environment.

It would be interesting to compare the responses of the youngsters' in the sample with their mainstream peers to see if mainstream pupils similarly indicate family and external factors rather than school factors as the reasons for their non-attendance. It would also be interesting to compare the emotional well-being profiles of mainstream peers with these found in this sample to see if mainstream pupils felt similarly supported and secure within their school setting.

Of course, it may well be that the off-site education provision youngsters' may have shown a different profile on entry to off-site provision. It is recommended, therefore, that ongoing assessment is made of all the off-site education provision pupils in terms of their emotional well-being in order to track and monitor their progress and needs both at entry and exit from the off-site education provision, as well as throughout their placement. In conclusion, the results of this survey suggest that the off-site education provision should continue to support pupils in the way that they do as pupils' general emotional well-being is far better than might be expected. The results also suggest that they feel safe and secure in school and that mainly family and external factors impact on their non-attendance. Future resources, therefore, might be most usefully targeted at addressing the family dynamics and external environmental issues that do impact on these pupils' attendance and emotional well-being.

Comparison studies of mainstream pupils would allow future resources to be similarly targeted within the wider school population.

### Addendum

This study has since been replicated in a mainstream secondary as a comparison and these results will be published separately at a later date.

A longer version of this paper is available at: [www.sera.ac.uk](http://www.sera.ac.uk) or [http://www.sera.ac.uk/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=120&Item](http://www.sera.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=120&Item)



## Do Academic Assessments Deter Compassion in Student Nurses?

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Recent reports by the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PAHSO) (2011) and the Department of Health (DoH) (2008) have criticised NHS care provided to vulnerable client groups such as older adults and people who have learning disabilities. These reports recognised failings that included an absence of basic nursing care, a finding that fits with evidence that student nurses recognise limited educational value in being placed in areas that provide care to such client groups (Henderson et al 2008). This study sought to identify the educational value student nurses attribute to clinical placements with these client groups, and whether they recognised any educational influences driving this. A mixed methods approach found that students saw significant merit in working with these clients; however they felt that academic assignment requirements influenced them in prioritising the development of technological skills, with vulnerable client groups seen as failing to offer the opportunity to develop such skills.



Though compassion is an attribute strongly associated with the practice of nursing (Van der Cingel 2009), recent reports have identified significant failures in meeting basic human needs by nurses caring for older adults (PAHSO 2011) and those who have learning disabilities (DoH 2008). These findings fit with studies investigating the educational development of nursing students, which have regularly shown an emphasis of technological care over what could be termed compassionate care (DeKeyser Ganz et al 2006). Projected changes in demographics and a reorganisation of healthcare delivery also mean that student nurses are likely to be increasingly placed in environments focusing on the care of these vulnerable client groups (Gillespie and McLaren 2010). There is a need therefore to investigate the educational preparation of student nurses in relation to the development of compassion.

This study therefore incorporated three stages of data collection which included two surveys and a focus group, allowing statistical and qualitative review of attitudes and opinions of one student cohort and exploring trends amongst them. As the initial survey was done during the students' induction week and the repeated study completed following 5 months of clinical placement and classroom theory this also enabled identification of academic and clinical influence on the students' opinions. The survey responses then informed the semi structured questions put to a focus group, an iterative process akin to the Grounded Theory approach (Holloway and Todres 2010).

Study results suggest that student nurses enter their training with significant preconceptions around the image they hold about nursing and the role they expect to undertake, with 21% more of them in the induction week rating areas associated with technological care (medicine, surgery and intensive care) as more important to their training than those focusing care on vulnerable client groups such as those identified above. By the second survey more than a third of respondents rated these non-acute areas lower than very important, and there was a statistically significant strengthening in their desire not to work with older adults suggesting influences occurring during the initial period of their training are reinforcing these views.

