

CHRISTOPHER GABBETT

**THE PRODUCTIVE PEDAGOGIES INITIATIVE IN
QUEENSLAND AND NORWAY AND ITS SUCCESS IN
NARROWING THE ATTAINMENT GAP FOR
LEARNERS FROM ECONOMICALLY DEPRIVED
BACKGROUNDS**

WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST

FELLOWSHIP IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING - 2011

Table of contents

	Page
1. Introduction	
1.1 Background	3
1.2 Report Format	4
1.3 Aim of the Churchill Fellowship	4
1.4 Itinerary	4
2. The Winston Churchill Memorial Travelling Fellowship	
2.1 Introduction	6
2.2 Productive Pedagogies provenance and dissemination	6
2.3 Pedagogical leadership and the socio-economic attainment gap	8
2.4 Productive pedagogies and teacher development	9
2.5 Pedagogy and learner inclusion	14
2.6 Pedagogy and culture	18
Analysis and implications for the UK	20
2.7 Objectives and results	20
2.8 The key role of professional development and the centrality of pedagogical leadership	20
3. Conclusion and next steps	
3.1 Conclusion	22
3.2 Dissemination of key findings	22
3.3 Final reflection	23

RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP

1.1 BACKGROUND

Anyone involved in education today knows that something has to change, and it has to change significantly. Economic deprivation/low social class, Free School Meal, High IDACI, sinkhole estate, White Working Class boys... there are so many ways of expressing the measures of poverty in regard to schooling that we're occasionally blinded by the reality. Put simply - if you're not as wealthy as your classmates, you will probably not do as well as them at school. Add to this the considerable impact of ethnicity and gender and there is the stark reality that the education system as it currently operates in Britain seems to predict success for the middle and upper classes.

Most recent data in Britain indicates that the deprivation gap in Britain is first noticeable at 20 months of age – and widens across every key stage. By key stage four (aged 16 – year 11) the gap between those who access Free School Meals and those who do not is 28.9 ppt. Following intervention by the Labor government from 2007, this gap has narrowed slightly – but it remains stubbornly static.

There has been a plethora of debate and documentation about this, but this report will focus explicitly upon the role that pedagogy and within-school approaches can have upon the deprivation gap. The main framework for analysis will be the 'Productive Pedagogies' strategy, developed by Professor Bob Lingard at the University of Queensland and applied by Education Queensland from 2000. The nature of the Fellowship allowed varied analysis however, and I was able to look at the different ways that pedagogy is used to support inclusion and learning for all, regardless of background. In both Queensland and Norway, I was able to identify as well compelling models of continuing professional development that supports the development of teaching and learning that disproportionately supports vulnerable learners.

I feel that this report and subsequent networking comes at a critical time for educators in Britain – and Europe. Significant research has been devoted to the nature of the deprivation gap and potential strategies for closing it. This tome of work has been by necessity varied in scope and format – but very little has focussed specifically on the role that enhanced pedagogy can play. There have been some positive green shoots with English education. Jake Mansell's work on classroom dialogue and how this can link to a taxonomy of learning was crucial within London in developing a conversation around how classroom based approaches can support vulnerable learners, and core elements of this work have spread nationally. The National Strategies 'Narrowing the Gap' team led by Chris Williams completed some work that was held in high regard by schools and local authorities; but crucially while this highlighted the key role that pedagogy can play – there was insufficient attention to what that pedagogy might look like.

The Secretary of State for Education has introduced a Pupil Premium that is linked to FSM ascription – which now has a retrospective eligibility. He has guaranteed school leaders freedom and autonomy in the spending of this money. I hope that the

strategies I have observed and recorded could inform spending of the Pupil Premium funds within schools.

1.2 REPORT FORMAT

Rather than outline the chronological events of the fellowship. I have divided the report into key themes, which will be elaborated upon in turn, drawing upon key examples and data from both Queensland and Norway.

1.3 AIM OF THE CHURCHILL FELLOWSHIP:

In this Fellowship I aimed to identify the ways that specific pedagogical approaches could close the attainment and inclusion gap between learners from socially deprived backgrounds and their peers. The main framework for analysis was via the Productive Pedagogies initiative, applied by Education Queensland from 2000.

A subsequent aim was identifying how pedagogy can be utilised in different settings, and the Norway leg of the Fellowship was particularly enlightening for highlighting how school 'culture' can provide a fulcrum for establishing appropriate pedagogies that enable accelerated learning for students from backgrounds that make them vulnerable.

