

## Must do better: how to improve the image of teaching and why it matters

Roy Blatchford & Harry Hudson

February 2022

*This is an extract from 'Must do better', just published by John Catt.*

The Covid pandemic has been a severe and often deadly whiplash across the world. And now that the pandemic has become endemic, there is an emerging perspective focused on what the pandemic has taught the world.

Environmentalists, for example, argue that the planet has paused, that carbon emissions have lowered – and that, yes, this can become permanent if we try to live differently.

The enforced lockdown of much of our lives as social beings and worker ants has caused organisations, businesses and charities of every kind to ask themselves three key questions:

1. What do we keep?
2. What do we ditch?
3. What do we refresh?

When the profession looks ahead, when teachers look ahead, how should these three questions be answered in a way that raises the profile of the teacher and places the teacher centre-stage in shaping the future?

The profession should **keep** reminding the taxpayer and the government of the day that without a well-funded schooling system, our children will not receive the world-class education this rich western democracy can afford to provide. The NES – the National Education Service – must be as high on the agenda over the next decade as the NHS – the National Health Service.

The profession should **ditch** some of its self-inflicted actions, especially in allowing minority voices within the profession to claim positions and voice opinions that clearly don't represent the views of the majority.

The profession should **refresh** itself as an essential public service, viewed as such by the general public in the same breath as doctors, nurses, police and armed forces. The Covid-induced lockdown saw teachers lead their communities in ways no one should forget.

The teaching profession is largely operating in the state sector: just 7% of children attend the independent sector. Yet state schools must learn from some of the best private school practices in the same way that private schools are quick to learn from the state sector.

The profession must continue to learn from the best international schools and the most successful school systems in the world, whether in Canada or Singapore. And those social and education entrepreneurs who are pioneering new frontiers – well, quite simply, the UK must learn from them. Imitation continues to be the best form of flattery.

And, given who the paymasters are, the profession needs to shape government thinking. Practice shapes policy more often than policy shapes practice. Teachers have it in their hands to lead the way.

[Must do better: How to improve the image of teaching and why it matters](#)