

Resetting the dial: focus on the gains

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A quote from Lenin which was circulating in the early weeks of the lockdown - 'There are decades where nothing happens, and weeks where decades happen' – seems as apposite now as it was in late March.

As I have written and broadcast in a number of contexts over the past few months, while politicians have struggled to offer a coherent way forward, *real* leadership has been exercised by those working in health, business, charities and, especially, schools.

There will be many lessons for education from the pandemic; this website curated by Peter Hyman pulls together characteristically innovative thinking on the subject: [Learning from Lockdown](#)

The losses for many of our children on the margins will have been significant, especially for those who make up the forgotten third: [The Forgotten Third](#)

How schools and students make the most of the £1 billion government 'catch up' fund will be important. And what Ofqual/DfE finally determine for the shape of GCSEs in 2021 and 2022 will be decisive in how secondary schools organize both Year 10 and Year 11 next academic year.

Educationists being what they naturally are – rarely satisfied and questing for the best – have inevitably focused on the losses of the past few months. Yet there can be gains as identified by John Hattie's observations on the impact on learning following the Christchurch, NZ earthquake in 2011: [Does missing a term due to COVID-19 really matter?](#)

How quickly the 'old normal' replaces the 'new normal' will be instructive – shall we waste the Covid-19 crisis or seize its opportunities? Looking across the schools' sector, significant gains surely include:

- increased trust in teachers and school leaders, particularly from the families and communities they serve;

- reaffirmation of education being about the whole child: well-being and performance data weighed equally;
- development of more flexible working practices, and 'cover' teaching a thing of the past;
- online learning – 'Zoom & Room' - seen now as an integral part of a child's schooling career, alongside teachers' enhanced expertise in virtual tutoring.

This pandemic has reminded us that we are part of a global society with different approaches to common challenges. Schools across the Middle East shut down at the end of February and will reopen their doors in September. Many US states followed a similar pattern, others are back open. European countries have acted variously, most now in session. Delhi schools are unlikely to reopen much before January 2021, and two states in India have banned online learning for pupils up to the age of 11!

What has struck me in this country is the remarkable ingenuity and resilience of teachers and leaders in special, primary and secondary schools. One primary headteacher said to me: 'I am optimistic. There is no alternative'.

Another (secondary) head: 'I am back in the classroom for two days per week and absolutely loving every moment. I think the kids will get a great deal in September because they will have professionals who are recharged and invigorated as to why they came into the classroom in the first place.'

Examples and stories of 'new ways of doing' are legion across the country and are rightly being recorded for posterity. As leaders reset the dial, their mindsets are forward-thinking and positive. They have chosen to say to themselves:

'Yes it's tough, but we need something to draw the school community together now and give us a positive agenda for moving forward. Don't want the new normal to have all the faults of the old normal. Need to enthuse, galvanise and excite staff. A sharp and determined focus on teaching and learning is just the way to make sure disadvantaged children don't miss out.'

Zoom Fatigue Syndrome (ZFS) is a recent self-diagnosis amongst an optimistic group of educational leaders I work with. They, like everyone in schools, need a break and no-one should begrudge it them ahead. September will come round soon enough.

Roy Blatchford's latest books are '[The Three Minute Leader](#)' and '[The Forgotten Third](#)', published by John Catt Education.