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From children's rights to teachers' responsibilities – identifying an agenda for teacher education

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Abstract

This paper introduces the themes explored in the symposium by seeking to connect various strands of argument and evidence to provide an overview of the Rights Respecting Initial Teacher Education course being developed at London Metropolitan University. Our starting point is the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the vision of education that flows from a commitment to this document. We then explore this in relation to policy developments in England around reform of the Children's Workforce and a commitment to a series of policy objectives collectively known as Every Child Matters. These two starting points are interpreted through a theoretical position which seeks to re-position teaching as a political activity, rather than a de-politicised, professional activity. This position interprets the children's rights agenda from Freire's commitment that "education either functions as an instrument which is used to… bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom."

Having established this critical perspective we then consider the evidence emerging from school developments – the workplaces for our student teachers. This evidence base suggests that some schools are already developing innovative ways to realise children's rights, both formally through their recognition by UNICEF as Rights Respecting Schools, and through the more piecemeal implementation of student voice, student observer, student researcher and school council initiatives. This evidence is discussed in order to identify trends which should inform initial teacher education.

Finally, through a discussion of the critical theoretical perspective outlined in part 1 and the pragmatic response to evidence presented in part 2, we outline a model of initial teacher education which situates education within wider social contexts and therefore sees the teacher as a change agent within wider social change. In this sense, rights are interpreted and reinterpreted through the forces that shape social change and thus present a radicalising agenda for teacher education.

Teaching as a political activity and the challenge for professional education

Policy developments in England and elsewhere increasingly describe teachers as educational professionals. The definition of 'professionalism' thus becomes a significant site of political attention. On the one hand, official versions of professionalism are closely aligned to the discourse of managerialism and accountability within education and the public services more generally (Ball, 2003). On such a view, teachers' professionalism is judged by their achievement of specified standards and their compliance with managerialist expectations. In a government document outlining the

roles of 'Middle Management' in schools, these ideas are exemplified in a set of role descriptors in which the classroom teacher is envisaged as being responsible for:

> "gathering stakeholder views in line with subject and year policies... apply[ing] established guidance on effective teaching to your lessons... and feedback to colleagues on their effectiveness... identify[ing] next steps in response to monitoring and evaluation, performance management processes..." (DfES, 2005: 6-7)

Such definitions leave teachers struggling to reconcile "the aspirations of the state and traditional notions of professionality" (Pachler, 2007: 245). This has led many to explore new models of professionalism which move from "technicist" approaches towards a model that "integrates the social processes of change within society and schools with the individual development and empowerment of teachers" (Patrick, Forde, & McPhee, 2003: 237).

In our struggle to articulate a model for professionalism within our own initial teacher education (ITE) programme at London Metropolitan University we have drawn on some familiar theoretical starting points. In the first instance we have introduced the notion of the teacher as 'change agent'. Michael Fullan argued that in order to undertake the complex role of the teacher within systems of education which all too often lead to a 'sense of inconsequentiality' (Fullan, 1993) one must remain aware that teaching is at its core a moral profession, and that to enact one's moral commitment one must also prepare to become an agent of change. Thus for him the key to maintain the clear moral commitment that often motivates new entrants to the profession, is to equip them with an understanding of how they can exercise agency within a larger system. Fullan's model requires teachers to pay attention to four sets of competencies. Firstly teachers must develop mastery, or a technical competence in their work, but this is just the first step in their professional development. Secondly, teachers should be prepared and able to inquire into practice and to generate new understandings to inform their subsequent development. Thirdly, teachers must be able to collaborate, in order to build alliances with others and to develop through professional relationships with colleagues and others. Finally, and echoing his initial commitment to the moral dimension to education, Fullan argues it is essential that teachers remain conscious of their vision for education, as this will provide them with the stability and certainty with which they can judge the changing context and policy agendas and continue to pursue their own role in providing meaningful educational experiences for young people. The implications for ITE are obvious, and having adopted this model we have ensured that our student teachers not only develop a technical mastery of pedagogy but that they also have opportunities to undertake and reflect on collaborative work and pursue professional inquiry, as well as receiving support to articulate and reflect on their own vision for education and the kind of teacher they want to be.

The model of the teacher as 'change agent' clearly echoes Richard Shaull's often-quoted[1] summary of Freire's philosophy that:

[1] The following quotation is often attributed to Freire himself but actually appears in Shaull's foreword to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

> "education either functions as an instrument which is used to… bring about conformity... or it becomes the 'practice of freedom', the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world" (Shaull's foreword to Freire, 1996: 16).

