

# Beyond QCA

## Digital Creativity in the classroom



### Skills for the 21st Century

#### QCA has taken learning so far... but what next?

Pupils over the past ten years or so have engaged with a curriculum largely designed around the National Curriculum and specifically the QCA schemes of work intended to assist in the delivery of that curriculum. No-one can deny that some degree of coherence and unity was required in the curriculum but there are signs that the curriculum is emerging and evolving into an altogether more exciting entity.

The change of emphasis towards “Excellence and Enjoyment” has taken a while to mature as a concept in a system where exam results are still seen as the primary measure of school success - especially by OfSTED. However, things are changing - especially in the Primary sector.

A desire to make the school curriculum more engaging and as a result more effective has led to some exciting innovations happening. Not only have schools embraced new curricula such as the IPC, exciting new innovations in the use of technology have breathed new life into traditional subjects. Digital media, simulation software and the increased use of mobile personal technologies are all making their mark in schools across the country.

7 year olds recording radio interviews and stories for publishing on the Internet; 8 year olds ‘blogging’ their ICT experiences on the ‘net, and 10 year olds creating complex 3D cad-cam models

based on digital images they had gathered with virtual film tours of their finished models.

I have been involved in leading all those activities in schools in the past 6 months. The pupils were all normal children in normal primary schools, yet were enthused, excited and immersed in their learning, and what is more they were acquiring a whole set of skills which QCA struggles to impart

#### Business and Enterprise Agenda

##### Skills Required by Employers (Thornburg 2002)

Technological Fluency

Communication

Teamwork (Collaboration)

Leadership

Problem Solving

Creativity

If we look at Government Strategy in the Secondary sector we see an emphasis on Business and Enterprise skills. These skills have been defined by Pink (2005) amongst others. Thornburg’s research in 2002 set out the skill set most in demand by employers. What is so powerful about the research is that the skills industry wants today tie in very

closely with what educators want to give their pupils.

Thornburg's skills are exactly those that I was trying to impart on my first primary school class, 21 years ago. I was trying to introduce IT then as now; I wanted my pupils to communicate effectively and work collaboratively, and I wanted then to make decisions independent of me. Problem solving was a great way of challenging them and it all added up to a creative environment where pupils were not afraid to try because they were not afraid to fail.

Today Technological Fluency is at the heart of the new movement in schools. Without it how can our future citizens operate in a world that is increasingly using technology to communicate ideas and information. (The web doubles in size every 30 days!)The increased emphasis on global networks makes teamwork and collaboration essential skills in any workplace. Leadership and problem solving are what makes a workforce special, while creativity is the key to success if we are to compete in the increasingly cut-throat global market place

### **“Not just function, but also design..Not just argument, but also story” (Pink, 2005, pp. 65-67)**

Pink identifies design, story, symphony, empathy, play, and meaning, as the key skills for the workforce if they are to be successful in the 21st. Century. He goes on to state;

*Not* just function, but also design: products must be beautiful, whimsical, or emotionally engaging;

*Not* just argument, but also story: being able to fashion a compelling narrative;

*Not* just focus but also symphony: synthesis, seeing the big picture, crossing boundaries;

*Not* just logic but also empathy: forging relationships, caring for others;

*Not* just seriousness but also play;

*Not* just accumulations but also meaning; purpose, transcendence, and spiritual fulfillment.

After the uniformity and rigidity of a Government imposed curriculum, it is increasingly apparent that a more creative, exciting and relevant curriculum is

required to provide pupils with the necessary skills to survive in the modern employment market.

What this means to schools is that they can allow the natural curiosity of children to flourish. Technology should provide an opportunity to allow pupils to learn in an exciting and engaging way.

Traditional skills are not forgotten in all of this. For Example; the rise of the citizen publisher through the use of the internet has provided pupils with an audience way beyond their teacher and as a result, a purpose to engage in communication both written and spoken.

### **“I've got this great idea for a story...”**

The above quote was from a boy in a primary school in Manchester speaking to a teacher. He wanted to write his story, in his own time, for performance on the school's internet radio site - a project I am still involved in. This was a pupil who was not involved in the project as such but still wanted to write. We had provided an audience and a purpose and he had an idea he wanted to share with the world.

We hear so much about boys and writing (or the lack of it) and here was proof of what I have long advocated. Boys *will* write if they are given an *audience* that inspires them and from that stems the *purpose* for writing.

Similarly those pupils making tours of their 3D models found out for themselves that they had to have a script if they were not to get completely in a muddle. As a result they themselves decided as teams to plan out what they were going to say for each part of the tour. I will leave the reader to tick the skills off !

It all adds up to an exciting time to be involved in Learning and Teaching.