

Editorial

"Lifelong Learning" has become a familiar phrase generally and to educationalists in recent years, with the latter finding it hard to disagree with its sentiment, although there are those who hold to the axiom, "you cannot teach an old dog new tricks". Lifelong learning is high on the agenda of government, employers, employees, students and institutions and it describes a deliberate progression throughout a person's life, where the acquisition and application of knowledge and skills are continuously reviewed and upgraded to meet the challenges set by our ever-changing society.

It is therefore interesting that the new UK Prime Minister, who has established wide-ranging reviews of government policy in education, health and the environment with consultative conferences involving people from all age groups and walks of life, has heralded in lifelong learning by dividing the former Department for Education and Skills (DfES) into the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and the Department for Innovation, University and Skills (DIUS). It is ironic that the acronym DCSF does not slip easily from the tongue, as DSCF would, which has led two government agencies to refer wrongly to this department. So much for joined-up education, which must surely underwrite lifelong learning?

At this point you may well wonder what lifelong learning has to do with this edition of *Education Today*. This edition is not themed, but if a descriptor was needed for the collection of five articles, the term "Lifelong Learning" would not be a misnomer.

We start with an article by Dr Norbert Pachler and Professor Karen Evans on the recently formed WLE Centre for Excellence at the University of London's Institute of Education which aims to transform the current models of work-based learning to respond to the diversity of professional learning needs emerging in many areas – a partnership between Higher Education and the world of work funded by the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFC). This is a very vital area of continuing professional development that forms an integral part of lifelong learning.

There follows an article by Professor Joan Freeman who has had a long association with the College (for a while being its first female Senior Vice-

President) and a lifelong passion for the needs and development of gifted children. Her research in this field is known internationally and includes a longitudinal study of a group of these children since 1974. Her writing is prolific and always readable.

The Royal Society of Arts (RSA) with its *Campaign for Learning* has strongly argued that attempts to define a simple - or even a single - model of lifelong learning are unlikely to succeed because, as it has demonstrated, learning is a messy process. The next two articles look at the thorny issue of single sex versus co-education of school pupils and that of home versus public education.

Dr Andrew Mullins and Professor Tony Shannon look at the arguments for and against single sex and co-education, as well as the research underlying these arguments. They also touch on the growing concern in some countries that boys are substantially under-performing and in others that there are attempts to ban single-sex education. The legal right for education at home in the UK was established in the Fifties when the Chief Education Officer for Norfolk, Sir Lincoln Ralphs, took legal action against a family who wanted to educate their children at home and lost his case in the High Court. Whilst there are no official figures, research suggests that currently around 50,000 (0.5%) UK children of compulsory school age are being educated at home. Brian Hogg looks at how Leeds LEA handles elective education at home.

Finally, Eamonn Gallagher in an article on a Citizenship programme introduced into Northern Ireland's revised curriculum shows its potential for reducing racism in the province. Northern Ireland remains overwhelmingly indigenous and is faced with an increasing number of attacks on the minority ethnic communities. The article suggests that citizenship education can play a role in moving towards a more tolerant and inclusive community.

A return will be made to the inclusion of lead articles in the next few editions and will include one from the Chief Executive of the RSA and from the four newly appointed Professors of Education to the College of Teachers; this continues the tradition established by the first such appointment of Joseph Payne which pre-dated university professorships in this field.

Professor Ray Page – *Executive Editor*

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