

**Leap Reciprocal Peer Shadowing Program Report**

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**Contextual and Systemic Factors Affecting Educational Outcomes**

* High level of autonomy and authority for schools and Head Teachers within the context of significant budgets. The HT is largely responsible for all aspects of school operation including salaries and awards.
* Very high level of accountability to the national Department for Education (DFE) through the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), Ofsted inspections every 3-5 years, the regular updating of the School Evaluation Form, regular updating of student progress data and the role of the School Improvement Partner.
* All schools across England must achieve a level of success whereby 85% or more of their students must make a minimum of two levels of progress each academic year.
* It is universally acknowledged that the south of England is largely made up of affluent communities, whilst the northern counties (i.e. north of Oxford) are largely comprised of communities of low socio-economic status with high number of migrants from Eastern Europe, Africa and the Caribbean. This has a direct impact on school and student success.
* Michael Gove, the Secretary of State for Education, is seen as antagonistic towards Head Teachers and teachers due to strong criticism of teacher and school leader performance across the nation. This criticism is echoed by the country’s media.
* There is an explicit campaign by the national government to shift the agenda and control of education from local councils (i.e. the Local Authority) by restricting their authority, reducing their funding and marginalising their role in the debate.
* There is a strong culture of freedom of enterprise and competition between many elements of the educational infrastructure within England that includes service providers, local authorities, universities and teacher training authorities and many private companies set up to offer schools external management of staffing, salaries, professional development, curriculum design and school improvement strategies.

The system is increasingly driven by market forces and therefore there is a concern about an increasing fragmentation of the system.

* The school accountability process ranks schools as being either unsatisfactory (i.e. requires improvement), satisfactory, good or outstanding. Schools ranked as unsatisfactory can be placed on ‘special measures’ leading to punitive action.

* Increasingly, schools that are deemed as outstanding are expected to take on a major role in supporting schools that are experiencing difficulties through formalised partnerships
* A new national curriculum is being introduced with a very limited implementation time frame. The curriculum is open-ended and with less explicit directive and is aimed at driving schools and cooperatives of schools to engage in local curriculum design
* Michael Gove is moving to change legislation that will increase the power of the Board of Governors in the role of school management and increase the role of the Chair of Governors to that of a salaried position
* Every classroom has the support of a teaching assistant (STLA). In many cases this person is a Highly Trained Teaching Assistant who can take a class without supervision
* A very noticeable lack of a strong focus on OH & S for students. Students are encouraged to take physical as well as intellectual risks

**Changing Practice to Meet the Challenges of Contemporary Society**

* Innovative new structures for schools including Academies, Quality Schools’ Partnerships, Cooperative Trusts, Peer to Peer Support and Primary Federations
* A national focus on ‘Building Learning Power’ (BLP) through the use of Guy Claxton’s

Model of classroom culture

* A re-focusing on visionary leadership in schools and the details that make for a high quality school
* Schools are taking control of the agenda for professional development of staff that is relevant to local needs
* Classrooms quite commonly have highly colourful and easily followed ‘visual learning guides’ and learning walls to support independence in student learning
* Lesson structures almost always include a base task and then a choice of levels of challenge activities
* The insistence on the rigour of the ‘literacy hour’ in each school every morning