

Evidence... in to the classroom

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King
Edwards VI
Handsworth
Grammar
School for
Boys

- Welcome to this session and thank you for choosing to spend 30 minutes of your time with me.

Gaurav Dubay



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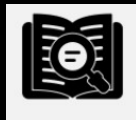
Athletics fanatic, father and Christian

- And so before I begin my presentation, I would like to take the opportunity to introduce myself.
- My name is Gaurav Dubay and I have a number of hats really.
- My experience in education, dating back to 2006, has been varied ranging from oracy coordinator, governor and AST.
- I am an experienced Head of English and unofficially lead whole school literacy at my current school. In addition to my school based role, I also work with the EEF in my role as an ELE and was appointed as the SNL for English at KE Academy Trust earlier this month.
- And, as you can see, I am also very proud of the fact that I am an athletics nerd, father to four amazing – but at times, a tad annoying – children and I am unashamedly a Christian which really influences the wider values that influence my teaching.
- And so today I'd like to share with you my experiences at middle management level. Whilst I recognise that SLTs have a huge role in ultimately driving the school culture and the direction in which it is going, I believe that the most successful opportunities for driving change in schools begins at middle leadership level – and there is a lot of evidence to confirm my view. Middle leaders find themselves in a unique position where they influence discussions at departmental level in their teams and are also, theoretically, involved in discussions with senior leaders.
- This unique position of middle management is, in my view, likely to have greater

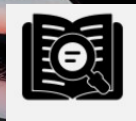
impact if we deliberate in evidence rich discussions. For departmental teams, it gives us the opportunity to legitimise the changes we wish to see and with senior leaders have at our disposal an arsenal of information so we can ensure our time is used for improvement rather than arbitrary, poorly thought through initiatives.



Aims...



I. Explore the ways in which context influenced our approach to implementation.



II. Explore the role of school evidence in driving change.



III. Examine the role wider research plays in supporting change.



IV. Examine the implementation process through the lens of review, refine and re-establish.

- And before I begin talking about our project, I would like to share with you my worries and the need for the project we engaged and are still engaging in.

The need to diversify

In 2010, the then Education Secretary, Michael Gove, announced a number of sweeping educational reforms – particularly in English – where the likes of Byron, Keats and Dickens would firmly be re-rooted and restored to their original veneration within the English educational system. The changes were designed to bring rigour and improve students' grasp of English Language and Literature.

Whilst I firmly welcomed the ambitions, I feared that the texts I loved – 'To Kill a Mockingbird', 'All My Sons' and 'Shards of Memory' – would be relegated to the lower leagues of what I like to call The Reading League, and thus deny countless students access to texts that they could both learn from and relate to.

* Since that time, my suspicions have been confirmed by countless reports, and, most recently, The National Literacy Trust concluded that the majority of ethnic minority students do not 'see themselves in what they read' (Best et al, 2020).

The findings of reports like the one aforementioned, as well as our own internal evidence, meant that we – in a multi-ethnic school – needed to work on developing curriculum diversity. The words of Fletcher (2005) resonated with us where the assertion is made that learners' voice creates 'empathetic learning

environments that value diversity and multiple perspectives.’ We made the choice, therefore, to put our students at the forefront of the discussion on curriculum diversity.

- Keeping the aforementioned in mind, I hope to share with you a case study of our approach in implementing and usualising a diverse curriculum in English at middle management level in a secondary setting.
- To that end, our aims are as follows [go through aims and develop as appropriate]

Why is school context important in thinking, driving and securing change?



The case for context

'context is an essential and incredibly powerful gateway to deeper learning and understanding. Without understanding context and the power it has to transform learning and experience, we have little chance of transforming the education system to be a truly learner-centered one.'

- Trace Pickering (2019)

'Context is decisive.'

Werner Erhard

- Before I share my school context, I would like you to write, in the chat section (or out loud) why school context is important in thinking about, driving and securing positive change in our schools.
- [Invite and check response]
- I'd like to thank you for your responses. It's not always easy stating our opinions.
- So what do researchers say about educational context? [Go through Pickering and Erhard's views]
- Erhard's view is particularly strong as he so authoritatively says it's decisive. Nonetheless, it's one I entirely agree with. Context allows to invest our energies in the areas that truly matter and make a difference and encourages us to move away from the areas that are topical and focus on that which will have a stronger impact on our students.

