

A report as a consequence of the sabbatical leave taken by John Heyes, Term 2, 2013.

The most successful education systems do more than seek to attain particular standards of competence and to achieve change through prescription. They invest in developing their teachers as reflective, accomplished and enquiring professionals who have the capacity to engage fully with the complexities of education and to be the key actors in shaping and leading educational change.

Teaching Scotland's Future, Graham Donaldson

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Executive summary

My reading around the topic of urban teacher residencies and alternative pathways towards teacher certification has given me a depth of perspective on the way that Teach First has come to be applied in New Zealand.

My conversations with teachers in London, and interactions with conference delegates and presenters in Scotland have given me a wonderful opportunity to stand outside of the New Zealand educational system and to take a look at it through a variety of overseas lenses.

Out of these experiences have come three important learnings:

1. It has been salutary to have been reminded of the esteem that is held towards the quality of the educational research coming out of NZ universities.
2. It is also flattering to be a part of a NZ state education system that is held up as an exemplar of quality for other education systems to aspire to.
3. It has also been beneficial to be able to match my perceptions of the Teach First scheme with those involved in Teach First in England. I remain convinced that Mangere College's partnership with the University of Auckland in placing Teach First graduates has been a positive step in ensuring that future graduate teachers are well prepared for the contemporary classroom.

Purpose

My initial proposal on the topic for my sabbatical report was

- to gain further knowledge on current developments in the area of mentoring, especially as regards

- a) academic counselling of students, and
- b) the advice and guidance necessary for graduate teachers following a non-standard pathway to teacher certification (The Teach First approach).

Background and rationale

However; in the months between the proposal and my leave in Term 2, 2013 a number of developments occurred.

On the home front the educational sector was challenged by the continued insistence by Hekia Parata, the Minister of Education on raising achievement for all as signalled in her budget speech in 2012:

· We have an education system that is among the best in the world. It gives our students a platform to compete here at home and internationally. Four out of five kids are successfully getting the qualifications they need from school and we must celebrate their success and the professionals in our system who make that possible every day...

·But our Government's education plan is about getting five out of five...

·Too many of the kids falling behind because they are not getting the quality teaching and leadership that all the evidence tells us makes the difference are Māori and Pasifika learners, those who come from low socio-economic homes, or have special needs...

Hon Hekia Parata, Minister of Education, 16 May 2012, Speech Notes

Within the education sector we knew that New Zealand was not alone in this desire to attain success for all learners. Many countries in the OECD have set targets that reflect our minister's and have done so in the recognition that future national prosperity is dependent on an education system that will not tolerate failure.

... all countries are seeking to improve their schools and to respond better to higher social and economic expectations. As the most significant resource in schools, teachers are central to school improvement efforts. Improving the efficiency and equity of schooling depends, in large measure, on ensuring that competent people want to work as teachers, that their teaching is of a high quality, and that all students have access to high quality teaching. (Teachers Matter, OECD, 2005)

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And specifically within Mangere College we received our first participants from the Teach First programme of Auckland University.

Methodology

And so by the time I commenced my sabbatical leave three interlinked areas of education were uppermost in my mind. I wanted to gain a perspective on how the educational system in Scotland was responding to its government's insistence on achievement for all, to look at how teachers were experiencing Teach First participants in London, and in relation to both of these to review what current educational literature had to say about the various routes taken in teacher training, and in particular what was written on urban residencies.

To allow this to occur

- I worked through contacts in Teach First to set up visits to meet with teachers in London.
- I enrolled in the conference **School Leadership in Challenging times**, under the aegis of the **Scottish Centre for Studies in School Administration**.
- I carried out a literature search revolving around urban teacher residencies

Findings

1. Literature review

The review of the research literature on TFA schemes commissioned by NZ PPTA recognised that the debate over alternative routes to teacher certification should be seen as sitting

.. within wider competing socio-political agendas which centre on choice, privatization and marketization of schools, curriculum and teacher education.

The review commented further

.. a significant part of TFA's long-term goals, is to develop leaders who can play future roles in educational reform either through politics or business.

(Literature review: Fast track teacher Education Schemes pp. 44-5.)

And also recognised that:

.. the impact of TFA and other alternative schemes on traditional ITE programmes seems likely to be that the latter will be increasingly required to much more strongly and publicly argue the case that teachers' work is intellectual, social, emotional and complex. Additionally, while teachers' professional skills are a critical part of students' success, there are also other important economic, social, cultural and political issues that impact on schooling. (p 47)

And so my sabbatical report has come to embrace these large issues of the place of education within political ideals and the place of teacher education in preparing the teachers to play a part in this future.