By returning to Freire's rejection of 'banking education' which views teachers as merely engaged in making 'deposits' of knowledge in learners' heads, we have been able to recognise many aspects of the narrow 'official professionalism' that we need to question. Freire lists some of the characteristics of 'banking education':

- The teacher teaches and the students are taught,
- The teacher talks and the students listen,
- The teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined,
- The teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher,
- The teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his or her own professional authority, which she and he sets in opposition to the freedom of the students (Freire, 1996: 54).

For Freire, all these actions are obstacles to the ultimate goal of education – to enable us to become more human, which can only be achieved through the development of a critical consciousness, which is itself the first step towards informed action in and on the world. As bell hooks (hooks, 1994) and Wayne Au (Au, 2009) demonstrate Freire's work remains personally and politically controversial for a range of reasons, but at the core, this commitment is one that resonates with the staff at London Metropolitan, and also with many of the teachers with whom we work. Whilst our practice may sometimes fall short of this, it does provide a critical and stimulating starting point for us to read the world and try to act within it.

Children's Rights and Education

Reflecting as a group of teacher educators on Fullan's model it is reasonable to ask ourselves what vision could we articulate that would both enable us to commit morally to the ITE programmes and provide a sufficiently robust and inclusive moral vision for the students who attend the university. Narrow and partisan political agendas are clearly unsuitable for such a task and yet it is important, as Fullan reminds us, not to deny the essential moral dimension to our work in education. Our starting point in this project is the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the vision of education that flows from a commitment to this document. This provides us with a normative framework which both resonates with government policy and provides a critical perspective from which to critique that policy. For example, the UK government has argued that its overarching Children's Plan is based on the UNCRC (DCSF, 2009: 9), although critics argue that there is a tendency to focus on protection rather than participation (Osler & Starkey, 2005: 54-5) or express scepticism that its provenance in the Treasury leads it to emphasise childcare as an mechanism for releasing parents to paid employment (Alderson, 2008: 52-3). As teacher educators we feel we need to

engage with the UNCRC afresh, rather than rely solely on the current administration's interpretation of it. What follows is an account of our intellectual re-engagement with children's rights as we seek to orientate our courses to the shifting policy landscape of teaching in secondary schools.

The rights embodied in the UNCRC are partly aspirational and conditional on contextual circumstances. They are therefore limited and one of the important limiting factors is the necessity to balance rights between people. On this reading rights are social, i.e. an individual claiming his or her rights simultaneously accepts and acknowledges the equivalent rights of others, which leads logically both to a sense of how one's rights are limited and to an associated sense of obligation to others (Alderson, 2008:18). This acknowledgement that rights are not simple commodities to be given or taken, indicates what fertile ground the UNCRC provides for adults who are employed by the state to further children's rights. Rather than provide a prescription for action, the UNCRC provides an ethical framework (Osler & Starkey, 2005: 35-7), the principles of which provide a challenge to deep and critical reflection on the nature of one's professional work.

There are three partly overlapping kinds of rights all of which have implications for education (Alderson, 2008: 17). Firstly provision rights relate to necessary services to which children are entitled, and clearly education is one of these areas of provision. On this view schools provide the institutional means for achieving this right (at least for most children), and teachers are employed as agents of such institutions to provide the front line services. This much is simply to re-state an already existing institutional arrangement in rights-friendly language, but the challenge comes from appreciating that these institutional arrangements have to meet the educational rights of all children, and this links to a more challenging agenda for inclusive education (Stubbs, 1998). Once one has grasped the significance of this entitlement, the practical day to day task of differentiating classroom activities effectively moves beyond a simple question of technical teaching strategies and is powerfully linked to broader issues about school structure, the roles of schools in reproducing existing inequalities and the potential role of the teacher in mitigating against the worst excesses of these tendencies. By engaging with the fundamental question of whether schools and classrooms operate in ways which meet all children's entitlement to an education, or maintain inequalities in provision which are predictable, one is led to the political question of whether such practices can be interpreted as 'coincidence or conspiracy' (Gillborn, 2008).

For us then, a commitment to provision rights entails a critical reflection on the nature of inclusion. Teachers have to understand their role in the classroom as a facilitator of learning, and this requires them to hone their teaching skills. However, they should also understand their role within the broader structures and processes which operate to include and exclude, and which place restrictions on them and their students. Echoing Freire and Fullan, we have to work with our student teachers to help them to develop a critical consciousness about the nature of the education system so that they can begin to envisage themselves as change agents within it.