Analysis of the focus group discussion identified four main themes around the differences student nurses attributed to the learning opportunities offered by each of these clinical specialisms. These themes being support, compassion, opportunity and challenge. Students really valued the high level of mentor **support** that they associated with the non-acute areas, as they recognised that a more relaxed pace allowed mentors' time to spend with them, they also felt that this slower pace enabled them to practice **compassion** through the application of softer, more humane interactions. However, despite such benefits these attributes were seen as less prestigious to the **opportunity** acute care areas offered in the range of, often technological skills students were exposed to, and equally these areas also offered a depth of **challenge** around the application of technological skills unmatched by non-acute areas.

Influences seen to encourage such views included faculty staff and programme design, with students recognising the influence of academic assignments on shaping their learning behaviour, citing a main academic assignment crossing this phase of their programme, involving the practice and application



of technological nursing skills, and unintentionally emphasising the importance of technological skills development over compassion.

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# The Behaviour Management Dilemma of the Student Teacher: Some Reflections

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In a training or education situation where a skill is being passed onto another by modelling, whether it is in a school, factory or any environment, there needs to be a clear understanding of what the aim of the training is. In schools, traditionally, the aim of schooling has been to pass exams. In general, the media and parents make quality judgements about 'good' and 'bad' schools based on exam passes so it could be argued that the aim of teacher education is to produce teachers proficient in guiding a class through to the goal of passing exams, and so is this the overall aim of teacher education?

With the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence came the four capacities – “successful learner, confident individual, responsible citizen and effective contributor”. Focusing on the 2<sup>nd</sup> capacity, within the “responsibilities of all” section of CfE, there are “health and wellbeing across learning” outcomes which aim to ensure “children and young people should feel happy, safe, respected and included in the school”. With the launch of GIRFEC the importance of the health and wellbeing of children and young people in schools was further emphasized. So perhaps we can also add ensuring the health and wellbeing of those in schools to the aims of teacher education? The most precise answer as to what the aims of a student teacher going through teacher education and going into schools to observe and train are, lie in GTCS' Standard for Initial Teacher Education, or Benchmarks, as they are the Benchmarks against which evidence has to be supplied in order to be passed as fit to teach.

## Our next issue of REB...

The SERA bulletin, Researching Education, is now calling for concise reports on research, collaborations or initiatives as well as discussion topics and issues.

**For a research report**, provide a brief outline (no more than 150 words) stating the purpose of your research, nature of the information you sought and one or two of the key findings. You then have up to 600 words to give a summary of your research. Please provide references where appropriate.

**Opinion piece/ issues etc**, between 500-1000 words is allowed. Provide your name and email address

Items should be saved in word and send electronically to [Lorna.Hamilton@ed.ac.uk](mailto:Lorna.Hamilton@ed.ac.uk)

There are two I would like to highlight. “2.2.2. Manage pupil behaviour fairly, sensitively and consistently by the use of appropriate rewards and sanctions” and, “3.1 Value and demonstrate a commitment to social justice, inclusion and protecting and caring for children.” Within the expanded version of the Benchmarks I have from my teacher education institution, 2.2.2. includes “demonstrate that they can justify the approach which they take to managing pupils” and “role-model positive behaviour and communication from which pupils can learn”. Within the expanded version of 3.1., the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1991, the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, the Standards in Scotland’s schools Act etc 2000 and the Additional Support for Learning Act 2005 are all referenced.

“Good” and “bad” teachers are subjective assessments but exam passes are the statistics by which snap judgements about schools are made. The use of corporal punishment was effectively banned in 1987 but up until then it was seen as a justifiable means of achieving educational aims. So what happens when a teacher employs means which they see as necessary to reach the end of the exam passes but run counter to 2.2.2 and 3.1? Do ends justify any means? And what is the position of the student teacher? If the training and background of the student teacher contains little or as is possible, no work on behaviour management and child psychology, then can judgements be made by the student teacher about what is good and not so good to model? Depending on the background and choice of courses

during teacher education: two students observing a class being taught with potentially inappropriate behaviour management techniques could therefore have very differing views on the same observed class and whether the behaviour management was inappropriate and so proceed along their professional development in two very different ways – one modelling the observed behaviour and the other, questioning the appropriateness of what they have observed, choosing to model a different form of behaviour. Added to this, the observing teacher who is providing feedback on the student teacher’s teaching of their own class may, perhaps expect a behaviour management technique that largely models their own? In this example, what is the second student teacher to do in such a situation?

