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ABSTRACT

Laerplan 97 (L97) is a program of curriculum reform recently introduced in Norway. The reform lowers the age of compulsory school attendance from age 7 to age 6 and provides a compulsory curriculum framework. The framework requires the subject-centered curriculum to be delivered thematically for periods of time dependent on the pupils' age while suggesting that teachers plan and teach with the local environment and resources in mind. This combination of compulsion and choice presents Norwegian primary teachers with a number of challenges. The document offers a summary of the research undertaken between 1997 and 1999 which looked at the issue of combining these prescriptive subject-centered and active-learning child-centered approaches. Data for the study came from semi-structured interviews with teachers and representatives of the Ministry of Education, questionnaire responses from participant and non-participant teachers, and observations made at eight primary schools. Findings reveal inherent contradictions in L97 including the following: (1) teachers seem to be the main reference point but children have to become independent; (2) the curriculum has to be integrated for some periods but timetables are planned in 45 minute slots which break between each period; and (3) teachers talk about the importance of respecting children but children do not seem to be educationally challenged. Suggestions are given for teacher responsibility in confronting and resolving these contradictions. Contains 11 references. (MM)

Curriculum Change in Norway - a Consideration from Cultural, Political and Personal Perspectives..

by Pat Broadhead

Curriculum change in Norway - a consideration from cultural, political and personal perspectives.

Paper presented at American Educational Research Association Conference, Montreal, April 1999

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(This paper offers a summary of research undertaken over a 14 month period from late 1997 until early 1999. A final period of data collection will be undertaken in June 1999)

Introduction

Laerplan 97 (L97) has recently been introduced in Norway. This is a substantial programme of curriculum reforms. This paper is concerned with aspects of primary education. In relation to this, the reform lowered the age of compulsory school attendance from seven years to six years. More importantly for this paper, it has brought in a compulsory curriculum framework which is more detailed and prescriptive than that of its predecessor, M87 (Monsterplan). However, it still seeks to give teachers sufficient flexibility to plan and teach with the local environment and resources in mind. It is an interesting combination of compulsion and choice that is presenting Norwegian primary teachers with a number of challenges and is encouraging some educationalists to resist its impetus. There seem to be some inherent contradictions, some of which this paper seeks to illustrate. A key focus within this paper is the debate about starting from the child or starting from the subject. Study of curriculum implementation in Norway may contribute in that, as is stated above, L97 is detailed and prescriptive. However, within the legislation, the teacher is required to deliver the curriculum thematically for periods of time dependent on the pupils' age. Also, the construct of active learning in integral to the delivery of the new curriculum. Thematic approaches and active-learning approaches have been traditionally associated with an incorporation of children's interests into curriculum delivery. A subject-specific curriculum has been associated with the delivery of knowledge. In seeking to combine the two, the Norwegian initiative makes an interesting study.

Some cultural issues.

In seeking to make comparative studies of simultaneous curriculum development in a range of countries, it seems important to attempt to convey the characteristics of individual countries and seek, at some level, to assess their influences on particular patterns or aspects of curriculum development in that country. These characteristics are of course as closely aligned with historical influences as they are with present-day circumstances. Gundem and Karseth (1998) draw attention to these historical influences within the Norwegian

curriculum in their consideration of curriculum structure and national identity. It is difficult to avoid superficiality in an endeavour to encapsulate a nation's culture in a relatively few words. Nevertheless, in seeking to move forward, some sense of time and place needs to be conveyed and some assessment of its potential impact attempted.

Although geographically vast, Norway is a population of only four million people (approximately). The majority of Norwegians live in the south of the country where the climate is milder. Within the country as a whole, there is a drift from north to south and within the north, from rural communities to rapidly growing towns. Many of the island-based communities are disappearing or are comprised substantially of ageing populations. These drifts are a matter of concern for the Government, partly because of associated economic factors but also because increased urbanisation is associated with a loss of cultural identity. Considerable educational funds are invested in maintaining very small schools in rural areas with a full complement of staff and resources. As one ex-Government respondent contributing to this research remarked:

> "We are a small country, on the outskirts of Europe. A tiny fraction of the world's population lives here and if we don't take care of what is our legacy . . . no-one else is going to do it . . . if we want to preserve what you would call ecological variation in the world, we have to take part . . ."

