

# **PROJECT REPORT**

## **Building Communities of Imaginative Enquiry**

### **Tuckswood Community First School, Norwich**

**Jan 2005 – April 2006**

**Tim Taylor**

This project was funded, by the DfES' Innovation Unit, as a result of Tuckswood Community First School's successful Ofsted report in March 2004. The report praised the school's commitment to innovation through its use of imaginative enquiry approaches, in particular the 'Mantle of the Expert' system (Heathcote & Bolton, 1996).

The Mantle of the Expert system (MoE) is an approach to education that is rooted in enquiry, community, and dramatic imagination. Children and teachers investigate aspects of the curriculum through shared, focused, and extended enquiry in contexts for learning and teaching that are purposeful, authentic, and meaningful to everyone. The classroom community supports and sustains the creation of imaginary communities where children learn collaboratively as they take on the role of experts and their clients. The dramatic imagination of children, apparent in children's pretend play, is harnessed and extended through adult participation alongside children as they explore curriculum topics.

There were two main aims, of the project. Firstly, to apply and build on Tuckswood's successful use of imaginative enquiry approaches, especially the Mantle of the Expert system in other primary schools. Secondly, to design a teacher-training model that would support practitioners as they developed their own understanding and application of MoE.

### **PROJECT OUTLINE**

- The project involved a group of 12 teachers from 7 different schools, meeting for 4 training weekends and a series of 'twilight' after-school meetings over the research period of 15 months.
- The project funding was £12,000.

- The group explored practical and innovative ways of interpreting, implementing and extending the six strands of the Primary Strategy.
- The project's starting point was the imaginative enquiry approaches used successfully at Tuckswood: the Mantle of the Expert system and Philosophy with Children.
- Three of the training weekends were on the Mantle of the Expert system, lead by, Luke Abbott and Prof. Brian Edmiston. The fourth was on Philosophy with Children, lead by, Dr. Karin Murriss.

## **MAIN AIMS**

The project's main aims were:

- To examine the use of imaginative enquiry approaches for transforming classrooms into exciting and purposeful learning environments.
- To build on and apply Tuckswood's successful use of the Mantle of the Expert system and Philosophy with Children in other primary schools.
- To build expertise and confidence in using imaginative enquiry approaches among the project teachers.
- To design, and implement, a model of professional development that was rigorous, collaborative, and sustained.
- To examine how training and support in the use of the Mantle of the Expert system could positively influence teaching practice in the classroom.

## **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

The feedback from the project teachers was detailed and uniformly enthusiastic and positive. Teachers described the project as 'transforming' and 'wide-ranging' in its effect. They talked with enthusiasm about the value of using Philosophy with Children. But, it was the potential of the Mantle of the Expert that they found most exciting.

They highlight ways in which MoE approaches did the following:

- Alters the power structure in the classroom, creating genuine learning communities, and improving the interaction between adults and children. *"Using the Mantle of the Expert approach in my teaching has begun a process of changing the power structure in the classroom: we learn together, as a community."*

- Creates clear and genuine links across the curriculum. *“The project has transformed my own teaching. Using MoE, I have been able to structure a series of experiences in order to enable increased depth of understanding.”*
- Encourages teachers to be more reflective about their own practice and the process of learning in their classrooms. *“I believe it is the way forward for education, creating a truly meaningful context for learning, which empowers both myself as a teacher and my children, who love every minute of it!”*
- Creates challenging learning experiences that are meaningful and exciting for children. *“Lessons are far more enjoyable, the children seem to thrive on needing the relevant knowledge to complete the tasks before them. The class are far more engaged in the learning process.”*
- Develops creative learning environments that protect children into experience, not from it. *“The children believe in it and in themselves. They know they are learning and feel much more a part of it. They see, the decisions they make have consequences and effects, they have to face up to and deal with.”*
- Makes learning meaningful, relevant, and engaging. *“Over the last year it has been a major part of the children’s learning and we have watched our classes become transformed by the powerful thinking, speaking, listening, and freedom of imagination that happens within MoE.”*

Teachers and school leaders described the impact MoE had on children’s learning as ‘huge’ and ‘inspiring’.