While I have mentioned the aims of teacher education, the aim of the student teacher is to become a qualified teacher but does this depend on the new teacher replicating the experienced teacher’s approach to behaviour? It is possible then for the student teacher, in certain circumstances, to be caught in a dilemma of whether to copy the model they see to achieve their goal, or to challenge what they see, in line with the Benchmarks and their own views.

If one observes and then undertakes teaching practice in a class where there are behaviour management techniques that seem counter to 2.2.2 and 3.1 but the teacher is regarded as a “good” teacher based on the exam results of their students, then what is the student teacher to think and how are they to manage behaviour in their practice teaching sessions? And if there are behaviour management techniques that are directly in opposition to 2.2.2 and 3.1 then what is

the student teacher to think and do they have any responsibility to discuss with the teacher or other party about what they interpret as inappropriate behaviour management techniques? Are they to interpret whether what they are observing is counter to, for instance, the Additional Support for Learning Act 2005 and if so, is the student receiving any guidance education to help make this judgement? Is the student in a position to interpret what is and isn't appropriate? Whilst it is apparent by summative assessment techniques to decide whether a teacher is fulfilling the knowledge and application side of their teaching and so the student would be in a strong position to discuss the merits of a style that is leading to a "failing" class, it is less easy to assess in relation to 2.2.2 and 3.1. Not only does it depend on the experiences and education of the student teacher but it also depends on their and other parties' fundamental views of children and young people. And at the core of these and other judgements that require to be made there is the interpretation of the very wording of 2.2.2. What may seem fair to one person may not seem fair to another and turning full circle back to how schools are judged, when exam results are still where snap judgements are made, do any means justify the end?

A final thought is on the well worn "good and bad school" classification that is made by student teachers on being told their placement location. My experience, through talking to colleagues and reading social media, is that judgements are made by the majority on the easily obtained internet statistic of number of passes at a certain age at a certain level - the higher the percentage, the "better" the school, regardless of and before any knowledge is gathered about whether the principles behind 2.2.2 and 3.1 are being modelled in classrooms.

## For our next issue of REB...

The SERA bulletin, *Researching Education*, is now calling for concise reports on research, collaborations or initiatives as well as discussion topics and issues.

**For a research report**, *provide a brief outline (no more than 150 words) stating the purpose of your research, nature of the information you sought and one or two of the key findings. You then have up to 600 words to give a summary of your research. Please provide references where appropriate.*

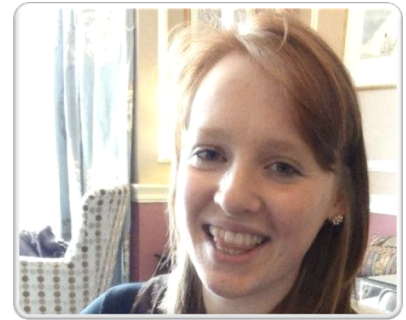
**Opinion piece/ issues etc**, *between 500-1000 words is allowed. Provide your name and email address*

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# Kneading Knowledge: An Analysis of How Knowledge Can be Created and Built Through the Use of ICT

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There is an on-going debate about the role of technology in education. The Curriculum for Excellence (Scottish Government 2009, p.303) describes Information and Communications Technology (ICT) as modes of technology used to 'transmit, store, create, display, share or exchange information'. ICT therefore functions beyond individual usage as it allows communities to create and build knowledge together. Knowledge Forum Version 4.8 (Learning in Motion, 2008) is one such tool created around a theory of knowledge building, bringing together groups of people who can promote a 'knowledge-based economy' whilst incorporating 'social cohesion'. This article will critically analyse how this software, Knowledge Forum, can be used within teaching and learning. First, it will explore the theory of knowledge building. This will then be applied to Knowledge Forum and then more specifically, to the online learning communities which are created.