The second kind of right embodied in the UNCRC is protection rights, and these relate to the need to protect children from neglect, abuse or discrimination. In the first decade of

the 21st century, official government statistics indicated that of the 11 million children in England, each year between 50-100 died from neglect and abuse; 25,000 were on child protection registers; 60,000 were 'looked after' by local authorities; and 3-4 million were deemed to be 'vulnerable' (Alderson, 2008: 50). Schools have named members of staff responsible for child protection and clearly entrants to the profession need to understand how the system works and what role they may play within such a system, for example passing on a concern if they have spotted signs of possible neglect. As well as being prepared to deal with these less common issues there are day to day problems relating to bullying and oppression, with children occupying the roles of victims, perpetrators and bystanders. Whilst tackling in-class bullying is an obvious manifestation of this issue, which most teachers are prepared to deal with, there is a need to move beyond the immediate manifestations of such violent acts, and to consider hidden bullying, such as that exemplified through cyber-bullying, and deeper examples of prejudice, such as homophobia. In this regard protection from harm becomes a more expansive and complex issue than simply the archetype of protection from physical harm. One moves towards a more subtle and critical requirement to establish a psychologically safe environment, which requires a high level of alertness in the classroom and a willingness to reflect critically on one's own stance.

In this regard teachers benefit from professional education which supports them in exploring their own position in relation to these issues, and to develop a more conscious stance about their role. Pearce provides an illuminating account of how difficult the journey to full political and professional consciousness can be for a white middle class woman attempting to teach inclusively in a multicultural urban school (Pearce, 2005) and Epstein and her colleagues illustrate how well-meaning teachers continue to marginalise young lesbian and gay people when hetero-normative assumptions remain un-surfaced and un-challenged (Epstein, O'Flynn, & Telford, 2003). Au (2009) illustrates in his critical discussion of Freirean pedagogy that one of the most significant principles established by Freire's view of the world is that we can come to know about the experiences of others (i.e. people who are 'Othered' through processes of oppression) and we can therefore tackle this in our teaching.

The third category of rights in the UNCRC relates to participation rights and in relation to education the most significant of these relates to article 12, which requires young people to be given the opportunity to express their view, and to have those views taken into account. As Alderson points out, in practice this often comes down to young people being consulted or being given the chance to make decisions, and she outlines four types of involvement ranging from (1) being informed, (2) expressing a view, (3) influencing the decision-making, and (4) being the main decider (Alderson, 2008: 91-2). In reality this desire to promote participation has wide implications for teachers and article 12 has influenced a whole range of initiatives in schools to promote school councils (Whitty & Wisby, 2007), student voice and consultation (DCSF, 2008; Flutter & Rudduck, 2004), student researchers (Fielding & Bragg, 2003; Kellett, 2005a, 2005b) and student observers[2]. The development of student voice relates to recent policy in England on

[2] Staff from the Initial Teacher Education programme at London Metropolitan have recently been involved in training young people (11-18 years of age) to observe their teachers and provide feedback on aspects of their teaching.

personalisation in education, which is often characterised, at least in part by greater student autonomy. One government sponsored policy paper envisages children and their parents as service-users whose 'choice' and 'voice' can be used to drive excellence in provision (Leadbetter, 2004) and this resonates with broader models of welfare reform in which these two mechanisms are seen as essential in driving up standards in all public services from welfare and health to housing and education (Coffield, 2007; PMSU, 2006).

For us, this commitment to participation rights raises interesting issues for student teachers about how they can explore student voice in their own teaching, without subverting these into mere extensions of managerialist approaches, i.e. how can they retain the emancipatory dimension to such practices within often restrictive hierarchical institutions. More practically from the student teacher perspective we have to tackle how they can manage the dual imperative of promoting student autonomy whilst rising to the challenge of behaviour management, which is a perennial problem in many English classrooms (NUT, 2010).

So far then, taking the UNCRC as a starting point we have arrived at three principles, which we have sought to incorporate into our teacher education programme:
(1) Teachers need to be prepared to understand the processes that include and exclude learners, from the classroom to the system level.
(2) Teachers must be prepared to critically reflect on their own values and beliefs in order to engage fully with the need to create positive and inclusive learning environments.
(3) Teachers should recognise the potential in young people to develop greater control over their education and to develop appropriate methods to enable them to form and express their opinions about it.

