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PRIMARY REVIEW
RESEARCH BRIEFINGS
6/4

PRIMARY WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT AND REFORM

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This briefing draws on Primary Review Research Report 6/4 *Primary Workforce Management and Reform*. The report provides an overview of the government's workforce reform strategy and the impact it has had upon primary teachers, heads and schools. It focuses on developments during a relatively short period of time, from 1998 to the present day, and includes those policy documents and research studies that have the most relevance for practice in schools. There is also some reference to earlier research, because the present government's workforce reform initiatives cannot be viewed in isolation from a larger process of systemic reform which goes back to the Education Reform Act of 1988 and which put in place the National Curriculum, the Key Stage tests, the reduction in local authority control and changes to teacher training and school inspection, on all of which New Labour has been able to build. Further, there are important lessons from the period 1988-97 for those involved in the current reforms. The full report lists all sources consulted and is available at www.primaryreview.org.uk.

The modernizing agenda that the government pursued is viewed through the three objectives set out in the Green Paper, *Teachers: meeting the challenge of change*. The report covers:

- The case presented for modernizing the teaching profession.
- The National Agreement and phases of workforce reform.
- The management of change in schools.
- The reshaping of the workforce and the impact upon teachers and teaching assistants.
- A brief comparison with workforce reforms in Scotland and the USA.

Modernizing the workforce

Government policy documents stated that reforms for modernizing the workforce had three objectives:

- To promote excellent leadership by rewarding professionals properly.
- To recruit, retain and motivate high quality classroom teachers by paying them more.
- To provide better support for all teachers and deploy teaching resources in a more flexible way.

Policies that implemented these reform objectives led to:

- The establishing of a Workforce Agreement Monitoring Group (WAMG) consisting of government, employers and unions.
- The setting up of an Implementation Review Group (IRU) of practitioners to review policy initiatives from a school perspective.
- A National Remodelling Team.
- A National College for School Leadership (NCSL).
- A system of performance management and performance related pay.
- The establishment in 1998 of the Advanced Skills (ASTs) Teacher posts.
- Pay standards for Post Threshold Teachers, Excellent Teachers and Advanced Skills Teachers.
- The Primary National Strategy
- The Primary Leadership Programme.
- The Every Child Matters agenda and associated reforms.

- A framework for professional standards that underpin the five key outcomes of Every Child Matters and the six areas of the Common Core skills and knowledge that the primary workforce should be able to demonstrate.

The main findings from the research surveyed

Research into educational policies and workforce reform surveyed in Primary Review Research Report 6/4 focuses on:

- the management of remodelling linked to workforce and curricular changes in primary schools;
- related issues for head teachers;
- teachers' workload;
- teaching assistants and their deployment in classrooms.

The research surveyed identifies a number of themes, some of them related to the speed at which schools have had to implement the changes since 2002 and consequent problems of initiative fatigue among some teachers. Evaluations of the National Remodelling Team revealed:

- Successes of workforce remodelling have included the introduction of Preparation, Planning and Assessment (PPA) time; meeting the requirements of the National Agreement; introducing the change management process and flexible team working
- Most schools in terms of remodelling were still at the developing stage and only a few had reached the sustainable stage.
- There was concern about the long term sustainability of the programme because heads and teachers considered sustainability to depend on future funding.
- While there is progress with the Every Child Matters agenda it was thought that more could be done to link the different agendas and show teachers how they interrelate.

Evaluation evidence from schools involved in the Primary Leadership Programme found:

- Pupil attainment at Key Stage 2 was improving.
- In teaching and learning there were improvements in data analysis.
- There were changes in teaching style.
- There was a stronger sense of team work.
- Schools were finding difficulty with sustainability.

Research on teachers and teaching assistants found:

- There was an increase in the use of ICT and particularly the use of interactive whiteboards which, in turn, increased the use of whole class teaching.
- There was a shift in role boundaries between teachers and other members of the school workforce enabling more effective support for pupils.
- Teachers now viewed teaching assistants as crucial to their effective teaching and management of pupils.
- Teaching assistants were, on the whole, broadly satisfied with their role and positive about the way they were led and managed.
- For pupils with special needs there were indications that these pupils spent more time with teaching assistants and less with their class teachers.
- There was some concern about the sustainability of the increased numbers of support staff in primary schools

Conclusion

Overall, the view from headteachers, teachers and teaching assistants on workforce reform in schools is positive, although there are concerns about sustainability emerging from several of the research studies which have been included in this survey. Further research is needed on the way in which teachers have generated models of practice in relation to workforce remodelling. In particular, much greater attention needs to be paid in the training of teachers to the coordination of teaching assistants and the mentoring of teaching assistants in schools.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The report on which this briefing is based: Burgess, H. (2008) *Primary Workforce Management and Reform* (Primary Review Research Survey 6/4), Cambridge: University of Cambridge Faculty of Education. ISBN 978-1-906478-27-8.

The report is available at www.primaryreview.org.uk and is one of 32 Primary Review interim reports. Two of these deal with the opinion-gathering strands of the Review's evidence base. The remainder report on the thirty surveys of published research which the Review has commissioned from its 70 academic consultants. The reports are being published now both to increase public understanding of primary education and to stimulate debate during the period leading up to the publication of the Review's final report in late 2008.

The Primary Review was launched in October 2006 as a wide-ranging independent enquiry into the condition and future of primary education in England. Supported by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, it is based at the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education and directed by Professor Robin Alexander.

The Review has ten themes and four strands of evidence (submissions, community and national soundings, surveys of published research, and searches of official data). The report summarised in this briefing relates to the **Research Survey** strand and the theme **Settings and Professionals**.

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