- Has transformed the children’s attitude to learning. They report children becoming passionate and excited about their work: *“One boy asked me if we were doing ‘our company’ after lunch. When I said, “yes”, he ran round the field, arms out, whooping ‘yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.’”*
- Improves the relationship between adults and children. Making learning a shared experience, where children feel they have genuine ownership of their learning. *“Lessons feel more relaxed and more purposeful. The children feel they can be themselves, because they know their real opinions and ideas will be valued. They don’t need to assume an opinion just to please me or their classmates.”*

- That learning can transcend the classroom. *“The classroom becomes a bigger place and a wider world. The work is fun and purposeful for them.”*
- Creates opportunities for children who struggle in more traditional lessons. Many of the teachers noticed that boys, in particular, respond to the more active and emotionally engaging nature of the Mantle of the Expert system. *“Boys, especially lower achieving boys, have shown, through their verbal and empathic understanding, their real grasp of a situation and have participated in a way that they were reluctant to in ‘ordinary’ work.”- “It appeals, to some children, in a way that everyday lessons don’t seem to, watching them engage is fantastic.”*
- Intrigues parents, who often comment to teachers on the children’s excitement for their work. *‘Mo has been really inspired by the project. She informs us daily of the progress of the architects’ company. Thank you so much, you have given her a real passion for learning,’ “I am amazed at how she is so interested in the history, she is telling us all about Nelson all of the time.”*

The children, themselves, stressed the positive effects on their learning of using MoE.

*“Making it more exciting helps you learn better... because we're doing it ourselves. If we read it out of book we would learn stuff, but we wouldn't learn how we would do it... when you act it out its like your own story you're doing... It's fun because you all get to do stuff, it's not like a boring teacher, saying do work, do this work, all boring work. This is work, but its like fun work, its creative stuff.”* Sasha(8)

*“You want to make it more exciting because we won't learn nothing if we think its boring... We wouldn't want to learn if it wasn't fun... that's what all this Roman stuff is about, we're actually wanting to learn. That's the thing that we like.”* Bobby (8)

*“It’s like having golden time all the time!’ It helps me to learn – it’s a fun way of learning.”* Ethan (7)

*“You're not really at school. I'm interested in it because it seems like it's serious and really real.”* Tia (6)

*"It's interesting and fun. I like deciding things."* Ella (7).

The teachers considered the training and support model a success, because it was sustained and rigorous - allowing time for practice, reflection and discussion.

They thought the half-termly after-school 'twilight meetings' were crucial, because they provided opportunities for the teachers to support each other - to share ideas, experiences, and planning.

They thought the online forum was useful because it gave them the opportunity to stay in touch with the trainers, particularly when they needed help and support, as well as the opportunity to read about the work going on in each other's classes.

The success of the project relied on the encouragement and support of the school leaders. Without it, it would have been impossible for the project teachers to take the risks and make the changes that innovation requires. The project was most successful in those schools where the teachers felt most supported.

The project has evolved into a Primary Strategy Learning Network involving eight schools from Norfolk.

## **MEASURING THE SUCCESS OF THE PROJECT**

Implementing the Mantle of the Expert system requires a commitment from both individual teachers and schools as a whole in terms of time, resources, and attention to community building. The system cannot be imposed on schools, teachers, or pupils. Because the system is complex, learning to use it takes time, and teachers must be committed, and they must have support.

Teachers approach to classroom learning must be collaborative. They must be ready to share power with and among the pupils if they are to use MoE successfully because the system is grounded in shared enquiry. Judging by the results of this project, it was very worthwhile for those teachers who struggled to refocus classroom learning on collaboration.

The children's response to the system was dynamic. They were energised and passionate about the work. Teachers said their classes were more engaged and more actively involved in their learning, for example, making valuable contributions, taking ownership, and investing considerable amounts of time and energy. They described their lessons as being *'far more enjoyable'* and their children *'inspired'*. Colleagues of the project teachers noticed a difference, *"one said that the children walked into assembly "with eyes alive with possibilities"*.