The third aim was to identify how schools and education authorities can use extant continuous professional development frameworks to effectively establish strategies and systems that support staff development, teaching and learning, and school improvement.

1.4 ITINERARY

During the five weeks of my fellowship I spent two weeks in Queensland, Australia and three weeks in Norway.

In Queensland (April 2011), I visited the offices of Education Queensland as well as two State Schools (government owned/controlled schools). These were Goodna State School and Marsden State High School. I spoke also with Susan Falls, a former adviser within Education Queensland who led the dissemination of the productive pedagogies strategy under the previous state government and has maintained a role in teacher development within Brisbane. During the visit to Goodna State School, I spent a very informative hour with Dr Simon Petrie, a former criminologist who has utilised his experience to support inclusion and school improvement amongst Queensland's deprived communities.

I met with Michelle Young and Trevor Doyle, education advisers within Brisbane Catholic Education. To gauge how rural deprivation is challenged via enhanced pedagogy, I met with Mr Peter Moloney, Principal at Assumption College, Warwick.

The Norway leg of the journey was completed in August 2011. I was very fortunate to have three hours with Professor Stein Erik Ohna at the University of Stavanger, whose work in inclusive education is internationally recognised. He signposted a number of key political and social developments in Norway regarding curriculum development and pedagogical approaches for varied vulnerable groups in Norway which was invaluable.

In Trondheim Kommune, I met with Berit Kirksæther and Jorid Midtyling who spoke in depth of the efforts the Kommune has gone to in improving outcomes for students from vulnerable backgrounds. They arranged some extremely useful meetings, and I am also indebted to the following schools and the Principals who made immeasurable contributions to my knowledge of professional development, learning cultures and school improvement;

- Saupstad School, Principal Inger Sagen Hasselø;
- Huseby Lower Secondary School, Principal Inger Hilstad;
- Romolslia School, Principal Åge Holberg;
- Lilleby School, Principal Sissel Thoresen Busch, Ladevn.

In Oslo, I was indebted to Solveig Sigstad at Osle Kommune who arranged visits to Vahl Skole in central Oslo and Mollergata Skole. These were crucial in identifying the role that culture can play in narrowing the attainment gap.

I am very grateful to Annette Skalde and Alette Schreiner of the Norway Ministry of Education who provided invaluable guidance. Ms Skalde in particular was exponentially helpful in facilitation a number of contacts.

I am additionally indebted to Mr Richard Lovell of Chiltern College, who provided advice and support during the Oslo leg of the Fellowship, and joined me for the meetings there.

2 THE WINSTON CHURCHILL TRAVELLING FELLOWSHIP

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This travelling fellowship aims to provide information and strategies for school leaders, teachers, local, regional and national leaders of education to support learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. The model for analysis is the productive pedagogies, although the fellowship research did examine other school leadership methods and strategies. I have aligned these however, as near as possible, to the productive pedagogies core strands.

2.2 PRODUCTIVE PEDAGOGIES PROVENANCE AND DISSEMINATION

The Productive Pedagogies describe a common framework under which teachers can choose and develop strategies in relation to:

- what they are teaching
- the variable styles, approaches and backgrounds of their students

Teachers can use them to focus instruction and improve student outcomes. Some are more suited for teaching certain knowledge and skills than others.

The central premise of successful application of the productive pedagogies is that teachers;

- consider and understand the backgrounds and preferred learning styles of their students
- identify the repertoires of practice and operational fields to be targeted
- evaluate their own array of teaching strategies and select and apply the appropriate ones.

The four strands (and twenty sub-strands) of the productive pedagogies are listed below.

- Intellectual quality
 - Higher-order thinking
 - Deep knowledge
 - Deep understanding
 - Substantive conversation
 - Knowledge as problematic
 - Metalanguage
- Connectedness
 - Knowledge integration
 - Background knowledge

- Connectedness to the world
- Problem-based curriculum
- Supportive classroom environment
 - Student direction
 - Social support
 - Academic engagement
 - Explicit quality performance criteria
 - Self-regulation
- Recognition of difference
 - Cultural knowledge
 - Inclusivity
 - Narrative
 - Group identity
 - Active citizenship

The productive pedagogies framework was published by Education Queensland on line. This framework was intended as a classroom companion to enable teachers to plan and deliver lessons that would support all pupils regardless of background and characteristic.

This is a very compelling professional development model and one that links directly to teacher efficacy. Where the productive pedagogies have been most successful, the dialogue within the school becomes one focussed on the role of pedagogy and the importance of appropriate professional development, rather than a focus on curriculum and content.