Osler and Starkey (2005) identify a more specific range of pedagogical principles, based on the UNCRC, and they argue that rights-respecting teachers should incorporate them in their practice. The following principles feature in an early lecture on 'how children learn' in our ITE course to illustrate how decisions about pedagogy can be based on learning theory and research and on ethical considerations:

- Dignity and Security (Art. 19, 23,28, 29) – an environment free of bullying, intimidation and mockery and teachers who nurture respectful relationships.
- Participation (Art. 12, 13, 14, 15, 31) – opportunities for learners to exercise choice and responsibility in their learning and teachers who consult about learning and promote learners' autonomy.
- Identity and inclusivity (Art. 2, 7, 8, 16, 23, 28, 29, 31) – respect for children's (multiple / hybrid) identities and the communities they belong to.
- Freedom (Art. 12, 13,14, 15) – classrooms which allow for maximum freedom of expression and conscience, but which have limitations to protect the freedom, security and dignity of all. Teachers who encourage and facilitate dialogue.
- Access to information (Art. 17) – opportunities to engage with a range of information and teachers who nurture the skills of critical interpretation. This is essential if learners are to have the opportunity to develop their own opinions.

- Privacy (Art. 16) – teachers should consider the purpose and the context if they seek information about the private lives of children.

Whilst this clearly has the potential to engage new teachers in deep and difficult discussions about their experiences, it also serves as a constant reminder of the moral dimension to teaching and the need for teachers to build up a repertoire of practical skills for classroom practice within an ethical professional framework.

In addition to these considerations, the UK government has been pursuing what it calls a "quiet revolution" in children's services in recent years (DCSF, 2009: 8) through its *Every Child Matters (ECM)* policy framework. At the heart of ECM is a commitment to five objectives: (1) economic well-being; (2) being healthy; (3) enjoying and achieving; (4) staying safe; and (5) making a positive contribution. According to UNICEF, these objectives can be seen as re-representations of the UNCRC. Under ECM schools are now directed and funded through a government Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and they are locally coordinated within integrated local authority structures for Children's Services. Within schools, there are now more additional staff and alternative professionals working as mentors, counsellors and home-school liaison workers, as well as named individuals with responsibility for liaising with other professionals, such as social workers, the police and health care professionals, to coordinate casework for individual children. Whilst the practice still tends to lag behind the rhetoric, there is no doubt that these structural changes represent significant developments for schools and the professionals who work within them.

Schools leading the way to a new paradigm

It is important to recognise that whilst ECM provides a positive context in which to pursue children's rights, there is also a strong competing discourse of academic standards. Government policy also continues to focus on managerialism and performativity (Ball, 2003, 2008), which often lead to results which sit uneasily with a commitment to nurturing individuals and valuing every child equally. Gillborn's work provides a detailed insight into the ways in which the objective of academic achievement, when pursued through high-pressure, selective and competitive means, can lead to the production and reproduction of traditional patterns of school failure for low-achieving groups, such as lower socio-economic groups (Cassen & Kingdon, 2007) and some minority ethnic pupils (Gillborn, 2008; Gillborn & Youdell, 2000).

It is possible for schools to deliver increasing outcomes (as measured by examination grades) through traditional means, and there are some schools that respond to such pressure by a return to tradition, which often includes a smart uniform, a strict discipline code with zero tolerance for transgression, a transmission model of teaching accompanied by frequent testing, a thorough test preparation regime and a highly selective focusing of resources on those students on the D-C grade borderline. As long as the desired outcome is achieved (annual increases in examination outcomes) government inspectors have been largely neutral on the means adopted to secure the achievement. Recently though, inspectors have also begun to look for evidence of the school's contribution to community cohesion, to the achievement of the five ECM outcomes, and in doing so, they have begun to give more weight to the opinions of children and young

people themselves. The mechanism for doing so is still rather rudimentary, and there are no schools to our knowledge where a school has failed because of poor performance in the latter categories, nevertheless, their inclusion in such officially significant quality assurance agencies does imply that the government is now looking for ways to bring the means and ends into alignment.