Headteachers testified to the motivational and creative effects of using the system, both on teachers and children,

*"The children have been very excited and motivated by the contexts they have explored with their teachers skilled support. They very quickly took on a 'mantle of expertise' and behaved like real researchers and experts - talking most authoritatively about orang-utans and their environment and other topics. This impact was particularly marked for some boys who have shown limited interest in conventional activities. The use of imaginative enquiry based learning has clearly had a positive impact on their progress in learning."*

*"The impact it has had on the school as a whole has been incredible. From the staff's perspective we have all been enthused by this way of working. Staff have embraced all the training opportunities, and professional dialogue, and have had opportunities to take risks in their classrooms, evaluate with colleagues, and go back and try again!"*

*"From the pupils' perspective they are much more engaged with learning. They are becoming more articulate, self-aware and able to develop and move ideas on. They use the words: "fun", "adventure" and there is an evident degree of urgency in their work - it is real, meaningful and relevant!"*

*"School improvement work, especially in the form of creative education, is very demanding! I have seen that the teachers involved in the I.U. Project have been, and continue to be, energised, excited and brave. I am very happy to say that the children in our school are similarly motivated and excited by their learning."*

## **INTEREST IN THE PROJECT**

The project has generated huge interest, regionally, nationally and internationally,

- Sue Eagle (headteacher at Tuckswood) is feeding back the outcomes of the project to QCA and NCSL through the *Developing a Curriculum for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* project and the *Co-constructing Learning with Students* creative event.
- The Education Department of Newcastle University has shown interest in the project. The Project Co-ordinator, Tim Taylor, delivered a lecture and two days of workshops to the PGCE students in March.
- Primary Strategy Learning Networks in Norfolk, Essex, Suffolk, & Northumberland with a focus on the Mantle of the Expert, are exploring the system through the model developed during the project.
- Professor Brian Edmiston is writing a book on the use of Mantle of the Expert, *Learning with Imagination*, in collaboration with Luke Abbott and Tim Taylor. Drawing considerably on the experiences and outcomes of the project.
- A major curriculum development project in Norfolk, *New Landscapes For Learning*, is using expertise developed by the teachers and trainers on the project.
- There has been enormous interest from schools all over the eastern region and beyond.

## **THE SUCCESS OF THE TRAINING**

It was decided, that the most efficient and effective way to use the majority of the funding was to have training weekends. This required a considerable time commitment from the teachers. In recognition of this, the schools agreed to release them for one day, on two of the weekends.

The training and support model was considered a success for the following reasons:

- The training mostly took place at weekends
- The expertise of the trainers.
- The exceptionally high quality training.
- The support extended over a long period of time, particularly through the website forum and the twilight meetings.
- The opportunity for practice and reflection between the weekend training sessions.

- The opportunity to have one-day of classroom support
- The sharing of ideas and resources.

<b>PROJECT TRAINING MODEL</b>		
Term 1	1 weekend – Mantle of the Expert System: Friday evening – Sunday lunchtime	3 evening meetings
Term 2	1 weekend – Mantle of the Expert System: Sunday morning – Monday evening  1 weekend – Philosophy with Children: Friday evening – Sunday lunchtime	3 evening meetings
Term 3	1 weekend – Mantle of the Expert System : Sunday morning – Monday evening	3 evening meetings
In addition, each teacher on the project had one-day classroom support – teaching, observation & discussion with an AST experienced in using the system. This was beyond the IU funding.		

### **PROJECT TRAINERS**

**Luke Abbott** - Lead Senior Advisor for Essex LA and an authority on Mantle of the Expert System who has been training teachers in the use of the system for over twenty years.

**Professor Brian Edmiston** - Associate Professor of Teaching and Learning at Ohio State University, USA and a leading expert in the use of imaginative enquiry approaches.

**Dr. Karin Murriss** - Academic and consultant who pioneered teaching philosophy using picture books and is one of Britain's senior trainers in Philosophy with Children

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE TRAINING PROJECTS**

- Though the project was time consuming the teachers were uniform in their belief in the need for such intense training. The weekends added up to approximately 84 hours of training. In addition, there were 8 twilights of about 3 hours a night. Making a total of 108 hours per teacher.

- All of the teachers were keen to emphasize the need for continuing training and support.
- The teachers were also keen for more opportunities to observe and work alongside experienced practitioners in the classroom.