Earlier this year I became aware of the growing debate in Scotland on the state of education (refer Appendix 1 – Give headmasters more power ...). **The Commission on School Reform** had found that an estimated one in five Scottish school leavers had few or no qualifications, and poor skills in basic literacy and numeracy.

This Commission followed on from an OECD report **Quality and Equity of Schooling in Scotland (2007)** that found:

- *A widening achievement gap from about P5*
- *Marked social differences in basic achievement*
- *Declining student engagement and interest (especially in early secondary)*
- *Marked gaps in (qualification) attainment*
- *Staying-on rates that have ceased to grow*
- *Wide regional variations in post-compulsory participation, and*

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- *A worrying, comparatively high level of young people not in education, employment or training.*

The parallels between these findings from Scotland and the contemporary educational landscape in New Zealand are fascinating.

The work of the commission was followed by **The Donaldson Report – Teaching Scotland’s Future, Report of a review of teacher education in Scotland** which made a number of very pertinent points:

- *Leadership is based on fundamental values and habits of mind which must be acquired and fostered from entry into the teaching profession, and*
- *Career-long teacher education, which is currently too fragmented and often haphazard, should be at the heart of this process, with implications for its philosophy, quality, coherence, efficiency and impact. (Page 2)*

Universities should meet clear criteria for teacher education which go beyond the content of the courses themselves. Self-evaluation, inspection and direct feedback from students should all become stronger features of the approval process and of ongoing evaluation and improvement. Partnership with local authorities and schools should be strengthened to create relationships which are collaborative rather than complementary. (P 7 Donaldson)

As I have said, these comments from Scotland which so closely echo our experiences in New Zealand need to be seen in a wider OECD context. Here is a perspective from the USA:

A broader challenge for states, school districts, and teacher preparers is how to develop and expand the reach of strong, efficient and affordable preparation routes that enable teachers to be competent when they enter teaching and that retain teachers as they become more effective. (p23, Does teacher preparation matter? Evidence about teacher Certification, Teach for America, and Teacher effectiveness. Darling, Hammond, Holtzman, Gatlin, and Heuilig. Stanford University. Education Policy Analysis Archives, vol 13, No 42, Oct. 12, 2005)

And here from Singapore:

There is an urgent need to recognize teachers’ work as complex and demanding and improvement in teacher quality requires a reconceptualization of how we prepare a new generation of teachers ... it is manifested in qualities that require teachers to value and sustain the intellect, to work collaboratively with other stakeholders in education, to be responsible and accountable and to be committed to lifelong learning and reflexivity. (Transforming Teacher Education, National Institute of Education, Singapore, 2008)

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In Scotland Donaldson continued his commentary on global contexts:

Across the world, governments are reforming their education systems in quite radical ways as they try to address challenges arising from globalisation, societal change and technological development and to address their own specific national needs and aspirations. (Donaldson, p17)

Donaldson then turned his comments on teacher training within the Scottish models to include Teach First:

Teach First, which grew out of Teach for America, has an increasingly strong position in England. Teach First focuses on areas of deprivation. It attracts highly-qualified graduates who might not in other circumstances have considered teaching as a profession. .. Although there is not the same pressure to recruit more teachers in Scotland ... routes of this nature could complement more established ways into the profession. (p 26)

Donaldson certainly saw the possibilities that Teach First offered as a pathway for teacher training and induction. It was also clear to me, as it is to many, that teacher induction cannot be isolated from the political imperatives that are being placed on compulsory education throughout the OECD.

