

Global Connections TCK Forum 2nd November 2016

TCKs and academic re-entry to the UK

Changes: the teachers' perspectives

The following information has been collated from interviews with teachers which took place between February and October 2016.

Secondary English

'In my school, we've concentrated so far on implementing new KS4 (GCSE) and KS5 AS and A Level) changes to the English curriculum; our next job is to adapt the KS3 English curriculum so that it is more rigorous, with inclusion of pre 19th century novels for each year group. We are nervous that weaker students who do not read for pleasure at home (or who rarely ever have done so) will not be able to access some of the exam texts.

There's been so much change in one go that it's hard to stay on top of everything and to feel confident of my understanding of each course, particularly in terms of the course overview. There simply wasn't enough time to digest all information before teaching it.

Poor recruitment nationally has meant that some teaching posts haven't been filled or were filled unsatisfactorily. This has put undue pressure on more established staff, who have had to mop-up the messes of others.

[There is] a greater emphasis on wider reading, particularly on Greek/Roman mythology, and Biblical references etc [which] is taken more seriously by pupils as this is now expected to gain a level 8/9.

The speed of change in all 3 Key Stages in English has been rather overwhelming, but I think that the change at KS3 and 4 has been for the better. To succeed well in English now requires learners to **read widely** and to have **cultural capital**, something which I'm sure most diligent missionary children will already be encouraged to possess in daily life.'

Secondary Maths

'The very weakest, who have gaps in their knowledge anyway, are tending to find it a bit of a struggle as there is much more stress on solving a problem rather than on a short "do this" sort of question. The rest are finding some things a struggle but rising to the challenge.

Many of us prefer [the new GCSE exam system] as students are older and more experienced when sitting their exams, rather than having to rush elements in year 10

by the end of November. It gives a better reflection of their attainment.

As there will not be any modules, and there will be more questions linking topics it is going to be harder to divide up the content. Also, all teachers will need to be experts in all the areas - pure maths, statistics, decision maths and mechanics.

The new maths A level, due to start in 2017, has not yet been approved due to a deadlock in discussions about the syllabus.'

Primary and Special Needs

The teachers' workload, already high, has significantly increased.

In order to meet the requirements of the new curriculum, adjustments have had to be made. For example, in one local primary school, extra time has been created for the English grammar components by reducing the allocation for topic work - in this case the topic of the Home Front (World War Two) has been axed. Decisions such as these are common as the time allocation needs to be increased for English and maths.

There is a fear within the Special Educational Needs (SEN) department that children with special needs will be unable to cope and will inevitably fall further behind.

General Trends

An experienced secondary teacher who has worked in both state and private schools identified the following general trends:

Inspection requirements

Recently OFSTED have put a lot of emphasis on 'evidence of progress'. This has encouraged the development of a culture in which it is normal for schools to look for the best possible ways of presenting the relevant statistics. There is a real challenge to integrity as various measures are adopted in order to maximise the perception of 'progress'. Where the students are aware of this, they may absorb the values being modelled and develop a mindset in which integrity becomes an elastic concept.

However the teacher who reported this also observed that the preoccupation with 'progress' appears to be on the wane.

Many schools now employ educational consultants whose purpose is to advise on how to achieve the best result from the OFSTED inspection.

The impact of technology in lessons

Due to the development of online educational resources, there is now a strong link between the curriculum and the publishers of textbooks. In many subject areas, online packages such as Kerboodle - see

<https://global.oup.com/education/secondary/kerboodle/?region=uk>

are already being used to complement and reinforce work done in the classroom.

Schools are now able to purchase entire online packages which reduce the need for textbooks, and as this is much cheaper per student than the price of the books, it seems inevitable that the use of textbooks will decline.

Until recently, the use of phones in school time was banned, but the increase in availability of learning materials online now means that some teachers are already encouraging students to access online learning materials via their phones, in the classroom.

The impact of technology - surveillance

Technology has also made an impact on the relationship between parents, teachers and students.

For example, it is now very common for state schools to have an online homework administration system. This means that assignments and deadlines are available for the parents, as well as the students, to access online. This may have the effect of reducing the onus on the students to take responsibility for the completion of their homework - a negative development, in the eyes of the teacher interviewed.

A local secondary school has recently become 'cashless'. This means that payments for school trips or the use of the restaurant are all billed to the parents online. A disadvantage perceived by some students is that the parents can see exactly what their children are consuming at lunch time!

Gill Bryant

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