## **PROJECT TEACHERS & SCHOOLS**

**Tim Taylor** - Project co-ordinator: Tuckswood Community First School, Norwich. On secondment to Essex LA

**Emma Hamilton-Smith** - Tuckswood Community First School, Norwich

**Jenny Burrell** – Avenue First School, Norwich

**Michael Bunting** – Avenue First School, Norwich

**Karen Marshall** - Avenue First School, Norwich

**Catrin Parry-Jones** – Surlingham Community Primary School, Norfolk

**Julia Walshaw** – Bealings County Primary School, Suffolk

**Archna Solanki** – Millfield Primary School, North Walsham

**Sarah Long** – Millfield Primary School, North Walsham

**Sally Coulter** – Acle Primary School, Norfolk

**Simon Thomas** – Acle Primary School, Norfolk

**Emily Millner** – Hillside Primary School, Norwich

## **COMMENTS & FEEDBACK FROM THOSE INVOLVED WITH THE PROJECT**

**Luke Abbott – Project Trainer, Lead Senior Advisor, Essex**

Success comes in many guises. In the spirit of excellence and enjoyment the teachers were hugely successful. They continued to review an experiment into their teaching that mattered to them beyond the usual constraints of the standards agenda.

They attempted to engage with the question posed by Colin Conner (NCSL) and Keith Lloyd (ex HMI), namely, ‘what else impacts on standards?’ Narrowly defining standards is thankfully outdated, particularly in the domain of the Every Child Matters agenda. It became clear from the experiments teachers trialled in their classes that they wanted to engage in learning contexts that could harness the NC givens, track their progress as teachers, and the impact of the work on their learners.

The research was illuminating. It never became self fulfilling since the teachers trialled their own work as sceptical believers, and as people

questing to discover the deeper practice outlined by Heathcote in so many of her writings.

Messages, from their settings, were very pertinent to the importance of the culture of school improvement, since the attempts, made by the teachers, began to challenge the status quo.

There can be no doubt that the use of drama for learning techniques positively affected the children at Tuckswood. Their last Ofsted report is clear and accurate. But the key to any success in a school relies, not only on gifted and experimental teaching, but on the leadership that supports and advocates change. The project's remit did not touch upon the nature of school climate, but we hear, from many of the teachers, that the support of the school's leadership team was critical to their successful understanding and use of the system.

To summarise:

- Teacher skills, in questioning and challenging, the thinking of their learners, improved through the use of contexts for learning and the practices associated with drama for learning and mantle of the expert.
- The education, and growth, of the imagination improved in children who often had low self-esteem and were seen as those who needed to 'catch up'.
- The climate of the school, was a key factor, in embedding any long term changes in classrooms. As we know, change is notoriously difficult to instil.

**Dr. Brian Edmiston – Project Trainer, Associate Professor of Teaching and Learning, Ohio State University, USA**

I have worked with teachers on both sides of the Atlantic for over twenty years introducing them to various imaginative enquiry approaches including the mantle of the expert system. However, I have never had the opportunity to be involved with a long-term project that has been so carefully thought-through in advance, so well organised, so artfully executed, and with such stunning results.

As the teachers experienced for themselves the effectiveness of MoE, both on the training weekends and then in their own classrooms, they became deeply committed to learning how to implement the system. They not only volunteered to spend time out-of-school but asked for additional contact

time with us via the twilight sessions, the website forum, and they wanted further training weekends which we were unfortunately unable to provide.

I was especially impressed when teachers brought writing, art work, interview transcriptions, and scores of stories of children's deep engagement in activities that went far beyond doing a task and illustrated how children became self-motivated and deeply immersed in studying aspects of the curriculum in the sort of depth rarely seen in primary schools.

It was highly significant that the group of teachers spent long periods of time with one another spread out for over a year across three terms. Trust was built up among trainers and teachers over time. As everyone became more honest about their classroom experiences their quality of learning became richer and deeper.

Though we provided the teachers with handouts and booklets, it is important to stress that the training we provided was neither in lecture format nor through packaged activities. We engaged the teachers in practical demonstrations that we analyzed together. Further, we were responsive to the teachers' questions about their particular situations. We planned with the teachers, reviewed their successes and disappointments, and tailored our approaches to suit their needs.

The teachers in this project were transformed as professionals. This was a training model that I would like to replicate. Teachers had time to consider and build on the strengths that they brought to the classroom. They had time to think about the purposes of education that got them far beyond picking up teaching tips. This project created the sort of climate and community necessary to facilitate significant changes in how teachers frame their work. They shared and learned from one another as well as from us as trainers so that in their classrooms each in their own way became more committed to creating the sort of rich contexts for learning that sustain the depth of learning envisioned under the Primary Strategy and the Every Child Matters agenda.