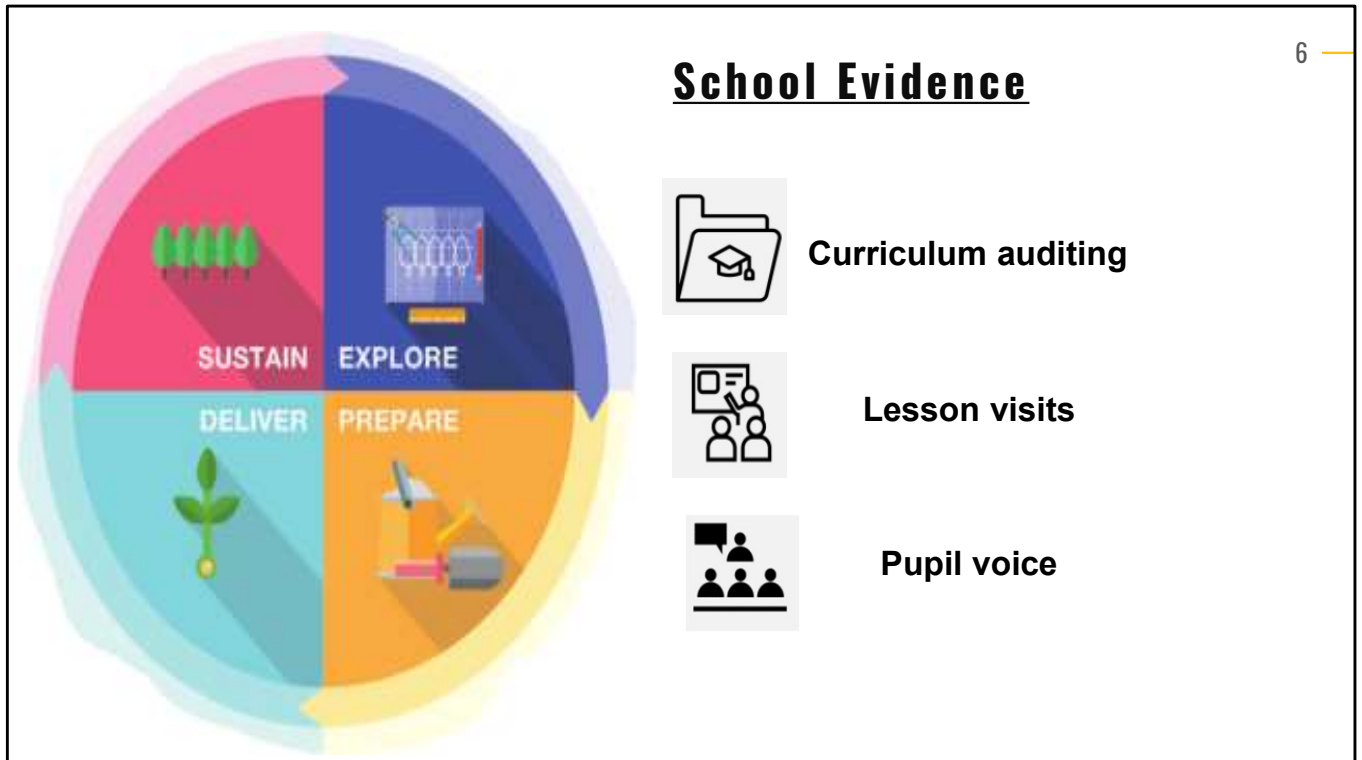
HGS: Examining our Context



Things to consider....

- I. Able students (top 20% nationally)
- II. Very able mathematicians and scientists.
- III. Range of socio-economic indicators (above the national average of PP students but also a number of affluent students, too)
- IV. Limited experiences: Similar backgrounds (EAL)
- V. Traditional views.

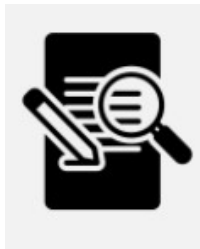
- And so what did we at HGS need to consider with regards to our context? In my department, we recognised that our curriculum, whilst ambitious and much enjoyed by the majority of our students, needed tweaking in order to ensure our students were being offered a diet fitting in with our vision statement: 'Cultured, Engaged and Informed'. By this, we mean [explain meaning of three terms] There was a compelling need to diversify our curriculum.
- However, we recognise that in order to make the changes to our curriculum in order to establish these changes, our first point of call would be our context [go through context].
- It's important, therefore, with the aforementioned, that we understand that in order for our curriculum to become diverse, it wasn't about getting rid of texts because they're 'old, pale and male' - in order for us to bring a level of diversity we recognised that we needed to supplement the curriculum so students could relate to characters who are like them in literature but we also recognised the need for them to be exposed to people who are not like them so that they develop important skills of empathy and the ability to relate to others – something, which we understand from our context, is something they lack.



- So in order to bring about the change we needed, we made the decision to change albeit at a slow pace, using the infamous EEF Implementation Wheel to enable us to plan that change [go through the process of the wheel].
- And so the first thing we did was audit our curriculum [go in to detail]
- Lesson visits also played an important part in our observations [explain PPT and resources e.g. lack of representation with school resources and how Bennie Kara's handbook played an important part in improving our representation]
- And finally, the most important once was pupil voice. Our drive to develop our diverse offering through pupil voice was, for us, an incredibly deliberate one. Mentally Healthy Schools (MHS) argues 'pupil voice is an effective mechanism through which we 'can create meaningful change...better academic outcomes' and perhaps most importantly facilitates 'a sense of empowerment and inclusion'. Our students, who as a result of their backgrounds, are so used to having their voices silenced, we recognised that pupil voice would have to play an incredibly important part in driving the change we needed.