As stated in **Exemplary Teacher Induction: an international review, Educational philosophy and theory, 38(3), Howe, E.R. (2006)**

The conclusions reached on the best approaches to induction programmes were:

- *Individualised induction plans and funding for mentor training;*
- *Development of partner schools for more extended periods of induction – mixed between universities and schools in the first year followed by more intensive school-based elements in the second year.*
- *Reduction in responsibilities in addition to reduction in teaching workload – time for reflection*
- *Development of an organisational culture in which there is collaborative exchange involving a range of professionals aimed at supporting newly qualified teachers, and*
- *Separation of the support and assessment functions of induction.*

Or more succinctly:

One factor stands out. Teacher preparation that focuses more on the work of the classroom and provides opportunities for teacher to study what they will be doing produces teachers who are more effective during their first year of teaching (p26) and

Teachers with stronger preparation in day-to-day issues are relatively more effective in their first year, while those with stronger content knowledge are able to make use of that knowledge by their second year. (p27 in Teacher Preparation and Student Achievement, Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, Wyckoff. NBER Working paper, No 14314, September 2008)

Donaldson's comments on School experience in the initial phase of teacher training in Scotland are perceptive:

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School experience is a vital part of preparation for teaching. However the proportion of time given to placements and what happens during placements remain contentious. For many, if not most students and teachers, placement provides the opportunity to develop and hone the skills required for the classroom. However it should do much more than provide practice in classroom skills, vital though these are. Experience in a school provides the opportunity to use those habits of reflection, self-evaluation and teamwork which are essential attributers of the twenty-first century professional. (p90)

This attitude is reinforced by comments from America such as:

.. programmes that were better able to control the field experiences of their students were also more effective. Programmes that had primary authority for selecting cooperating teachers and that required more supervision of novice teachers had greater effect on student achievement. (Learning from Multiple routes, Grossman and Loeb, ASCD Educational Leadership May 2010)

Professional development schools should become the norm for teacher induction. Teachers, like other professional, do not emerge from universities and colleges as fully formed professionals – but they do have a foundation of knowledge on which to base their practice. Under competent supervision, they become increasingly effective. (What makes a teacher effective? A summary of research findings on teacher preparation. NCATE)

And to return to Donaldson his conclusions and vision for the future are aspirational:

Teachers will be more research aware and engage directly in self evaluation. That means greater personal responsibility for professional learning and improved opportunities to pursue that learning. It means better use of scarce time by focussing more directly on relevance to and impact on young people's learning. It means more collegiate learning as part of teams supporting young people, mentoring colleagues and being open to fresh ways of working. And it means being a willing and active partner in building the next generation of teachers. (p102)

However this issue of mentoring of new teachers may be asking too much of our current system:

In many ways, mentoring is an unnatural activity for teachers. Good classroom teachers are effective because they can pull off a seamless performance, monitor students' understanding, and engage students in important ideas. But good classroom teachers may not know how to make their thinking visible, explain the principles behind their practice, to break down complex teaching moves into components understandable to a beginner. Nor do they necessarily know how to design an individualised curriculum for learning to teach that is tailored to the specific strengths and vulnerabilities of a particular novice in a specific context. (What new teachers need to learn, Feiman-Nemser. Educational Leadership, May 2003, Vol 60, No 8)

This debate on the place of teachers and education in contemporary society lies not only in educational academia but also in the media. Columnist Suzanne Moore, writing in the Guardian 12 June, 2013 (refer Appendix 2. I'm proof that anyone can sit an exam ...) on the debate over the revisions to the English qualification system:

Michael Gove's fundamentalist meddling is about conforming to a dimly imagined past, when analytical thinking was surplus to requirements...

When I have been to parents' evenings over the past year, I have asked teachers what they will be teaching. They say they will let me know when they are told. Meanwhile they are trying to raise the morale of those now sitting exams that are apparently "too easy". Gove seeks out his own Falkland's/miners' strike confrontation with teachers. As a fundamentalist, he does not value consultations because educational experts are inevitably all Bolsheviks. So I say to my girl: "Read a book. Read one that you enjoy. Employers will want people who can think as well as memorise facts." And then I hope. Thinking for oneself. There is no exam in that. That indeed is the course work of life. That, indeed, is why the government wants it stopped.

This clear political context for this debate on all aspects of education cannot be ignored. And so to return to the issue of how we best prepare teachers for work in contemporary classrooms.

2. Teach First

Any consideration of the role of Teach First lies within the debate regarding teacher training and induction.

Urban Teacher Residencies may cost more in upfront investments than most university-based and alternate pathways to certification, but they have the potential to bring important benefits that reach well beyond the scope of most teacher preparation programmes. Also, financial data suggest that successful UTRs could be quite cost-effective. The initial expense of a full-time, paid internship under the supervision of a master teacher can be offset by both the retention of the novice teachers and their increased teaching effectiveness over time.