**Jenny Burrell – Class-teacher, Avenue First School, Norwich**

The project has had a huge impact in that I now teach through MoE as much as I can. My current use of the Mantle of the Expert system (an architects' company) has been running since last October and is still going strong – we do the work virtually every afternoon and are covering most of the

foundation subjects through it. It is a system that fits in so well with my own ideology and I believe that it is the way forward for education, creating a truly meaningful context for learning which empowers both me as a teacher and my children who love every minute of it!

As my role has been to lead the use of MoE in school, there has been a significant impact both on my own class and on the whole school community. All teachers have been enthused by the work and have used it in the classroom. Year 1 colleagues have been particularly enthusiastic and have done some excellent work with their problem solving company! Myself and my Year 2 colleague have used MoE extensively over the last year so it has been a major part of the children's learning and we have watched our classes become transformed by the powerful thinking, speaking, listening and freedom of imagination that happens within MoE. We have had some great feedback from parents in Year 2 saying how much the children are absorbed in the company work, talking about it enthusiastically at home and getting so much out of the work. We held a parents' workshop that was so successful that we are redoing it soon with a much bigger number of participants!! Head and governors have been truly impressed by the work and want it to a major part of our future curriculum.

*'Mo has been really inspired by the ....project. She informs us daily of the progress of the architects' company. Thank you so much .... you have given her a real passion for learning,'* **Parent in my class (written on home/school contact book)**

*'All our little ideas have made one big, fantastic idea.'* (The children had been brainstorming their ideas for rebuilding Kibera, a huge slum settlement in Nairobi.) **Flynn (7)**

*'It's like having golden time all the time!' It helps me to learn – it's a fun way of learning.'* **Ethan (7)**

*'It's like real life – there's big trouble! We can learn about solving problems.'* **Joshua (7)**

*'I like it because it's pretending – we play but we're learning.'* **Rebecca (7)**

*'I like being different people'.* **Mathew (7)**

*'Sometimes I think Mrs Burrell has gone crazy. Well, at least I know I'm not crazy!'* **Dominic (7)**

*'It's exciting because anything can happen.'* **Luke (6)**

*'It's fascinating. You get to learn about things much more. You're learning things while you're having big adventures.'* **Mo (7)**

**Michael Bunting – Class-teacher, Avenue First School, Norwich**

Adopting the MoE approach makes you ask yourself serious questions, about why you do things the way you do and just what ‘makes you tick’ as a teacher. It has led me to radically alter my practice – for the better. It has also given me more confidence and an ideological scaffold to support my practice.

My relationship with the children has improved so much. Lessons feel more relaxed and more purposeful. The children feel they can be themselves, because they know their real opinions and ideas will be valued. They don’t need to assume an opinion just to please me or their classmates. My colleagues have also noticed a difference in them – one said that the children walked into assembly “with eyes alive with possibilities.

*“Thank you, Michael, this lesson was quite magical ... there’s so much power in the drama” **Serena Dixon, Headteacher, observing.***

*“I like it because you find out about yourself ... I have learnt that I am brave” **Emma.***

*“It brings imaginary people to life: I’ve learnt that you can have fun at the same time as learning” **Harry.***

*“I like the drama because it’s adventurous: I’ve learnt to care about people” **Katy.***

*“I think it’s brilliant because there are so many dilemmas and adventures that never end. I learnt about myself that I keep trying until I get it perfect: It’s really fun mixed with learning” **Jonty.***

*“It’s fun because we can rewind and fast forward” **Kelci***

*“I like it because we learn about stuff as we do drama and it’s fun. We discover it as we go along: I learnt about myself that I think a lot” **Leila.***

**Julia Walshaw – AST, Bealing County Primary School, Suffolk**

The project has given me a much deeper understanding of the drama at the heart of Mantle of the Expert.

I have been able to learn, discuss and practice the drama skills at the residential courses, then take these back to the classroom. Each time, my own new understanding and refreshed outlook has fed directly into the children’s learning.

It has been very beneficial to share experiences with teachers in other schools. After each residential, I have experienced a real boost as a teacher,

which has been reflected in the work my class have done. I have fed back to the rest of the staff, who are all working through Mantle of the Expert. They have been interested to hear about what new aspects we have explored on the residential.