Gundem and Karseth (1998) draw attention to what they see an underlying assumption within the new curriculum, that personal identity develops through a common base of knowledge, cultures and values "through socialisation into a national state identity". The implications for the role of the teacher, they maintain, are that the teacher becomes an agent implementing on behalf of the state rather than an interpreter of the curriculum who matches experiences to needs and interests.

Economically, Norway remains in a strong position. There are no strongly evident manifestations of poverty even within the poorer districts of the capital city Oslo. Speaking as a visitor who has worked and spent time there, I have seen no indications of any social class structure. Social services and health provision reflect the principles and practices of an egalitarian society. Solstad (1997) outlines the "equalising measures" (p3) which have reduced social and economic differences yet maintains that "equity will always be at risk" (p284). Refugee populations are growing; Norwegians speak, for the first time, of seeing begging in the capital city. Ball (1998) cites Carter and O' Neil's work (1995) who draw attention to a 'new orthodoxy', a shift in the relationship between politics, government and

education in post-industrialised countries. One aspect of this is a trend towards improving national economics by tightening the connection between schooling, employment, productivity and trade. Another concerns the attainment of more direct control over curriculum content and assessment.

Norway is a very environmentally conscious country; the Norwegians live their lives outdoors for much of the time. The new curriculum reflects this in many ways. For the youngest children, the outdoors is seen as their classroom. Children have frequent breaks from their classwork for outdoor recreation. As a visitor to schools in Winter, I have noticed that children spend a great deal of time putting on and taking off their layers of clothes. The school day is considerably shorter than that of an English school pupil.

The Church continues to have a strong political and moral influence within society as a whole and within the educational sector. The sale of alcohol is forbidden except in state regulated shops. The Ministry concerned with educational affairs is now The Norwegian Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs. In 1994, it was The Royal Ministry of Church, Education and Research. The first section of the Core Curriculum document published in 1994, and the foundation for L97 is concerned with 'The Spiritual Human Being' and begins:

> "Education shall be based on fundamental Christian and humanistic values. It should uphold and renew our cultural heritage to provide perspective and guidance for the future".

Solstad (1997) describes this general part as "describe(ing) the kind of human beings which schools should try to produce" (p279). This core document is seen by some as a significant break with tradition in curriculum development in Norway. Gundem and Sivesind (1998) remark that from the 1960s until present day, the different curriculum guidelines have kept the same format structure and language. However, the new document offers a "completely new layout with extensive use of pictures, less 'expert' language and even a return to old-fashioned virtuous terminology such as words like 'diligence'". Gundem et al go on to list some dilemmas and paradoxes inherent within this new core. They conclude in their paper that that "it seems to be the case" that curriculum work is being de-professionalised "in favour of political and administrative interests".

In considering curriculum trends prior to L97, Svingby (1995) has pointed out:

> "In the long struggle between the centre and the periphery in Norway, the curriculum thus favours the centre. It also favours the subject specialist of the upper and academic parts of the school system to the child-centred teachers of the lower levels" (p218)

There would seem then to be a shift taking place with the implementation of L97. The requirement for thematic approaches and active learning are potentially likely to force a deeper consideration of approaches to learning, of teaching methods.

Thematic approaches and active learning; related legislation.

The following offers selected extracts from the curriculum document "Principles and Guidelines for Basic School Education". By way of further explanation, **thematic work** is depicted as an integration of curricular subjects (two or more), a way of organising the curriculum. **Project work** is a specific method where pupils define a problem and carry out a targeted piece of work in consultation with the teacher resulting in a product. Project work can be either single subject or inter-disciplinary.

◊ **Thematic structuring of contents.**

When structuring contents by themes, focal points from several subjects are brought together in meaningful units (themes). Organisation by themes must observe the targets in subject curricula. The co-ordination also comprises local material. Thematic structuring shall take into account;

- the experiences, interests and understanding of the pupils
- connections with the local environment
- topicality

In primary school, thematic organisation and play should be viewed together so as to permit them to reinforce and supplement each other. Thematic organisation of the contents in higher grades should enable pupils to see the connections between subjects and between the different sectors of the individual subjects

♦ **Thematically organised contents and project work**

The elementary stage - The focus on thematically organised teaching means that at least 60% of elementary school time should be earmarked for it, especially during the first two years of school.

The intermediate stage - time must be allowed for both subject and inter-disciplinary teaching. While subjects are given greater prominence, thematically organised approaches must be maintained and pupils must also experience project work. At least 30% of the time available each year must be devoted to theme and project work.