Creating and sustaining urban teacher residencies – a new way to Recruit, Prepare, and Retain Effective teachers in High-Needs Districts, Berry, Montgomery, Curtis, Hernandez, Wetzell and Snyder. The Aspen Institute, Centre for Teaching Quality, August 2008

As one aspect of my sabbatical leave I met with a number of teachers who are involved in Teach First in London. As I have already stated the English experience of TF must be seen within the educational context of England where there remains clear perceived distinctions between graduates from the Russell Group of universities and those that have graduated from other universities. The stratification of English academic society appears to be as entrenched as ever within a society that still grapples with north-south divide, regional accents, etc.

The perception of a senior administrator responsible for induction of new staff is pertinent as it reflects the fact that most school leavers in the 21st century will experience a range of careers within their working life:

It is a huge advantage for senior students to see teachers who have held previous professions before entering teaching.

This administrator also acknowledged the range of academic expertise seen within the teaching profession in England:

It has also been good to get academic rigour into the classroom, because teaching in such schools (as ours) is not necessarily seen as desirable.

When speaking to teachers who had entered the profession through the Teach First pathway the tensions inherent in alternative pathways came to the fore:

Participant A

Initial hostility of teaching staff ... Struggle with the tension between university and school demands. There needs to be greater clarity of the requirements for qualification ... I need to plan very carefully.

As can be seen these tensions lie not only within the workplace, but also within the academic demands of the training pathway. And these tensions were also voiced by another Teach First teacher:

Participant B

I struggled with the stereotypes towards TF trainees ... I am really glad (I came into teaching this way) I wouldn't have chosen any other way.

In talking to a Head Teacher the wider issues of the university pathways, and the socio-economic context came to the fore in a conversation that revolved around the English University system and the challenges of being a low socio-economic school in London.

It is gratifying to realise that a number of the issues raised within the London context are not reflected in the New Zealand situation; however one area of commonality is the way that Teach First has attracted some hostility from the established teaching profession within New Zealand. While PPTA has stated ... *Because the university has now been able to meet all those requirements, our position now, while not one of enthusiastic support for the programme, needs to be one of professional co-operation and suspension of judgment...* the initial response of teachers has not always been welcoming. This has posed challenges for schools wishing to work alongside the University of Auckland in this alternative pathway to teacher education particularly in terms of providing the necessary mentoring and support that these teachers need.

3. Conference

I also attended a conference, **School Leadership in Challenging times**, under the aegis of the **Scottish Centre for Studies in School Administration**.

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There were a number of highlights that came out of this conference – the first was to have Prof Viviane Robinson’s approach to learning conversations given central prominence in a session, and then on another day to have NZ’s high performance in PISA (mentioned in the same breath as Finland!) being presented as a desirable goal for the Scottish education system.

The conference was also fascinating in the way that Scotland is considering the move towards greater autonomy for schools. As a NZ principal it was salutary to be involved in discussions led by Dr Judith McClure, the chair of the Advisory Board of SCSSA, around what accountability meant for head teachers in Scotland:

- Strategic planning for their schools, including the management of risk; working collegially with their local authority.
- Learning and teaching and the ethos of the school; including the provision of useful qualifications, both academic and technical and the pathways to sustained destinations
- The personal development and welfare of each pupil; including leading in working with parents and responding to them and where required, social services and the police.
- Working with colleagues and employee relations.
- Financial strategy and management.
- Working with local businesses, universities and colleges in the co-production of education and in philanthropy.
- Health and Safety

Criteria such as these are ones that a NZ principal would take as a given. But what also came out of this conference was the opportunity to hear Prof Graham Donaldson, the author of the Donaldson Report, and being able to engage further with his thoughts on future developments in initial teacher training.

Implications

As already stated I had three inter-linked areas of education that underpinned my work whilst on sabbatical leave. Having completed this leave I am able to state the following:

1. What was fascinating to learn in Scotland is that there is a strong push for greater autonomy for schools as the system responds to governmental pressure for achievement for all.
2. From London I learnt that all teachers involved with the Teach First pathway into the profession shared identical pressures as are being faced by teachers in New Zealand, and
3. From my reading of what current educational literature has to say about the various routes taken in teacher training, and in particular what was written on urban residencies, that the “jury is still out” as to whether urban teacher residencies necessarily achieve any greater success than conventional pathways, but that they are of equal merit.

Conclusions

It has been a wonderful opportunity to stand outside of the New Zealand educational system and to take a look at it through a variety of overseas lenses.