Of course some schools and local authorities have been attempting to do this already and UNICEF has been promoting a Rights Respecting School Award (RRSA) programme to provide a framework for schools which have decided to pursue success through children's rights. One large local authority has sought to introduce the approach across all its schools and in documentation on its website refers to the standards and quality assurance agenda:

> "Schools' own evaluations, Unicef RRSA reports and Ofsted inspections are now indicating higher levels of oracy, literacy (especially writing), personal development and well being in schools where rights based approaches are embedded as a whole school philosophy. It makes the difference between a school being judged 'outstanding' rather than 'good'."[3]

It is significant that innovations that would have previously been seen as existing on the radical edge of the education system are now being adopted by mainstream local authorities and being developed in ways which are compatible with dominant discourses around managerialism and performativity. The local authority in question describes its *Rights, Respect Responsibilities (RRR)* programme in ethical terms (we must treat children respectfully), in political terms (we must recognise our responsibilities under the UNCRC), in educational terms (developing individual's fulfilment), in academic terms (driving up standards) and in quality assurance terms (moving from one OfSTED category 'good' to the highest category 'outstanding'). It is this unifying potential of the concept of 'rights' which has made it so attractive as an organising principle for London Metropolitan's provision, but before we address this, it is worth considering the evidence emerging from the RRR programme to date.

Covell and Howe have been conducting research alongside the introduction of the RRR programme, to inform practitioners about how the policy is being implemented and to disseminate the case study more broadly (Covell & Howe, 2008; Covell, Howe, & McNeil, 2008). In their early evaluation of the introduction of the programme, they reported that one of the biggest impacts was on teacher morale:

> "Teachers said that it reminded them that their day-to-day interactions with children really do have the potential to improve society and that they can do so much more than get children through their tests" (Covell & Howe, 2005: 4).

Here we can see evidence of teachers using a rights-based approach to education to reflect critically on their own professionalism and their own agency within the educational system. In this way the programme holds out the promise of helping teachers

[3] *Rights Respecting Schools* available at: www3.hants.gov.uk/education/childrensrights/

mitigate against some of the pernicious effects of a culture of performativity and to re-engage them with a more holistic view of education. It also indicates that the rights agenda does not necessarily get hijacked for its contribution to academic standards alone – a fear expressed by some commentators on student voice (see for example Cook Sather, 2007; Fielding, 2007).

At the end of three years, the evaluators concluded that in those schools where the RRR approach had been fully implemented, these positive impacts on teachers continued and pupils were more likely to say they enjoyed school, they were more likely to participate in activities in the school and teachers reported improvements in the children's behaviour around school (Covell & Howe, 2008). Whilst children in all schools knew that they cannot simply do as they please, the evaluation report indicates that the moral reasoning behind such opinions develops, so in schools where the rights approach has not taken root children are more likely to cite adult authority as a key reason for them moderating their behaviour, whilst in RRR schools more children spoke about the need to avoid infringing other people's rights (Covell & Howe, 2008: 9). Their analysis also indicates that the positive student effects seemed to be most pronounced in schools in the most deprived areas, especially where there was a focus on participation.

In reviewing the literature on rights based approaches to education, Covell et al. argue that:

> "Children who are taught about their contemporaneous rights and responsibilities in classrooms and in schools that respect those rights by allowing meaningful participation are children who display moral and socially responsible behaviours and feel empowered to act" (Covell et al., 2008: 323).

Their evidence suggests that this process can be observed in both primary and secondary schools. The emphasis on participation also resonates with earlier research conducted by Hannam (2001; 2003) who observed that secondary schools could successfully combine high levels of student participation with improvements in attendance, punctuality, behaviour and achievement.

These rights respecting schools seem to offer benefits to teachers and students. Importantly in a school system where disruptive student behaviour is increasingly cited as a problem (NUT, 2010), it seems especially significant that there is evidence that adopting this approach helps teachers reduce burn-out and helps to improve the level of behaviour in class. RRR schools reported peer counselling and anti-bullying programmes, but there was also evidence of some students feeling more able to complain about disruptive behaviour as an infringement of their own right to learn, and thus beginning to take some of the responsibility for managing behavioural problems with the teacher. This reflects Starkey's view that:

> "Far from undermining teacher authority, it is a means to ensure that that authority is respected because it is based, not just on power, but also on an explicit commitment to fairness and respect for dignity" (Starkey, 2007: 14).

On the evidence available to us, it is possible to argue that bringing ends and means into alignment in this way provides the scope for uniting the often competing discourses of standards in education and inclusion. If one can run a school which teaches children about their rights in a rights respecting manner, and develops positive relationships which lead to academic achievement, it seems to hold out great hope for the future. If one aligns this evidence with the kinds of policies we noted in the first section of this paper, one can begin to feel optimistic that the tide may well be turning and that a rights-based education could well become part of the mainstream. I turn now to illustrate some of the ways in which we are preparing teachers for this kind of school at London Metropolitan University.