Improving students' outcomes from schooling requires schools to be learning organisations, where both students and teachers are engaged in learning. As such, knowledge and talk about pedagogy need to be at the core of the professional culture of schools. It is essential that schools engage in the valuing of teachers' work, that is, their pedagogical practice.

This requires appropriate and strategic dissemination, linked to a meaningful continuous professional development model. This unfortunately is where the application of productive pedagogies in Queensland fell down. The 'train the trainer' model adopted in the state fell short of the aspirational expectations, and today when school leaders are approached about the productive pedagogies in Queensland they are not very enamoured.

By 2005 however, educationalists internationally were taking greater notice of it. In several states in the USA, it was adopted and adapted to inform teacher practice. A number of local authorities in Scotland implemented the 4 key areas as pillars of CPD and performance management. Indeed, about two weeks before I embarked on the first leg of the fellowship, I was invited to a school in Halton to present to staff,

as they were about to utilise the productive pedagogies in developing a year seven curriculum.

My initial conclusions were that the productive pedagogies in Queensland had suffered from a lack of political support as well as issues with appropriate and strategic dissemination. This proved true, but it was very compelling to identify areas where appropriate implementation and support had made such a significant difference to pupil outcomes. Indeed, the tabled research by Mills and Goos outlines the significant gains made amongst students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander backgrounds. There was less research however on how the strategies could support learners from contextually deprived backgrounds, where disadvantage may be more hidden and issues like a lack of social and cultural capital considerably acute.

2.3 PEDAGOGICAL LEADERSHIP AND THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC ATTAINMENT GAP

In his book 'Visible Learning', New Zealand academic John Hattie identified pedagogical leadership as the type of leadership that has the greatest impact upon improvement in schools. This research was informed by *School Leadership and Student Outcomes: Identifying What Works and Why Best Evidence Synthesis*, by Viviane Robinson, Margie Hohepa, Claire Lloyd (The University of Auckland), published by the New Zealand Ministry of Education 2009.

He concluded that promoting and participating in professional learning about teaching and learning is the most effective thing school leaders can do, to have the greatest impact on pupils' learning, progress and attainment. In detail;

Leaders who promote and participate in teachers' professional learning:

- have a focus on teaching and learning are able to support improvements in the quality of teaching and learning because they build up a shared understanding of what is working and why, what needs to be improved and how to do this, including freeing up time for CPD
- help to generate a collective, constructive approach to problem solving as part of an effective school improvement strategy
- encourage teachers to use 'smart tools' that help to improve teaching and learning.

In 2010, the Department for Children, Schools and Families had identified pedagogical leadership as key to closing the socio-economic attainment gap. As such, I was keen to identify ways that the productive pedagogies could constitute a model for pedagogical leadership. I was looking to identify methods that school leaders use that offers a chance for outstanding practice that is cross discipline, cross phase, skills based and easily transferable.

2.4 PRODUCTIVE PEDAGOGIES AND TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

Looming above Mary Street in Brisbane's town centre is Education House – the headquarters of Education Queensland. I was really curious about how the work to support indigenous learning had fared. My personal feeling was that the importance of cultural location and identity needed to be supported through the pedagogy – much like Martin Mills argues for in his *Productive Pedagogies* publication. This is one of the most compelling documents aimed at teachers I've read but sadly now lost within the white noise of a new administration and the development of the National Curriculum.

Maybe more controversially but I think accurately, I felt that this approach regarding connectedness and 'deep learning' was essential for the attempts to challenge contextual deprivation in a UK context.

I met with Mr Steve Armitage (Executive Director – Indigenous Education) and Mr Leigh Schelks (Executive Director – Strategic Initiatives) in an office with one of the best views of Brisbane that you could get. As sub tropical April rain peppered the windows, these gents gave a really interesting account of the journey that the Queensland state system is currently undergoing. Talking to Leigh Schelks was particularly enlightening;

1. He didn't blame parents or carers for the attainment gaps
2. He didn't believe that a selective process in schools either caused or exacerbated attainment gaps. That is – he believed that despite there being a significant amount of private education in Queensland catering for 'middle class' kids, the state schools have the capacity to be as good as them.
3. He didn't glibly assume that devolution of autonomy to school leaders independent of any guidance or support from educational or academic leaders was an answer to attainment gaps.