Lower secondary - at least 20% of the periods in each year must be devoted to theme and project work.

◊ **Co-operation and active learning**

Pupils are to be trained in democratic procedures and develop social skills, in independent work and in co-operation with other pupils and with adults in the school community. They will co-operate in teams and take part in joint planning, execution, problem solving and evaluation of performances.

The subject curricula stress the aim of educating active and independent pupils who have acquired new knowledge by doing exploring and actively trying things out.

These principles have extensive pedagogical implications for Norwegian teachers. It is important to point out that teaching in Norwegian primary schools is dominated by the use of textbooks. The schools invest considerable sums of money in purchasing one book per child within subject areas. These principles also have implications for pupil management, more directly so in relation to co-operation and active learning.

The study

The study draws on data from two formal sources and one informal source. The formal sources are:

Semi-structured interviews: the curriculum is divided into subjects. The primary subjects are Arts and Crafts, Christianity and other religions and philosophies, Domestic Science, English, Nature and Environmental Studies (this includes science and technology), Norwegian, Mathematics, Music, Physical Education and Social Studies (History, Geography and Society). The leaders of each of the subject working groups were interviewed and, where possible, some group members were also interviewed. Interviews lasted about one hour, were

taped and were conducted in English. Two representatives from the Ministry of Education were also interviewed although they would not allow the interview to be taped. They stipulated that they could speak only about facts and not offer opinions. The then Minister of Education (no longer a politician) was interviewed.

Questionnaires: were completed by two groups of primary teachers. The author is currently engaged with a colleague from the University of Leeds providing a series of workshops over a two year period. The course, described as the Nordland Project, is designed to support the implementation of the new curriculum with primary teachers. Teachers participating in the Nordland Project were given a questionnaire at the beginning of the course (February 1997) The questionnaire was also distributed to non-participants. The responses, from 54 teachers (29 Project participants, 25 non-participants) have been combined for analysis and presentation. Discussion in this paper focusses on analysis of three questions (question one was originally two questions but subsequently combined because of considerable overlap in responses):

1. What will be the two biggest challenges arising for you and your school from L97?
2. In what ways do you think your role as a teacher will change?
3. How will pupils benefit from L97?

These were open questions with respondents asked to identify three responses to each question entirely of their own choosing. Categories of responses were determined and any common responses collated. In each case, the most commonly cited responses are presented in this paper.

The informal source is **observations** made and recorded during visits to eight schools in Northern Norway The visits were written up in a largely impressionistic way but with some examples of observed action and interaction also included. Conversations with one group of primary teachers were recorded.

In this paper, the data are examined in relation to the exploration of thematic approaches and active learning. To have legislated for such approaches is a significant step in curriculum development.

Interviewing - some political dimensions revealed.

Broader aspects of the establishment and work of the curriculum working groups are the subject of another, related paper (Broadhead, in preparation). Gundem and Sivesend (1998) have also detailed their establishment and working practices. This paper is not so much concerned with these broader issues as it is with the specifics relating to thematic approaches and active learning. Consequently it is upon related extracts that this paper focusses.

In a context of thematic approaches, one group leader remarked: "If you are looking into the older curriculum it has always written about themes, written about projects and so on but it has never been implemented in a higher degree". The ex Minister of Education in reflecting on thematic approaches acknowledged: "It's something that really requires careful thinking when designing the curriculum and intensive work in the school if you are to succeed at this. And a major thing, that you view the introduction of a new curriculum as a learning process in itself. That it is not finished, it is not something that is thought through, the implications aren't there, what type of project work you should do. It's not something which is given." These comments reflect two aspects. Firstly, that despite a well-established principle, actual practice had never really reflected the principle. The respondents from the Ministry of Education confirmed this as a commonly held viewpoint. Secondly, that changing teachers' practices will require more than documentation and legislation; it has to be implemented at a level of personal understanding by the practitioners. Alexander (1992) has illustrated how imposing new practices on teachers without a parallel exploration and assimilation of underpinning rationales leads to changed practice but not necessarily improved practice. Webb et al (1997) identify a characteristic of 'change witout commitment'. This is primarily linked with preparation for OfSTED (Office for Standards in Education) inspection in school whereby teachers seek for the speediest route towards an objective to satisfy accountability. This generally results in a wealth of documentation with no guarentee of associated shifts in approaches to teaching and learning