The founders of Knowledge Forum, Scardamalia and Bereiter (2010, p.1), found that '*knowledge building as a theoretical, pedagogical, and technological innovation focuses on the 21<sup>st</sup> century need to work creatively with knowledge.*' This idea of building knowledge, they state, is closely linked with a business's concept of 'knowledge capital' (Scardamalia and Bereiter 2010, p.2), and is based on the idea that knowledge can be created and built upon through a community of learners.



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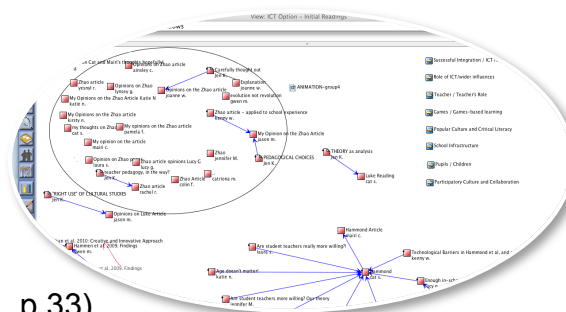
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This theory or knowledge building contrasts with the traditional 'banking education' described by Freire (1972, p.46). He states that these banking educators perceive pupils as objects in learning and that the teachers role is to 'fill' the pupils, or 'containers' with knowledge which may be meaningless (Freire 1972 p.45). Knowledge Forum, which I will examine in more detail below, does not illustrate the 'banking' theory but is based on knowledge building, showing how important it is for learners to engage and learn from one another across many different contexts or topics.

Knowledge Forum is an online workspace developed from 'Computer-Supported Intentional Learning Environments (CSIL)' founded by Scardamalia and Bereiter (Zhang, et al. 2007, p.121). Learners log in to an online workspace and can begin with a blank 'Knowledge Base' (Learning in Motion, n.d.a) and can share and build information, visually. Pupils can play with their ideas, improving the community's knowledge, archiving it and creating an environment whereby conflict is created between ideas. Usability is not an issue for someone who can read, write and has developed the necessary skills to articulate their ideas and thoughts. However, for young children there may be barrier for

them if they cannot yet access and create text. It can seem disorganized and messy but through support and discussion of how to organise these structures of knowledge, can be shaped by the learners.

Analysing its ability to engage pupils is a challenging prospect. Knowledge Forum (Learning in Motion, n.d.b) state, from their research, that this inquiry based resource encourages all pupils to interact with learning, thus emphasising the ability for engagement. Research has shown that pupils can find technology boring and disengaging when used in the classroom (Hammon, et al., 2009; Wikan, Molster, Faugli and Hope, 2010). Consequently, the sole use of Knowledge Forum is likely to be unsuccessful. It needs to be used in ways that do not become repetitive and therefore uninteresting.



Jenkins  
(2009, p.33)

highlights a problem within education. He states that schools are training pupils to become 'autonomous problem solvers' but adults in workplaces are increasingly expected to work and solve problem in teams. Knowledge Forum is a