*'It's fantastic. I prefer working in a company because it's much better and it tingles in my tummy.'* **Alex (5)**

*'If we didn't work for a company it would be really boring. When you're working for a company you don't actually realise what you're learning.'*

**Gabriel, (6)**

*'Children very involved and lots of interesting work.'* **a parent**

*'My daughter always comes home full of enthusiasm and very keen to tell us about her day.'* **a parent**

**Emily Milner – Class-teacher, Hillside Primary School, Norwich**

The project has had a wide-ranging effect on my teaching. Not only have I introduced mantle of the expert into my classroom but I have become much more reflective about what I am teaching. I find myself questioning the tasks I am giving children and wondering about the purpose of those tasks and more importantly what the children understand as the purpose of the tasks. MoE provides that purpose without question.

MoE has certainly inspired the children in my class and they look forward to the sessions. I notice that for some children it appeals to them in a way that everyday lessons don't quite seem to and watching them engage is fantastic. Other year 2 colleagues are trying MoE in their own classrooms as is a teacher in reception. All are reporting that they are excited and inspired by the approach.

*'When can we do more drama?'* **Daisy (7)**

*'It's fun because you're learning and playing at the same time'* **Mia (7)**

*'After a number of weeks thinking I'm not sure we've covered very much yet, suddenly it all came together at once and the children proved in one mind map that they had learned and retained even more than last year.'* **Teacher**

**Simon Thomas – Class-teacher, Acle St Edmund Primary School, Norfolk**

Mantle of the Expert has opened my eyes to a completely different form of implementing the curriculum to children. After an initial start, during which

I felt very much out of my depth, the children engaged in the learning process and accepted the unusual hierarchy that comes with MoE. Lessons became far more enjoyable and the children thrived on needing relevant knowledge to complete the tasks before them.

The class are far more engaged in the learning process. One problem I have encountered is due to the current structure of the classes in our school, which use an ability level system to place children in sets. This has proven a difficulty, as it does not allow a long time period within which to work with the same group of children. Also, our current PPA cover uses a Specialist Teaching Assistant who purely teaches History and Geography, both subjects, which can be effectively explored using MOE.

*“When can we do this again!” Hazel (10)*

**Sally Coulter – Class-teacher, Acle St Edmund Primary School, Norfolk**

I’ve really enjoyed being part of this project as it has been an opportunity to regularly meet colleagues from other schools and share practise. The meetings and the forum have been a crucial element in reflecting on what has worked well and those that didn’t! Another aspect, that has been useful, is the opportunity to reflect and have a dialogue on different educational perspectives. I have found that I am really questioning aspects of my own practise. The residential weekends and our other meetings have enabled us to get to know each other well and have created a ‘safe’ environment for this to happen.

I believe this work has great potential for engaging the children and allowing them to be active participants in their learning. Within my own class already I have become aware of the following impact on the children:

- The engagement of boys
- Reluctant mark-makers writing enthusiastically because they have a real purpose.
- Shy children having the confidence to participate and share their ideas, because they feel safe because all ideas are valued.
- Children reminiscing back to previous MOE learning and linking it with something new we are doing – because of their emotional engagement, the memories stay with them. The children say to me “Remember when ..... well it’s a bit like that.”
- Learning going beyond my initial curriculum objectives, as well as transcending the statutory curriculum e.g. values/beliefs.

- Children pouring over pictures/information in books after a session because they want to find out more!

Sharing others experiences has also provided the evidence for this.

I am looking forward to continuing this work and I feel that this is one cluster group that will continue to meet (and expand) as a lot of time and energy has been put into something which is having a real impact – it is engaging the children but also the teachers!

**Emma Hamilton-Smith – Class-Teacher, Tuckswood Community First School, Norwich**

The project has allowed and enabled me to be much braver in the work I do with the children. Planning situations with outcomes that are unforeseen. It increases my own trust in the children's ability to come up with interesting curriculum pathways to further their own learning in the way they want to rather than how I might plan or foresee it. The project has enabled me to really take a look at the dynamics of the classroom and the interaction between teacher, child, and other adults. It has made teaching exciting and creative, not tied to traditional subjects. I am learning through my own teaching, alongside the children.