Group leaders were clear that the need for curriculum integration was always an integral part of their working remit "in my subject I was responsible for, we were discussing this almost all of the time . . . in the group leader meetings (it) was a topic we discussed on several occasions. Maybe it was the most discussed topic". When group leaders met as the leader group they looked together at the individual subject drafts and tried to bring coherence: "when we had the leaders' meetings, we tried to put the same things in the same grade, let's

say tobacco and alcohol . . .and that was the leaders' job . . . I think we should have been given more time for that in the leaders' meetings". It was clearly perceived as a substantial challenge at this stage of curriculum design: "it was a difficult part of the work"; "that part of the work was difficult and frustrating". It was recognised by the Ministry respondents that it would also be difficult for teachers to implement which was why it was being phased in for different age groups over a three year period.

Pursuing the idea of 'extensive work in the school' in relation to introducing thematic approaches, the ex Minister had gone on to talk of the need for experimentation: "Then you have to do these experiments and see what it is that works and when you find something that works, teachers have to communicate amongst themselves and tell each other so that if the Reform is to be successful, it has to be a learning experience among teachers". To legislate, in terms of associated timescales for thematic approaches, was seen by one group leader as ". . .very, absolutely unusual to do this because it is a very strong constraint on the methods the teacher could choose and it is very unusual to do". Another group leader remarked "what limits you in doing thematic work is not where you live but what limits you is your imagination as a teacher".

Another constraint for teachers related to the considerable amount of subject content associated with each subject. Speaking of teachers' responses to the legislation, one group leader remarked: "The main objection is there is so much content in the curriculum, they can't do this." The group leaders had spent time searching for common themes across their subject areas: "trying to put things in our own plan from one group to another . . .we marked it with stars, what can we work together with?" When asked what had happened to these attempts to integrate the curriculum on behalf of the teachers, respondents said; "I don't know, it is very interesting . . . there was much work to do and there wasn't time to do all that work and get it under way"; and "we put it away because in the hearings the teachers said this we can do better ourselves, they told us, actually we are the teachers - two somewhat conflicting views. The ex Minister remarked on the omission of thematic support : "that as I see it is a defect of the plans. . . a decision is never made only once, so now it is apparent that this is a defect, and the thing that makes me optimistic is the fact that we have discovered that and we can correct it. Implementing a plan is a learning process also and on those occasions when I can sort of wish myself back in my old position it is to make those additions and modifications . . we didn't see all these things at the start. I never intended we should have perfect foresight".

In anticipation of inherent difficulties associated with thematic approaches, a special group, the Basic group was established in the early stages of curriculum design. Part of their remit was to "suggest a common content for the lower primary years (ages 6-9) and this must be well co-ordinated with years 5-10" (translated documentary source). Their first remit however was to "take part in developing a principle/fundamental document which should attend to holistic thinking/approach to education". This proved to be quite a challenge. The members of the Basic Group worked closely with the curriculum group leaders, especially when trying to see areas of compatibility across subjects. This group formulated three models of how integration might look for different ages and phases of education but also felt strongly that "we didn't want to produce themes because we felt it should be done in the classroom . . . we produced about 40 examples and some were tried in different classes . . they were just thrown away".

The thematic approach was seen by several respondents as a direct vehicle for promoting more active and participative learners. The Ministry of Education officials also confirmed that there was a strong view on the need for more active learning on pupils' part. This was by no means a new movement within curriculum design in Norway; active learning approaches were key in the 1939 curriculum borne out of the international progressive movement and Dewey's work. M87 had not moved teachers away from their heavy dependence on textbooks in the way envisaged and it seemed that the role of the teacher in promoting active learning approaches may now need to be more clearly emphasised. However, textbooks were clearly envisaged as continuing to make a perhaps substantial contribution to curriculum delivery. Officials described a process whereby publishers had their new, proposed texts approved by the Government, "publishers are used to it" I wrote in my notes during the interview and that this liaison was seen as functioning as a "guarantee for quality". One group leader remarked: "the theme is understood as taken from different experiences, our subject areas, and it is based on the active research of the children in these subjects . . . there is a research part and they should try to get new knowledge and present for others". Another: "at this point in our history when we have tried for fifty years to get active learning into the school and still haven't obtained that, okay you have to make some heavy legislation" The construct of active learning was clearly evident as important from the outset: "we were told that this should be the idea . . . the pupils had to be active . . . we were pleased about that". As one respondent said: "we try to force the teacher to be active". Another talked of the language that was used to convey this sense of active learners within the curriculum: "we could use other words, they were discovering, they were looking outside, they were looking after, they were trying, they

