

Science in the humanities

As we come into spring we see all the benefits of lighter evenings, new growth, warmer weather (hopefully!) and other signs of change. It is more than a year since the COVID-19 pandemic lurched into our lives. The momentous nature of this pandemic has been personally overwhelming and that is without suffering loss due to the disease or (to date!) illness.

The pandemic has caused many divisions. Masks or no masks? Conspiracy or contagion? Schools open or closed? This last question is of course tongue in cheek, but the perceptions of teachers have been exposed in ways that I had certainly never anticipated. As we move to reintegration of more learners back into the school setting and away from remote learning, I am hopeful that the 'battering' taken by teachers in some quarters will diminish. I hope that the critics will hear all the stories of the teachers who have delivered food to homes and taken learning packs to hundreds of pupils' homes because online learning was not possible due to a lack of IT equipment or infrastructure. This is not to mention the teachers who have also taught every timetabled lesson, perhaps with their own children at home, and those who have been in the classrooms with critical-worker learners. Teachers, as well as the majority of learners, have adapted to the changes over the pandemic and shown levels of resilience they probably didn't know they had.

My concern, however, is that, as we hear more and more about how much time learners have spent out of school, how big a 'recovery' curriculum is required and how learners need to spend more time in school to compensate for the reduced formal learning hours, we

have many arguments and much bad press still to come. I worry about what this will mean for science. I am genuinely concerned that there will be a slip of status, once more, with the emphasis on maths and English being reinforced. If that happens with science (a core subject), then I feel equally concerned for the teaching of the arts and humanities. We can only hope that 'recovery' curricula, and the inevitable forthcoming review of the National Curriculum in England as a whole, will allow some of the positives of the last 12 months to be included: the creativity,

the reduced burden of assessment, and school leaders and teachers being more involved in the curriculum-design process.

This issue is focused on drawing together humanities subjects and science – not cross-curricular teaching but making meaningful links. There are more than you might at first think! We also have the last of the 'Interview with...' articles and it was a delight to speak with Professor Chris Lintott, presenter of *The Sky at Night* and Professor of Astrophysics at the University of Oxford. His journey

from being a young child obsessed with the night sky to his profession now is another inspiring one. I hope that this issue offers some thought-provoking reading, as well as some practical activities that can be taken to the classroom and enable great teaching of science and the humanities.

As we move forward in the forthcoming weeks, your experiences of the changing curriculum and reintegration of learners into school are most welcome. Please share with us how that is going and what is happening to science in that time – the good the bad and the ugly are all invited!

Leigh Hoath

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