The children believe in it and in themselves. They know they are learning and feel much more a part of it. They see the decisions they make, have consequences and effects, that they have to face up to and deal with. The classroom becomes a bigger place and a wider world. The work is fun and purposeful for them. They discuss it with enthusiasm in school and at home. Less-able children are more confident to have a go, ready to make suggestions and decisions. Children with poorer writing skills see that they can still make valuable contributions and feel encouraged to communicate their thoughts and ideas.

*"I am amazed at how she is so interested in the history, she is telling us all about Nelson all of the time."* **Parent**

*"You're not really at school. I'm interested in it because it seems like it's serious and really real."* **Tia(6)**

*"It's interesting and fun. I like deciding things."* **Ella (7)**

*"It's kinda fun. You can do your own thing in it."* **Rahim (7)**

*"It makes you think about what you are going to be when you're grown up. You can change your voice and your language."* **Kaitlin (7)**

*"It helps you think about things."* **Callum (7)**

*"It's fun and interesting. If we didn't do drama we couldn't be it and talk in it. What would be the point?"* **Devon (7)**

*"You can really see the learning happening here"* **Kate Ashby - PGCE Student**

**Catrin Parry-Jones – Headteacher & .5 Class-teacher, Surlingham Community Primary School, Norfolk**

The project has transformed my own teaching. Using Mantle of the Expert, I have been able to structure a series of experiences in order to enable increased depth of understanding. As a consequence my planning has focussed on the quality of the experience we make together, and the understanding we can create from that experience as a group, as well as knowledge based learning outcomes. The key skills, in the National Curriculum have come to the fore.

Emphasis on speaking, listening and enquiring within the drama, much of the time, has enabled learning to happen at a faster pace, and sometimes there is no 'product' to assess that is external to the child or group. I record with photographs, and have recently invested in a small digital movie camera to record work within the drama. When we produce something for a real purpose, which needs to be of quality, whether it is newspaper article, or some Tudor artefacts, interest and application is sustained, through the children's own motivation. I have learned not to worry that every piece of work is done to the nth degree, or recorded in writing.

The emphasis on thinking through the consequences of actions, hasn't left my teaching devoid of knowledge content, but is absorbed into the context. The children are motivated by the 'real' purpose, to learn more.

Using the Mantle of the Expert approach in my teaching has begun a process of changing the power structure in the classroom: we learn together, as a community. This has led to a huge awareness, that the quality of my questioning is paramount, and needs developing. I think carefully about the way in which I phrase something, or which particular word to use with a level of 'precision I was completely unaware of before taking part in this project.

It has had a huge impact on the way I plan, which has implications for the rest of the school. Boys, especially lower achieving have shown through

their verbal and empathic understanding their real grasp of a situation and have participated in a way that they were reluctant to in 'ordinary' work. The children plan much of the content of the term-which I find easy to relate back to NC outcomes.

The project has generated a lot of interest from other teachers. All teachers are interested to find out more, and most would like to develop Mantle of the Expert within their classrooms.

The structure of the school day within the class has changed, as the curriculum has become increasingly more integrated.

When I was on the school field at lunchtime, one boy asked me if we were doing 'our company' after lunch. He then ran round the field arms out whooping 'yes,yes, yes, yes, yes.'

One parent said her daughter came home from school, and 'relieved' the day by acting out, and continuing the ideas at home.

*"It makes you understand what its really like to go through something, and understand what someone else is feeling"* **Rachael**

*"It's better than just reading a book or something, because you can't really imagine everything until you do it."* **Lea**

*"It's like you're really there."* **Poppy**

*"I love it because we get to do things like we're grown ups, and we can decide what we're going to do and what happens."* **Daniel**

*"It's really fun"* **Natasha**

### **Helen Banks - Headteacher, Acle St Edmund Primary School**

This project has provided a fantastic opportunity for staff to be involved in some in depth professional development. This required them to make a commitment to use a significant amount of their own time in return for some very high quality experiences and thinking time. One teacher was particularly inspired by the ideas explored in this project and has incorporated MoE, philosophy for children and an enquiry based approach to teaching and learning into her practice through specific projects.

The children have been very excited and motivated by the contexts they have explored with her skilled support. They very quickly took on the

mantle and behaved like real researchers and experts talking most authoritatively about orang-utans and their environment and other topics. This impact was particularly marked for some boys who have shown limited interest in conventional activities. The use of enquiry based learning has clearly had a positive impact on their progress in learning and this is something we need to consider across the whole school.