were experimenting. We tried to use those words". It seemed that teachers had little problem accepting this in principle, it was the practice that created the real challenge: "Most teachers agree that this is the right way but how, this is the difficulty the challenge . . . I have been around giving talks about this and I have met many teachers in many different places and they have got the idea and they often as: 'How do we do it then?'" Ideas about active learning are associated with the heavy use of textbooks mentioned earlier. I had asked one respondent: "How does having a text book help a child to be active?" The reply came "it doesn't happen very much in my opinion but the teachers seem to need one book for each pupil. In the (subject) group, when we discussed this we had a vision of a classroom with different textbooks. Different books, all sorts of materials and they could choose for the level from what they could manage. This is a very hard struggle for the teachers because they prefer to have one text book for each child so they can bring it home and do their homework . . . there is a lot of work to do".

Questionnaires and observations- personal dimensions revealed.

Table 1: What will be the two biggest challenges arising for you and your school from L97?

(The left-hand figure represents the total number of responses for this category across all 54 respondents; the percentage shows the left-hand figure as a rough percentage of the 54 respondents)

Sufficient relevant resources for theme/project work	**28**	**52%**
Using thematic and project work	**21**	**39%**
Time to work with other teachers	**19**	**35%**
Getting the required training for teachers	**14**	**26%**
Develop new ways of working	**13**	**24%**
Overview of all subject content	**13**	**24%**
Time/systems for planning	**12**	**22%**
Using and organising rooms in the school	**12**	**22%**
Using information technology	**11**	**20%**
Motivate pupils for independent work	**11**	**20%**

Teachers recognised that theme/project work would require the support of a range of materials and resources that are currently not generally available to them in the classroom (largely because of the tradition to substantially invest in textbooks). Over half the sample independently and simultaneously selected this category even in the earliest days of the implementation of the new curriculum. If we combine responses to the first and second categories, both relating as they do to theme and project work, it is evident that a very high number of the sample selected some aspect of thematic work as a potential challenge for their

school and for themselves. It is not then surprising perhaps that they subsequently identified the need for appropriate training and time to work with others as high categories of forthcoming challenge. 20% identified motivating pupils for independent work as a challenge.

Table 2: In what ways do you think your role as a teacher will change?

Be more a guide/supervisor/support	29	54%
Spend more time planning/co-operating with colleagues	10	18%
Give pupils more responsibility	8	15%
More paperwork/documentation to produce	7	13%
Create the right environment	7	13%
I will be less of an educator/give less information	4	7%
Will need to be updated in subject material and methods	4	7%
Help pupils be active learners	4	7%

54% of responding teachers saw a change in their role that seems to reflect a standing back on their part from a more interventionist role as teacher. If this is combined with category 6 "less of an educator" this climbs to 61% of teachers who envisage a significant pedagogical shift from "knowledge giver" to "facilitator". A relatively small proportion see a change coming from helping pupils become active learners (7% of responses); perhaps they think they already do this; perhaps they have not yet recognised the implications for the teacher's role from implementing active learning approaches. Yet if we look at Table 3, it is evident that in seeing these particular benefits for pupils, teachers seem to value pupil independence, curiosity and co-operation.

Table 3: How will pupils benefit from L97?

Develop independence	16	29%
More active/curious in their learning	10	18%
Will learn how to co-operate	10	18%
More opportunities to take responsibility	10	18%
Will learn how to make choices/use own ideas	8	14%
Will be taught how to use IT	5	9%
More theme and project work	5	9%
More chance for play	4	7%
More fun/enjoyment /exciting	4	7%
Will learn how to find knowledge	4	7%
Better teaching/higher expectations by teachers	4	7%
Learning will be more interesting/motivating	4	7%

These responses suggest that overall, these teachers see greater benefits coming from 'active learning approaches' and its traditionally associated methods (in total, 54 related responses, across the first five categories) than they do from theme and project work per se (5 responses in one category). This suggests that they will welcome the proposed changes, yet this doesn't alleviate the anxieties that they associate with thematic work in terms of resource provision.

Thematic approaches and active learning - visions and realities explored.