For those unfamiliar with education human resources in the Australian states, particularly large ones like Queensland, here is a brief outline. At least anecdotally (but to be honest, very accurately), staffing of remote schools was extremely difficult. Graduates appointed to remote schools went there to 'do their time' before receiving a more compelling post closer to the coast/urban centres. One key initiative involved turning this concept on its head, and seeking to only employ the best teachers for remote schools. Ads were placed, and the first tranche saw 60% of the prospective applicants rejected. While this was a bit frightening for human resources colleagues, it was a powerful statement of intent. Leigh put this

more emphatically, 'We know the damage that a bad teacher can do. We've found that it takes three years of work to undo that bad damage'.

These communities now, when compared to communities with similar context in Australia, have the greatest increase in attainment and engagement. What is clear also is that the explicit reference to and expectation of excellence in teaching and learning is having its own rewards. These teachers are honing their pedagogical knowledge and sharpening their skills in dealing with various challenging behaviours. Leigh Schelks has identified them as the pedagogical leaders of the system – many, when they move on to other schools as middle leaders, offer a significant level of capacity building and leadership.

I find this incredibly compelling – the rhetoric around 'Leading from the Middle' sounds great but is it in practice anything more than applying a weak theoretical framework to practice that is largely extant? There's something increasingly robust about good and outstanding teachers who decide to become even greater. It's something that you won't see on Jamie's Dream School – I think I'll rely on him to give me ideas for how to use ricotta rather than to explain learning theory.

So – in some of the more challenging educational environments in the world –remote Queensland – there is an emphasis on pedagogical leadership and the ongoing development of capacity. How strong a case though – recruiting outstanding educators, supporting them through high quality professional development that emphasises developing oracy, self-efficacy, engaging with community leaders and celebrating identity as central to supporting language acquisition as a tool to learning. And, when these teachers move to urban or rural centres and encounter contextual deprivation... guess what?

They pick up the baton, call their colleagues to the barricades and help to close the gap.

During the Australian leg of the fellowship, I visited a number of schools currently engaging in a federally directed initiative aimed at supporting learners from low socio-economic backgrounds. One such school is Goodna State School. I spoke to Merryl Macey, Head of Curriculum at Goodna State School, which is in an area of significant socio-economic deprivation but has consistently improved NAPLAN scores over the past 5 years.¹

When I asked Merryl the commonalities or non-negotiables of pedagogy in Goodna SS (as developed by teachers via joint planning) here is what she told me.

¹ In 2008 the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) commenced in Australian schools. Every year, all students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 are assessed on the same days using national tests in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions (Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation) and Numeracy

Intellectual quality:

- *Teachers must have an extensive ‘field knowledge’ of content to be covered – in other words, you cannot effectively teach what you don’t know – so teachers must research prior to the time what they need to teach, and identify what they need to learn, themselves, about the topic. Part of this process is the writing of exemplars, so that teachers are aware of how difficult an assessment task is, and what standard is expected to achieve an ‘A’. There have been times when the writing of exemplars by teachers has led to a drastic alteration of the task because teachers have realised that the expectations are too high or too low for the age of the students.*

Connectedness:

- *Explicit teaching is essential in all areas of the curriculum – without explicit teaching of skills and knowledge, students are sometimes second-guessing what it is that they need to know (this problem was rife in schools in the 1970s and 1980s, with ‘process writing’, ‘conferencing’ without explicit teaching, and general thematic approaches which were very enjoyable but lacking in content, skills and direction).*

Supportive classroom environment:**Recognition of difference:**

- *Differentiating not only the teaching but also the assessment tasks is necessary to ensure that students are given every opportunity to show the teachers what the students know. Teachers need to be very clear what it is that they are assessing, and most of the time it won’t be spelling, neatness, writing etc, but problem solving, planning, designing, creating etc. Therefore, students need to be taught in ways that accommodate their various learning styles, and assessed accordingly.*
- *Expectations must be high – of the teachers themselves and their planning, preparedness and delivery of lessons, and of the students’ behaviour, attitude and academic progress.*
- *Most importantly of all, the teachers must enjoy what they’re doing, and must enjoy working with the students, and this needs to be obvious. Children can sense very easily if a teacher doesn’t like them, and they will usually respond negatively which of course will adversely affect academic success. We continually encourage our teachers to celebrate our students’ successes, to concentrate on the positive while attempting to reduce or eliminate the negative.*

This school had used the productive pedagogies teacher toolkit to develop a number of non-negotiables for planning and delivery. More than that though, the school identified the importance of a pedagogical leader whose intervention and understanding of teacher efficacy was used as springboard to training and development.