Preparing teachers as change agents

In the preceding sections I have outlined some of the underlying principles for our professional courses. We believe that teachers should embrace teaching as a moral activity and see themselves as agents of change. In order to realise this model in our courses we have embraced children's rights as the normative framework for our model of professionalism. In the final section I provide several vignettes to illustrate how these issues are developed in practice through the course.

Example 1 Inclusion

Maths and Science students joined together for a day to conduct a role play which investigated the tensions between setting by ability and inclusion. Through modelling role play, structured classroom debate, and dialogic teaching methods, the university tutors established a forum through which students could experience taking responsibility for their own and others' learning and reflect critically on the tensions in schools between making decisions about grouping students to promote academic standards and the implications for inclusive teaching. The ensuing discussion involved reflections across the range of issues from the technicalities of differentiating lessons appropriately to the effects of setting on motivation and attainment.

Example 2 Inclusion

All students are introduced to historically established and currently reproduced patterns of inequality in education. Workshops provide students with the space to think about their own understanding of equality by considering homophobia in schools. Through focusing on an often neglected area of school culture, and one which is personally challenging for some of our students, we begin to prepare them for the emotional, political and ethical dilemmas that may confront them as teachers. Some of our students feel that casual homophobia ("you're so gay", "that is so gay"...) is not a problem because the children do not actually mean 'gay' just 'rubbish', others have religious commitments which lead them to disapprove of homosexuality, others would simply prefer to seek some form of neutrality on the issue. By providing a space for them to reflect on the issues, to *think* about and *feel* their responses to them, we aim to provoke them to embark on the transition from their own personal response to that of a teacher. This enables us to illustrate how important it is to think of oneself as someone who has a

professional responsibility to recognise and protect children's rights and to maintain a safe environment in which all children can flourish.

Example 3 Rights Respecting Pedagogy

Early in the course student teachers are introduced to the work of influential learning theorists, to help them think about the question 'how do students learn?' and the associated question 'how can we help them to learn?' The model of pedagogy we promote reflects the broad ascendancy of social constructivist theories and draws especially on models of dialogic teaching. This theoretical and research based model has been extended with the addition of a third question 'how should teachers teach?' and this is explored through the normative framework of the rights respecting pedagogy outlined above. By using the list of pedagogical principles directly derived from the UNCRC (Osler & Starkey, 2005) we encourage student teachers to think about developing an ethical rationale for the choices they make for classroom practice, as well as justifying their choice purely in terms of curriculum learning.

Example 4 Student Voice

All student teachers attend workshops which are run by school students. This gives them an experience of being taught by the people they are preparing to teach and helps to illustrate, through experiential learning, that children are capable of independence and formulating and expressing views on learning and teaching. In the past few years we have invited in groups of students who observe and provide feedback to teachers, others who undertake school based research projects and one group who undertook a school based campaign to tackle homophobia and promote equality. These workshops take place before the student teachers start their own teaching practice and they are regularly identified as highlights of the course by students.

Example 5 Portfolio Assessment

We have also developed a new structure for a portfolio assignment which explicitly promotes the model of the teacher as change agent outlined above (Fullan, 1993). Students are required to undertake a number of discrete tasks during their practical experience, such as analysing the social interactions of one pupil in a class, reflecting on a professional relationship in school, visiting an alternative educational setting to reflect on out of school learning. These tasks are reviewed by tutors, peers and eventually through self-review over the course of the year to encourage students to reflect deeply on their experiences. These individual 'patches' are then knitted together with a final piece of writing, in which the student must articulate their own vision for themselves as a teacher, commenting on the contribution their subject specialism could have on a young person's development and the principles they endeavour to promote in their teaching. The portfolio is described as a 'patchwork text' and embodies the four characteristics of the teacher as change agent: (1) it includes reflections on the technical dimensions of teaching, (2) inquiries into practice, (3) collaboration on reflection and reflection on collaboration, and (4) the articulation of a personal vision. Again, in end of year evaluations students are overwhelmingly positive about the role such assignments play in their professional education.

These glimpses into our programme indicate the small ways in which we have attempted to develop experiences which support the rights-respecting theme we have identified as important. Feedback from students after the first year of these developments indicate that they appreciate this focus and can identify ways in which this will impact on their own practice once they have qualified. The main point to emerge from student evaluations is that we should continue to develop this dimension and to embed it even more thoroughly in the different elements of the programme. Through staying true to our vision, through collaboration and through critical inquiry we aim to continue to develop our provision and in doing so to act in some small way as change agents, to promote the kinds of education outlined above. In this way our ultimate aspiration as teacher educators is to see ourselves as change agents and as facilitators of change agentry in others.

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