It would seem that some clarity needs to be brought to the respective understandings of "thematic approaches" and of "active learning" if related curriculum development is to result in improvements in teaching and learning. Thematically-planned curricular experiences and active learning approaches are not automatically conjoined. As my colleague on the Nordland Project has pointed out (Hodgson, forthcoming), within this Project, the term 'theme' is used to describe a unit of work which is planned and organised so that aspects of different subjects are brought together to make maximum use of similar and complementary elements. The term 'project' refers to ways of working for both teachers and pupils. Taking this further, the term 'project' becomes synonymous with the traditionally accepted view of active learning approaches. What is lacking however, and this could also be applied to the ideological premises on which the Norwegian curriculum is founded, is a clearly articulated and theoretically founded rationale which explores the perceived relationships between a method of planning the curriculum and a way of delivering that curriculum that engages pupils in certain kinds of activities. We need some common understandings. Such understandings might pre-empt Gundem et al's (1998) concerns about teachers serving the state in the implementation of the curriculum rather than serving children's needs and interests through the curriculum. Solstad (1997) also expresses concerns about the "ambitious listing of aims and objectives" resulting in "the severe limitation of the teachers' freedom of manoeuvre in planning and implementing programmes designed to involve pupils in active learning" (p280).

As I have argued elsewhere (Broadhead forthcoming) active learning does not only require active bodies. However, the extracts cited from the Principles and Guidelines which refer to active learning do imply physical as well as intellectual activity and so carry clear implications for classroom organisation and pupil management. Visits to school and observations suggest that pupil mis-behaviour is currently a serious issue; as one headteacher remarked: "the pupils have very bad behaviour". In the schools visited in the North of the country pupils address their teacher and the headteacher by her/his first name. Even though

class sizes can be relatively small, certainly by comparison with English schools, teachers are often seen in protracted negotiation with mis-behaving pupils. Any notion of rules about appropriate behaviour seem to be absent from many schools and classrooms. Teachers on the Nordland Project talk a lot about badly behaved pupils and see this as a real constraint in implementing active-learning approaches where more responsibility is inevitably given over to the pupil by the teacher. However, it needs to be given in a structured way, something not especially evident in the teacher's responses in Table 2. Nordland Project teachers talk also about how important it is to respect children yet there may be links between poor behaviour and de-motivated children. Observational notes from a visit to one school reflect observations made in other schools:

> "Basically, children are left alone to copy out great chunks of text which they don't seem to understand and seldom seem to read . . . teachers and children seem so listless, many children are yawning and lethargic".

At another point I had written:

These are some contradictions I see -

• The teacher always seems to be the main reference point	• The children have to become independent
• The curriculum has to be integrated for some periods	• Timetables are planned in 45 minute slots with breaks between each period
• Teachers talk about the importance of respecting children	• Children do not seem to be being educationally challenged

Successful curriculum reform needs to recognise and confront its inherent contradictions and perhaps to try and understand where those contradictions originate. It is likely that increased political intervention in educational processes has brought with it such contradictions. It is likely that cultural norms bring inherent contradictions. It is likely also that individual teachers at different stages in their own development and understanding of the teaching-learning process will bring about such contradictions within their classrooms and schools. Times of change require new practices; developing practice that is underpinned by intelligent thinking needs associated training, support and development for teachers.

There would seem to be an inherent conflict between a detailed curriculum which endeavours to embrace and depict all known and relevant subject knowledge at a level appropriate for particular age ranges and a means of its implementation which embraces as a central facet, the importance of following children's interests, of encouraging them to believe that they

have a contribution to make in terms of the design and implementation of the day-to-day curriculum. It is at the level of teachers' planning and teachers' implementation that such a conflict is confronted - in the school and in the classroom. It has not been confronted in the design of the curriculum; attempts were made and seemingly discarded. This may well be a brave and appropriate way forward; to give the responsibility to the gatekeeper's themselves - the teachers. Without appropriate support it will inevitably flounder.

The new curriculum requires teachers to work in radically different ways from those in which they have been used to working. Teachers recognised this, even in the early days of curricular implementation; they saw then the challenge that has been set for them. Some of them recognise the benefits that this can bring for enhancing pupil learning although they are nowhere as vociferous in articulating the perceived benefits as they are in identifying the challenges. What they see as their future role is especially worrying. Even given that this was only a small sample of teachers at an early stage in the implementation of the reforms, if teachers perceive the role as one in which they step back from structured intervention with pupils then issues relating to pupil management and classroom organisation will be exacerbated rather than resolved. In making such a limited interpretation of their role this particular contradiction could be the most insidious.

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