Interestingly, I found a similar approach in a secondary school in Trondheim, Norway. I ventured into the salty Nordic rain in mid August to visit Inger Hilstad, Principal at Huseby Lower Secondary School. Inger had identified specific commonalities of her unsuccessful students, linked explicitly to learning. She had then mapped the areas of subject and pedagogical need. For example, if a cohort of under achievers entered the school with lower than average literacy, it was not enough to offer booster classes. Rather, Inger offered release time to key staff who would lead in developing pedagogy that *all* staff could access to ensure their wave one provision was outstanding.

These key areas of study were;

- Metacognition
- Self assessment of learning
- Scaffolding to support literacy
- Improving classroom culture by celebrating diversity
- Cultural Literacy in planning
- Social and Emotional learning

Inger had identified this strategy as being central to not only improving outcomes for pupils from deprived backgrounds (Huseby School is held up as a national example for this) but it had also streamlined and focused continuous professional development in schools.

Again, the implementation of leaders of pedagogy had been central to meaningful and positive school change.

School improvement had been linked teacher development via the Productive Pedagogies too. In methodology not dissimilar to that of the Labour government's development and deployment of the National Strategies field force, the Queensland government also sought to employ advisers to work with local/regional curriculum leads and Principals in 2002. I was fortunate enough to speak to one of these advisers, whose current role straddles work within schools and wider implementation of what could be termed pedagogical leadership.

Susan Falls is currently working with a number of primary and secondary state schools in applying the knowledge from the initial launch of the productive pedagogies work. Interestingly, she admitted that from 2000 to 2005 the initiative was on everybody's lips. More recently though, a change of government followed by some targeted attacks in the media on the state of education in Queensland has seen a considerably lessened focus on the productive pedagogies approach. In our conversation, she made it clear that professional and political winds were changing again, and that attitudes to work focussed explicitly on pedagogy was undergoing a transformation. The productive pedagogies work is central to this.

Susan's opinion is that the initial launch of the productive pedagogies initiative was flawed; or at least, contained some key flaws. The first of which was the focus on the twenty separate, specific pedagogic tools rather than the 5 overarching themes that they sit within. As a professional development tool, the productive pedagogies assumes a level of competency that may be slightly aspirational. Here's an example. The first page of text of the handbook states confidently;

'Productive Pedagogies' is a balanced theoretical framework enabling teachers to reflect critically on their work.

Teachers should use the Productive Pedagogies framework to consider:

- Are all the students I teach, regardless of background, engaged in intellectually challenging and relevant curriculum in a supportive environment?***
- How do my teaching and assessment practices support or hinder this?***
- What opportunities do I have to critically reflect upon my work with colleagues?***

This manual may be used to assist teachers with:

- reflecting on current classroom practices***
- generating a professional language***
- designing curriculum and learning experiences***
- making intelligent decisions about individual students' needs.***

The manual describes each of the twenty Productive Pedagogies, and includes examples of how they may be applied.

I don't think any classroom practitioner who aspires for more inclusion and greater attainment in their classroom could disagree with the call to arms evident in the above.

Apparently, the twenty separate productive pedagogies were 'sold' to many teachers as being essential, non-negotiables that HAD to be present in almost all lessons, or series of lessons. There are probably a few ways of more successfully stifling teacher-creativity and leadership; but I cannot think of them. There were some outstanding examples of renewed assessment pieces and phases of work that reflected outstanding attention to the frameworks.

Where there was the most success (and where that success has translated into ongoing improved teaching and learning) the four pedagogic domains were front ended. That is, teachers were asked explicit questions about the four factors that build an outstanding classroom. Intellectual Quality, Supportive Classroom Environment, Recognition of Difference, Connectedness (of knowledge). Professional development conversations were then encouraged; where have you done this successfully? How have you evaluated impact? What has it done for your vulnerable learners? Can you share examples?

And, once the energy subsides; it's reinvigorated by the very accessible academic references within the productive pedagogies manual.

Why was this more successful? Well, by focussing on the dimensions of successful classrooms rather than the minutiae of effective teaching, professionals were given the opportunity to reference and celebrate their success, and ease effortlessly into a conversation about pedagogy. And, let's be honest – teachers having the chance, will and time to reflect on the science of teaching and learning is a rare thing indeed. So, what could have been an exercise in consolidating performance management structures or (even worse) ticking a box and missing the point became a much more focussed and positive learning conversation. Indeed, Susan's style of training now is much more professional centred; asking teachers, 'you know your school... where in the hierarchy of pedagogic thought do YOU want to place emphasis?'