It is salutary to have been reminded of the esteem that is held towards the quality of the educational research coming out of NZ universities. It is also flattering to be a part of a NZ state education system that is held up as an exemplar of quality for other education systems to aspire to. It has also been beneficial to be able to match my perceptions of the TF scheme with those involved in TF in England. I remain convinced that Mangere College's partnership with the University of Auckland in placing Teach First graduates has been a positive step in ensuring that future graduate teachers are well prepared for the contemporary classroom.

The New Zealand teaching service cannot afford to remain apart from contemporary international developments in teacher training. The current discussion over the proposals for the NZ Teachers Council further re-inforces this fact and if our profession is to aspire to our Minister's words in the foreword to the discussion document on the Teachers Council that, *(we need to) ... attract highly qualified graduates, and support their professional development ...* then these alternative pathways, such as Teach First, into the teaching profession must continue to be supported.

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Appendix 1

Give headmasters more power to stop Scottish schools' decline, says report

Headmasters should have more power, and schools should be allowed to be different, after decades of reforms that have failed disadvantaged children, according to a critical report on Scotland's schools.

By [Auslan Cramb](#), Scottish Correspondent

8:37AM GMT 05 Mar 2013

It warns that Scottish education is no longer world-beating and advocates a move away from a uniform approach towards greater diversity, with more decision-making at a local level and less council control.

The Commission on School Reform found that an estimated one in five school leavers had few or no qualifications, and poor skills in basic literacy and numeracy.

It wants schools that are enthusiastic about change to be allowed to progress more quickly to become "ambassadors" for schools adopting reforms at a slower pace.

It also wants senior staff to be able to take decisions and control budgets, and suggests that in many cases councils are too involved in day-to-day management.

Decisions should be tailored to the needs of the children in each case, instead of conforming to an across-the-board policy. That might mean recruiting talented teachers to work in deprived areas by offering financial incentives.

The commission would also like schools to have the freedom to specialise in areas like vocational skills or arts or science.

But it ruled out any form of academic selection and rejected a move towards academy schools, which have been introduced in England with funding from central, rather than local, government.

Chaired by educationalist Keir Bloomer, the body was set up in 2011 by the think tanks Reform Scotland and the Centre for Scottish Public Policy.

It has produced 37 recommendations covering areas including the development of the new Curriculum for Excellence and a centre dedicated to improving outcomes in deprived areas.

Mr Bloomer said: "There is an assumption in Scotland that our education system has always been, and is now, among the world's best. There may have been a time when that was true but unfortunately it is not true now.

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"Scotland's schools do an excellent job. The standard of education they provide is high and it is remarkably consistent across the country. But they are no longer world leading. If we want to be back again in the position of being the world's best then there is no alternative but to make some quite significant changes.

"The role of government and its agencies is strategic leadership. It is not micro-management. The role of local authorities is about co-ordination and about championing the interests of the individual child and family. The role of schools, increasingly, has to be about innovation."

He said that if schools were more empowered the result would be a "richness and diversity in the system which it currently lacks".

Elsewhere, it found that in reading, almost half of the countries overtaking Scotland were developing countries.

It also said that the fact many children began to fall behind in early secondary had been apparent during more than 40 years of reforms that had failed to address disadvantage.

It criticised the weak implementation of new ideas, saying the launch of Standard Grades was so delayed that the first candidates were the children of the children for whom they were intended, while the Curriculum for Excellence had taken a decade to reach the point of students sitting new exams.

Hugh Henry, for Scottish Labour, said the report was "right to challenge the complacency about our international reputation", adding: "No-one can argue with the devolution of more responsibility to schools, but the big issue is one of effective leadership at a school and departmental level."

Michael Russell, the education minister, insisted Scottish education was good and getting better, but said the report contained "interesting" recommendations and he planned to meet Mr Bloomer to discuss building on "what has already been achieved".

He added: "I am pleased the commission has recognised that Curriculum for Excellence provides the framework to continue those improvements.

"I believe we have the right elements in place to secure a truly excellent education system and we are making progress in that regard."