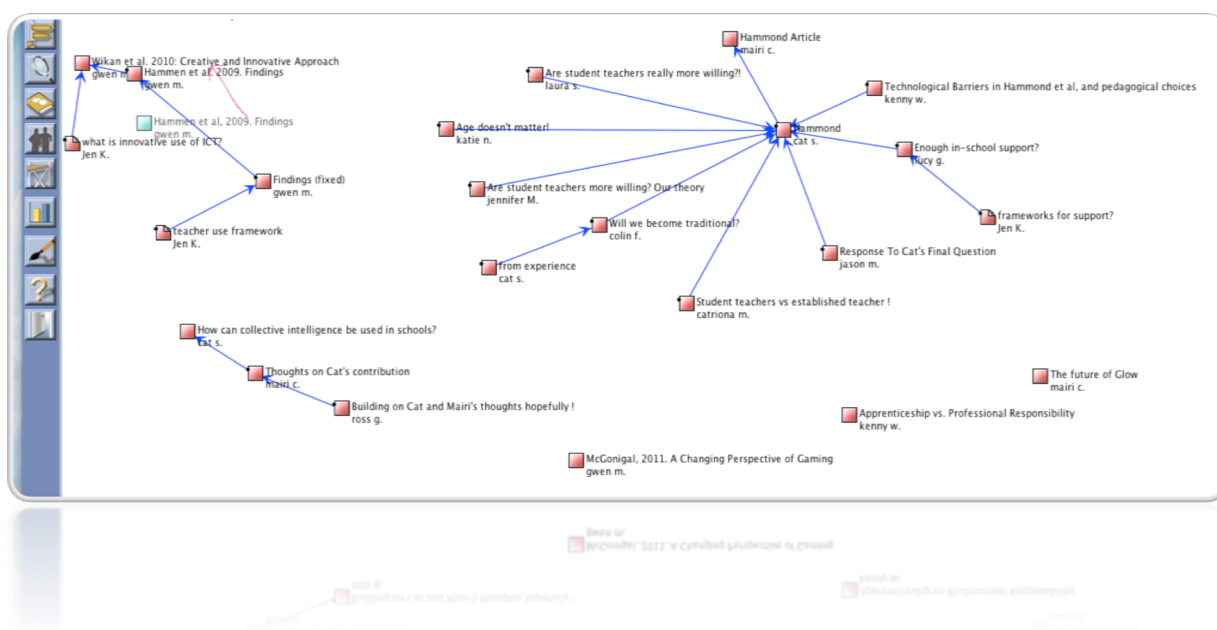
resource which promotes collaborative learning whereby communities can work together online, sharing knowledge which then belongs to the whole group (Roth 1999, p.16). Knowledge Forum allows for knowledge building to happen within an environment which could be called a 'joint problem space' (Rochelle and Teassley, 1995 cited in Luckin, 2010, p.39), supporting collaborative thinking.

Online communities are being built extensively all around the world, even more so with the introduction of social networking resources (Booth 2010, p.42). Within these cyber communities people are convening with others who they might not meet in other circumstances, therefore conflicting opinions are expected. John Dewey, the educational philosopher, claims that "miniature communities" can be created with pupils in order to practise democracy whereby children are entitled to actively articulate social concerns (Kahne, Middaugh and Evans 2009, p.8). This social production of information can be referred to as '*collective intelligence*' (Jenkins 2009, p.67) which can be a powerful process of knowledge building (Jenkins 2006). Knowledge Forum does not address the pupils in the class who might be too shy to contribute to discussions. Their role within this learning community is that of a 'lurker' (Jenkins 2006, p.26). Lurkers make up to 90% of various online communities (Katz, 1998 and Mason, 1999 cited in Preece, Nonnecke and Andrews 2004) and describe those who 'observe a setting but [do not] contribute in any noticeable way' (Dennen 2008, p.1624). Knowledge Forum's 'miniature [community]' (Kahne, Middaugh and Evans 2009, p.8) is just as powerful as Jenkin's (2006, p.1) 'spoiling' community. Jenkins (2006, p.27) identifies this 'spoiling' community as a group of individuals who come together to use one another's understandings to solve bigger problems through a 'collective intelligence'. Similarly, Knowledge Forum helps individuals to learn, illustrating the power in which a group of learners can have through collaboration, knowledge building together. However there should be an emphasis of the role of the teacher. Teachers cannot expect all pupils to fairly contribute to the knowledge building online, but they can have an important role in encouraging students to access and use the information but also in having a role within knowledge constructing discussions offline.

After exploring the different learning theories and applying them to Knowledge Forum it is clear that Knowledge Forum has proven to be a successful tool to facilitate the knowledge building process.



There is a need to expand and encourage teachers to follow the current Scottish curriculum. Just as there is 'Health and Wellbeing across learning', 'Literacy across learning' and 'Numeracy across learning' (Scottish Government 2009, p.6) teachers should be utilizing ICT across a range of learning contexts in order to enhance and expand learning for all. Although it will take time for all teachers to be fully integrating ICT into their classrooms, it also asks for teachers to adopt a new role, modelling and carefully observing activity online and offline. In conclusion, educators should provide opportunities for pupils to explore and expand their understandings, kneading knowledge, using ICT to enhance and allow this process to be effective and to flourish.



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