So, in the successful implementation of this work, a conscious and vocal conversation about the dimensions of productive pedagogies is essential. Susan felt that by focussing on the dimensions that most successfully improve classroom interactions it was more likely that deficit conversations could be avoided. For example, 'I can see what you're saying... but our kids won't respond to it because ...'

It is clear that amongst the best teachers and more successful schools, these approaches are being consolidated and embedded. And, unsurprisingly, it is around the four dimensions that the greatest learning sits. When I asked Susan what her greatest achievement has been in implementing this work... an increase in intellectual quality in lessons leading to a greater academic self concept amongst more vulnerable learners. And, what she would do differently? Focus first on teacher self efficacy. Because, as she put it, 'teachers are vulnerable learners too'.

2.5 PEDAGOGY AND LEARNER INCLUSION

I was involved in the implementation (but not the development) of the SEAL programme in the UK. We spoke dismissively of schools that were 'un-SEAL' and allied SEAL to many of the key indicators that we delivered on. SEAL had its detractors though. The tabloids lampooned 'happiness lessons' and schools that had misapplied the philosophy and methodology were vocal in their attacks on the programme.

During the Fellowship visit to Goodna SS, I was introduced to Dr Simon Petrie, who has the title 'Behaviour Management'. More interestingly, he is a former criminologist and academic, and he speaks with compelling passion about strategies to reduce violence in all of its forms. His specific programme is called 'Pathways to Peace'.

This was fascinating – it was an attempt to enhance the learning conversation to model appropriate relationships and secure inclusion for students from deprived backgrounds. I was interested in the degree to which a pedagogic approach could be developed that provides the means to reduce anti-social behaviour/violence? That is – aside from initiatives that engage with families, can we rely on a universal pedagogy that encourages development of the Social and Emotional domain or does there need to be outside agency support?

In Goodna alone, total serious incidents of violence have gone from 2300 in 2006 to under 300 in 2010. Significantly, this has been on a tide of rising, not falling enrolments. And, according to the school leadership, the addressing of low-mid level violence in the school was essential before any specific pedagogic initiatives could take place.

It was clear that this attempt to model positive behaviours via consistent self reflection and self monitoring in the community and school supported by appropriate language was itself a pedagogic initiative.

It is interesting that there is a reference to a 'peaceful' cognitive process. Sounds a bit jargony and aspirational. But what I found most compelling was the way that the stated school priority of limiting violence and the fear of violence found its way into pedagogy. When I met with the Head of Learning, she outlined the methodologies school leadership have used to enhance the quality of teacher-pupil talk and pupil-pupil talk. Why? Because 'that talk where we see our learning... and talk is where they shape their values'. When I examined the teaching and learning professional development document further, it was clear that the school was trying to make pedagogy do everything it should do; high expectations, differentiated tasks, varied learning activities. The most striking thing though was an explicit notion that all pupils should not just learn the curriculum but also feel the curriculum.

There was considerable evidence in Goodna of the promotion of genuinely forward thinking professional development to identify a transformative impact on the dialogue about teaching and learning in that school. To see in long term lesson plans references to cognitive domains, literacy support, gender differences is not new. To see heightened understanding and expectations around teacher led dialogue and its role in securing an improved environment is quite impressive though – this was something that would become more important during my visit to Browns Plains State High School.

This visit provided an impetus to reflect on something that I've been thinking about for a while but was pretty clearly outlined by David Langeneckert; *“language acquisition is an expression of cultural identity”*

The Framework for Poverty work explains very succinctly the link between poverty, different levels of language acquisition and educational attainment. Language also offers such a strong lever towards identity and social cohesion. This research underlies how important language is to full inclusion. Access to the classroom dialogue is key to contributing to educational ethos and culture; but equally language competence dictates the ability to successfully access curriculum and, eventually, success.

It is important to reflect on the role of classroom structures and systems in securing and consolidating identity. I think that this has to happen via curriculum and pedagogy – and the explicit identification and celebration of different aspects of identity is one of the most important things in supporting learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. The most successful school I visited during the Fellowship so far spoke explicitly about the methodologies they've used to secure engagement in every aspect of the child's life.

When I asked deeper questions about how the teachers and school leadership addressed the characteristics of contextual deprivation in the classroom, they referenced the importance self-esteem and peer identity. This echoed much of the research regarding self-efficacy and academic attainment and mirrors effective practice in the UK and elsewhere.