What did our pupil voice do?

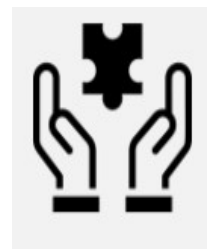
Explored, discussed and defined 'diversity'



Examined what did and didn't work in our curriculum



Developed pragmatic solutions

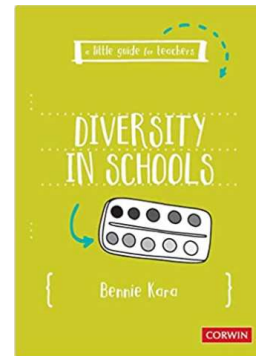
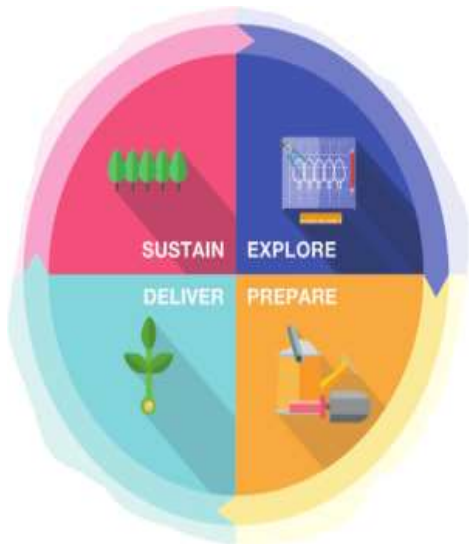


- So how did our pupil voice session(s) help drive that change?
- Well, it firstly allowed us to explore, discuss and ultimately define what we see as 'diversity' in English classrooms at HGS. Our students defined diversity as **"An acceptance, recognition and celebration of our unique identities. Each unique experience – regardless of race, religion, sexuality and the like – are to be celebrated. No voice will be silenced and all voices will be respected."** the input of leaders was almost minimal and in my department role, my strapline, 'Culture, Engaged and Informed', as well as my desire to promote student voice and agency is something I was very fortunate to see in action – and it was for me personally incredibly rewarding.
- We also discussed what did work and didn't work. Our students were concerned that removing texts from the curriculum would not only disadvantage them academically but deny them the opportunity to see things beyond their normal experience and, as such, narrow the diversity they needed. This was an incredibly important thing for us to consider.
- And so the final thing we looked at was developing pragmatic solutions. As you can imagine, there is a very negative attitude to 'OMaM' which is seen as a problematic text and it is for many reasons. However, our students needed to understand that our budget was limited and they needed to sort a pragmatic

solution – and they did. We now use this text to explore what a problematic text is in literature and develop a rhetorical argument to explore its place in literature.

Wider Research

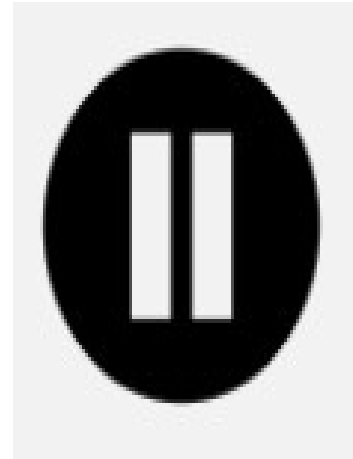
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* Once we looked internally to help prepare, deliver and sustain or changes, we looked at the wider research to help inform our changes. Our main sources included [go through sources and how they helped]

Reflection

- **What place does student voice have in driving change in your institution?**
- **How does the wider research and evidence help to support change in your context?**
- **Should change happen quickly or slowly? Why?**



Final word...

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Review

Refine

Re-establish

- We are now in the process of implementing our strategy – but how do we sustain it?
- [go through review, refine and re-establish]
- We must be aware that evidence does change and is constantly evolving. What works now may not work tomorrow. For instance, a change in context, political party or worldwide crisis – like covid – means we cannot expect things to remain consistent. Each strategy in place in our schools is highly fragile and so we must be willing to adapt, in humility, when needed.

- ❑ Kara, B (2020). A Little Guide for Teachers: Diversity in Schools (A Little Guide for teachers)
- ❑ Mentally Healthy Schools: <https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/>
- ❑ Pickering, T (2019). How to Shift from Education as Content to Education as Context.
- ❑ Sharples, J et al (2019). Putting Evidence to Work (EEF)

FIN



THANK YOU