Other staff have been very interested in the work being piloted by the lead teacher in the reception and year 1 class and as a school we are exploring how to develop more enquiry based approaches across the whole primary range. This is a key priority in our development work and a focus for our involvement in a Networked Learning Community. Our aim is that all staff should have time to plan together, try out different approaches and reflect on their impact in the systematic way that has been established through the innovations project.

**Serena Dixon - Headteacher, Avenue First School, Norwich**

The impact it has had on the school has been incredible. From the staff's perspective we have all been enthused by this way of working. The staff have embraced all the training opportunities, and professional dialogue, and have had the opportunities to take risks in their classrooms, evaluate with colleagues, and then go back and try again!

There has been an overall heightening of their understanding of how learning is best facilitated, the level of discussion around school has become much more precise and challenging, the staff relating experiences/ideas etc to academic research/educational theory. Through the project, members of staff have gained skills and confidence. Overall there is a BUZZ!

“From the pupils' perspective they are much more engaged with learning. They are becoming more articulate, self-aware and able to develop and move ideas on. They use the words: "fun", "adventure" and there is an evident degree of urgency in their work - it is real, meaningful and relevant!”

Parents and Governors have been equally excited by the work and have had the chance to participate in sessions held for them.

**Sue Eagle – Headteacher, Tuckswold Community First School, Norwich**

We were delighted to receive funding to enable us to work with other schools to share and continue to develop the exciting work we've been developing in our curriculum.

Working with the teachers and heads in the Innovation Unit Project has generated a really creative and imaginative forum, enhancing the ability of each of our staffs to co-construct meaningful learning with the children. There has been tremendous support for everyone throughout the process.

It's a testament to the success of this way of working that nearly all partners in the Project were keen to continue the development work through becoming a Primary Learning Network. Three other schools have joined us.

As a School Leader one of the challenges is to truly share the vision for the development of a Learning Community where adults and children can be fully engaged in shaping their learning together. Once the vision has been shared and embedded in practice, maintaining motivation and continuing development is key. The work carried out through this Project has deepened the belief, passion and understanding necessary for continuous development.

School improvement work, especially in the form of creative education, is very demanding! I have seen that the teachers involved in the I.U. Project have been, and continue to be, energised, excited and brave. I am very happy to say that the children in our school are similarly motivated and excited by their learning. One of the satisfying aspects of the Project has been the way in which the other schools have developed and implemented the ideas in their own way, specific to the needs and interests of their communities.

A major reason for the success of the I.U. Project is the hard work and full commitment of all involved in it, especially the Consultants, Luke Abbott, Brian Edmiston and Karin Murriss, and the Lead Teacher, Tim Taylor. It is pleasing that there is national and international interest in the work. The more the networking happens, the deeper the debate about improving creative curriculum will be.

### **References**

Bolton, Gavin. *Dorothy Heathcote's Story: The Biography of a Remarkable Drama Teacher* (Trentham Books, 2003)

Heathcote, Dorothy. *Collected writings on Education and Drama* (Northwestern University Press, 1991)

Heathcote, Dorothy & Gavin Bolton. *Drama for Learning: Dorothy Heathcote's Mantle of the Expert Approach to Education* (Greenwood Press, 1996)

### Useful websites

- **Mantle of the Expert website:** [www.mantleoftheexpert.com](http://www.mantleoftheexpert.com)
- **Tuckswood School website:** [www.tuckswood.co.uk](http://www.tuckswood.co.uk)
- **Bealings School website:**
- [www.creative-corner.co.uk/schools/bealings/home](http://www.creative-corner.co.uk/schools/bealings/home)
- **Tuckswood OFSTED report:**
- [www.creative-corner.co.uk/schools/tuckswood/ofsted](http://www.creative-corner.co.uk/schools/tuckswood/ofsted)
- **The Star Company website (2004 MoE enterprise):**
- [www.creative-corner.co.uk/schools/tuckswood/star\\_company/](http://www.creative-corner.co.uk/schools/tuckswood/star_company/)

### Contact

Tim Taylor: [tim.taylor4@btinternet.com](mailto:tim.taylor4@btinternet.com)

Sue Eagle: [s.eagle@tesco.net](mailto:s.eagle@tesco.net)