What is most impressive is the way that pedagogical frameworks are utilised to secure the expression of identity – deep learning, metacognition, connection across

curriculum areas, valuing of difference. These are evident within school strategic plans and also appear within short and midterm teacher planning.

Why then is this school doing so well with its cohort while schools with similar socio-economic profiles are not?

I identified two key reasons.

1. A use of data at classroom level to support recognition of different learning styles, attitudes, prior learning and pupil characteristic.
2. An emphasis upon the use of 4 key dimensions for teacher planning that supports greater intellectual quality in the classroom, connectedness of key knowledge, valuing of difference within the classroom, school and community, and support for the learning process.

The first point enables a basis for celebrating individual and peer identity, while the second consolidates the ability for pedagogy to acknowledge, secure and progress self and school identity – this is crucial for economically deprived communities.

2.6 PEDAGOGY AND CULTURE

The Norway leg of the Fellowship provided ample opportunities to develop a deeper understanding of different methodologies for creating truly inclusive classrooms. One surprise to me though was the word that came up repeatedly in the three cities/12 schools I visited. Culture.

I first thought that the school leaders were referring to the nature and behaviour of the school teachers; or indeed the interaction between teachers and pupils. They were not. What they were referring to was the role that a celebration and consolidation of Norwegian culture, language and expression could have in providing an accessible and aspirational benchmark for all students.

When I first contacted the Norwegian Education Ministry to arrange meetings for this fellowship, the contacts I was immediately given were in Oslo. As the nation's capital and most vibrant economic centre it is a more typically European city, and from an outsider's perspective it really does feel incredibly separate and different to other parts of Norway.

Trine Hauger, who until recently was Principal of Vahl Skole in central Oslo, provided an outstanding introduction to the city. As a school leader, Trine seized eagerly upon the 'Knowledge Promotion' strategy that Norway introduced in 2006. There was a focus throughout on learning for all (staff/parents included) as well as high expectations. What I saw in a few schools in Norway though is a way that pedagogy and classroom practice can be used to develop a habit of productivity, success and inclusiveness. This is underpinned though by an attempt to reinforce a common cultural currency – or, to rethink the nature of the strategy, to re-distribute and re-apply cultural capital to secure equality.

Much of this has its basis in the focus first identified in the National Program schools in Queensland. A rigorous, driven attempt to enhance language and literacy as a tool to establishing a personal identity as a learner. In Vahl School, for new arrivals, this begins as 'mother tongue' lessons but very soon develops into accelerated learning in Norwegian language, a strong emphasis upon open ended questioning/tasks and an expectation that metacognitive strategies underpin learning. Serving an economically disadvantaged community and with a 95% ethnic minority pupil body, there is a need to develop cultural literacy in line with functional literacy. Vahl does this systemically, with an inclusive and adapted

curriculum that celebrates Norwegian culture and traditions alongside the cultural diversity that the school offers.

Interwoven within this are a range of strategies that these schools use to not only guarantee the intellectual quality of learning and the supportive environment of the classroom – but also the connection of learning across the pupil's experience. Crucially though – the recognition and valuing of difference is tied to the school's ethos and is evident in all planning.

The same approach is mirrored by the Principal at Møllergata Skole, Eva Kjøge. This school is about 300 metres from where the July bomb exploded – and it serves a multicultural community where about 70% of the intake considers Norwegian their second language. Both Principals have identified the importance of quality pedagogy and shared, aspirational learner culture.

Sadly though, Trine spoke also about something that school leaders in the UK and Australia could sympathise. As demographics in central Oslo have changed and the east and central parts of the city have become more multicultural, the school has had to work very hard to convince parents of ethnic Norwegian children that Vahl School is for them. Current strategies are leading to a rise in scores in the Oslo test and national tests, so there remains plenty of evidence that it is.

Driving back to Vikersund though, I took the E16 towards Honefoss; the same road that Anders Behring Breivik took in order to get to Utoya island on 22 July. The island itself sits very quietly, eerily close to the side of the Tyrifjorden. A makeshift shrine overlooks it and a group of people were photographing it and the island. It was a reminder that the ideals and the ideologies that underpin this multiculturalism and strides towards equality have enemies – and made me reflect more on the successes of Vahl School in developing an ethos based on excellence, tolerance, distributed cultural capital and celebration of diversity.

ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UK

2.7 OBJECTIVES AND RESULTS

The objectives I set myself during the Fellowship required analysis of diverse education systems with a view to establishing pedagogies that would have the greatest benefit for vulnerable learners, and a focus on how extant systems can support continuing professional development within the context of diminishing budgets and targeted financial support such as the pupil premium.