Daily Telegraph

Appendix 2

I'm proof that anyone can sit an exam stoned and pass by spewing out facts

Michael Gove's fundamentalist meddling is about conforming to a dimly imagined past, when analytical thinking was surplus to requirements

Suzanne Moore, The Guardian, Wednesday 12 June 2013

When my 12-year-old said this week that she needed to do some homework, I felt like saying: "Don't bother. Just watch The Kardashians." Like many people, I am quite worried about Kim and Kanye. I didn't say this. I didn't say: "You don't need to learn much – just memorise stuff and spew it out when the time comes." I didn't say: "That poem you love, the one you took into school, will no longer count as a poem because it is in fact a lyric written by Morrissey." I didn't want to tell her about the new "I-levels", graded 1-8, because, as [Richard Adams pointed out in this newspaper](#), the blue people in Avatar use an octal numeral system as they have only four fingers on each hand. This makes as much sense to me as anything the education secretary Michael Gove says.

To be frank, I am fed up with resitting Gove and his reforms, though he has himself resat them several times. It always descends into Gove's champions – Toby Young, UKIP's James "Delingpole" and people [who are nothing to do with Gove](#) but who tweet as [@toryeducation](#) – attacking me in the style of overexcited 13-year-old boys (eg, the latter's "[@suzanne_moore](#) You're rattled cos u know you've committed Hack Fuckup 101, basing article on wrong facts, I double dare u to call DfE").

Who talks like this?

Delingpole tweeted that Toby Young had given, "[Suzanne Moore such a seeing-to she'll be walking bow-legged for months](#)". Nice. He deleted this and was forced to apologise but, like everything, it remains online.

Such is the mindset of those who would teach our children well.

Actually, I have argued for ages that [GCSEs](#) are redundant if the school leaving age is 18, but Gove is a whirling dervish of zealous policies. He is right about certain things. Coursework is fiddled. That's what private [schools](#) and tutors do. Whereas I love an exam, cramming at the last minute, forgetting it all the next day. It's the one skill that politicians and journalists share.

Wandering round this week, carrying, of all things, a column – no, not this one, I am not yet reduced to pamphleteering, but a plaster column my friend Deborah gave me – I bumped into several local parents who were either depressed or hysterical. "My son is dyslexic – there is no way he can do [exams](#)"; "I am going to take my kid out of school"; "My daughter is just sitting her GCSEs and has been told they are meaningless."

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All of this meddling is purportedly about raising standards – but we all know the standards that need raising are basic literacy and numeracy at primary level. *This* is the appalling failure of our education system. The tinkering of grades at 16 or 18 has little to do with the world of work or actual education.

Bear in mind that most of what you read on the subject of education will be written by those who privately educate their children. There is no denying the massive problems in state schools, but why not let schools reform rather than enforce upon them this top-down antediluvian affair? Do I need my child to study Shakespeare and Austen? Sure, and The Sopranos and Toni Morrison. Why ignore music as a core subject? Do we not see now that the brain connects music to maths and poetry? But theories of learning are not Gove's (nor his fanboys') forte. Cognitive development with both pro- and anti-Piaget arguments appear to be beyond them, along with different kinds of intelligence.

Gove's initiative is all about conforming to a dimly imagined past – just as Harvard is moving away from exams for literature, and as China and India realise that exams alone are not producing the kind of analytical thinking required to cut through information saturation.

Nothing was more puke-making than Gove's rigorous eyelash fluttering this week at the hypocritical Diane Abbott, who endorsed his plans for "rigorous qualifications".

As for what employers need ... Well, I am glad that I did Latin, but I can see the different talents that my kids have, despite their dreadful schools and dreadful mother. My eldest's dissertations at BA and MA level involved long and difficult research on sensitive subjects (social cohesion in Leeds just after the 7/7 bombings, then the EDL). None of this research comes from cramming. The ability to write at length, to sustain and structure and pace an argument, is useful in work and in life and in no way predicated on the ability to turn up stoned and pass a biology exam. I speak from experience. I am not proud of this, but I am proud of the work I did at degree level: the combination of essays, exams and dissertation. Why should school be so different?

When I have been to parents' evenings over the past year, I have asked teachers what they will be teaching. They say they will let me know when they are told. Meanwhile, they are trying to raise the morale of those now sitting exams that are apparently "too easy". Gove seeks out his own Falklands/miners' strike confrontation with teachers. As a fundamentalist, he does not value consultations because educational experts are inevitably all Bolsheviks.

So I say to my girl: "Read a book. Read one that you enjoy. Employers will want people who can think as well as memorise facts."

And then I hope. Thinking for oneself. There is no exam in that. That, indeed, is the coursework of life. That, indeed, is why this government wants it stopped.