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*Editorial*

*Developing Quantitative and Language-Based  
Literacies: Breaking the Link Between  
Poverty and Poor Attainment*

DR HOWARD TANNER  
*University of Wales Trinity Saint David*

In July 2012, three special interest groups (SIGs) of the British Educational Research Association (BERA) collaborated to hold a joint seminar at Swansea Metropolitan University. The seminar was entitled ‘Developing quantitative and language based literacies: breaking the link between poverty and poor attainment’. Papers were presented by members of the ‘Mathematics Education’, ‘Language and Literacy’ and ‘Social Justice’ SIGs. This special edition of the *University of Wales Journal of Education* is based largely on papers selected from that seminar, with an additional paper on the professional status of teachers by Professor Gareth Elwyn Jones, who sadly died recently, followed by an obituary by Professor Ken Reid.

In 2010, Leighton Andrews, the Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning, announced that the School Effectiveness Framework (SEF) would provide the ‘overarching policy to drive school improvement over the next decade’ and that it would ‘focus simply on three inter-related priorities: improved literacy levels, improved numeracy levels and reducing the impact of poverty on educational attainment’ (Andrews, 2010).

These three priorities have continued to be the focus for educational policy in Wales and the issues resonate with policy priorities across the countries of the United Kingdom. The seminar was thus timely and well attended with a good range of papers presented. In this special edition of the journal we have selected papers from each of the SIGs.

The first paper, by Dr Sue Lyle and Anna Bolt, reports on the impact on children’s literacy development of a Storytelling Curriculum that privileges

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children's voices (age 6–7) and encourages them to become authors by dictating their stories to adults. The Storytelling Curriculum is a counter-discourse to current thinking on how to teach literacy with the potential to impact positively on pupil outcomes and support the development of pupil voice.

The second paper by Dr Howard Tanner and Dr Sonia Jones reports on an action research project in five secondary schools from five local authorities in Wales to develop children's thinking skills in mathematical literacy. The paper uses mixed qualitative and quantitative methodologies and compares the efficacy of traditional Instructivist approaches and others based on discourse, inquiry and group work.

The next paper, by Helen Lewis, reports on a project to develop a culture of shared thinking in early years settings using Video-Stimulated Reflective Dialogue (VSRD) and Visible Thinking Routines (VTRs). These strategies proved effective in helping to promote a more visible and more valued culture of thinking in their classrooms and a shared understanding and language of thinking.

The next paper reports on an action research self-study with a class of ten-year-olds that aimed to improve children's skills of self-regulation, promoting respectful relationships and an effective learning community. Aileen Brindley reports the establishment of a happy and engaged learning community with significantly raised standards in terms of attitudes to learning and learning behaviours.

Geoffrey Kent reports on a detailed analysis of communication during groupwork in a class of Year 7 pupils in a mathematics class into which Complex Instruction (CI) was being introduced. Episodes are analysed using Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action. It is suggested that classroom norms and practices should be informed by Habermas's 'ideal speech situation'.

Next Peter Wright examines the factors influencing the teaching approaches used by mathematics teachers who are new to the profession. The paper challenges the dominant discourse of the mathematics classroom, which assumes that mathematics is hierarchical, that children should be grouped by 'ability' and that children of differing 'abilities' should follow different mathematics curricula. It is suggested that we should endeavour to transform this discourse into one that promotes equity and social justice.

The paper by the late Professor Gareth Elwyn Jones considers the status of teachers in England and Wales and whether teaching has the characteristics of a profession. This is considered initially from an historical



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perspective and then with regards to the recent abolition in England of the teachers' professional body – the General Teaching Council. The crucial contemporary issue is considered to be one of teacher independence. The case is made that the degree of independence enjoyed by teachers is crucial both to the well-being of the profession and the society it serves.

Finally, the journal ends with an obituary for Professor Gareth Elwyn Jones, written by Professor Ken Reid. The obituary details some of the highlights of the career of a highly distinguished academic, but is very aptly titled 'Obituary for a Good Guy'.

*Reference*

Andrews, L. (2010) 'Oral – School Effectiveness Framework', Welsh Assembly Government. Online at: <http://wales.gov.uk/about/cabinet/cabinetstatements/2010/100629sep/?lang=en> (accessed 30 May 2013).

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