I was fortunate enough to encounter some very compelling ideas that have enabled me to meet these objectives. The excellent pedagogical approaches outlined in schools like Goodna State School and Browns Plains State High School highlighted the centrality of functional literacy, social and emotional engagement and connectedness across curriculum for supporting vulnerable learners. Supporting this though was an explicit conversation about celebrating diversity within the framework of a unified and agreed expression of culture. This was consolidated even further in Norway, where institutions like Vahl Skole and Mollergata Skole spoke explicitly of how diversity could be celebrated and linked to a common, community centred and aspirational school culture.

All of the schools in Trondheim, but particularly Huseby, identified the centrality of quality teacher training and planning time – and it is this professional development that is the deciding factor in improving the classroom experience for vulnerable learners.

2.7 THE KEY ROLE OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND PEDAGOGICAL LEADERSHIP

The Fellowship has consolidated for me the belief that unless schools in the UK seriously re-think the role that continuing professional development can have in improving the quality of teaching and learning then the attainment gap for vulnerable learners will never close. For too long, schools in the UK have hidden within a course/inset culture, where CPD is identified as a universal chore rather than a bespoke right, and precious little of key learning is appropriately embedded or disseminated within schools. There are now so many course/inset ‘providers’ within the school system that it has become a soup kitchen of educational sound bites. I have one company that send me the same brochures, twice every three weeks – large, bulky envelopes that are probably responsible for low level deforestation every time they land on my desk. Distressingly, I wear so many ‘hats’ at school that I get the same delivery quite a few times every month.

It is a significant point that when I asked all of the school leaders who had been successful in narrowing the attainment gap in their schools about where much of their research had been conducted, not one mentioned an outside provider/inset. All

spoke of recent, relevant, academic publications that they had remodelled to fit the context of their schools. They then, either individually or as part of a senior leadership group, developed strategies that effectively encouraged teacher and learner participation and *maintained the leadership role in monitoring and evaluating the outcome*. This pedagogical leadership must be the fulcrum for this – creating a forum within schools where teachers can talk about the science of teaching – supported, enhanced and driven by all levels of leadership.

3 CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATION AND NEXT STEPS

3.1 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

My conclusion from the Winston Churchill Research Fellowship in Education can be summarised in a number of recommendations.

- To meaningfully close the attainment gap for vulnerable learners, but particularly those from contextually deprived backgrounds, schools should:
 - Prioritise the development of functional literacy/numeracy – but deliver this via classroom interaction and quality first teaching
 - Identify the key pedagogical factors that will support in helping vulnerable learners attain, and structure curriculum to ensure that all teachers are able to identify, understand and apply these within the context of their teaching area
 - Enable joint planning sessions and identify ‘quick wins’ across departments/faculties/groups of schools. Shared resources/approaches across schools/localities will support this
 - Develop a pedagogy that develops social and emotional skills
 - Develop a culture of pedagogical leadership, where challenging theoretical frameworks on pedagogical approaches are developed/adapted for a school’s context, staff are encouraged to apply these and school leaders at all levels support, monitor, evaluate and review
 - Consider the role that cultural capital plays in supporting the attainment gap, and aim to limit this by redefining and re-applying school culture/learning culture within the school
 - Prioritise the central and prime role of effective teaching and learning in closing the deprivation gap. Track the attainment gap for individual teachers, identify effective practice within the school and learn from it

3.2 DISSEMINATION OF KEY FINDINGS

Key findings from the Fellowship will be disseminated thus:

- Via the Fellowship blog; www.lavalla.wordpress.com
- Within extant educational networks (SISLAN, Narrowing the Gap Pedagogy Project web group, RSA education network)
- Via a conference, to be held in Autumn 2012

3.3 FINAL REFLECTION

I have been incredibly privileged to have completed this Fellowship. I encountered numerous institutions, offices, schools, professors and students – and in all cases I was astounded by how similar the problems schools encounter are. I reflected as my train went through Hell (which is a village just outside of Trondheim) that the effective practice I saw in that far northern city was so incredibly complementary to the outstanding work in the west of Brisbane – so far away geographically but so incredibly close. Close, in that it seeks to utilise a renewal of the mission central to education to change outcomes for some of the most vulnerable in our communities.

I wish to thank the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust for this incredible opportunity.

My final word is one of commitment. I visited Oslo one month after a heinous act killed many people – a city and a country that was reflecting and healing. I dedicate this publication to the people whose lives were taken that day, and to those committed to ongoing healing.