

## An Interview with Philippa Cordingley (CUREE)

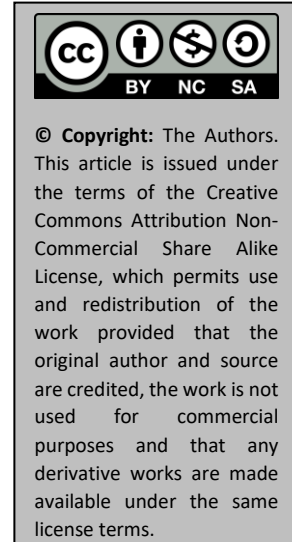
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Philippa Cordingley is the Chief Executive of CUREE and an internationally acknowledged expert in using evidence to develop education policy and practice. She leads CUREE and has a hands-on role in many of its projects including the development of the evidence based National Framework for Mentoring and Coaching; the creation of innovative practical resources to engage practitioners with research (e.g. Research for Teachers, The Research Informed Practice (TRIPs) web site and of a bank of micro enquiry tools for the Economic and Social Research Council's Teaching and Learning Research Programme and for the General Teaching Council. She also leads CUREE's research and evaluation projects ranging from a three-year large scale, multi-disciplinary evaluation of the implementation of the National Curriculum to the evaluation of in-school development projects. She has particularly enjoyed designing and leading CUREE's innovative and rigorous, yet user friendly, approach to evaluation that has proved very successful in the creativity and education field through, for example, CUREE's work for the National Gallery, the Sage Gateshead and Sing Up.

She is the founder and professional adviser to the National Teacher Research Panel, chair of the EPPI Centre Impact of CPD Review Group, an Honorary Fellow of the College for Teachers, a Fellow of the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA), Visiting Senior Research Fellow at Sussex University and a member of the Steering Groups of several HE research centres/projects. She also leads CUREE's strategic partnership with the Nuffield Foundation.



### ***What do you think has made the biggest positive difference to teaching practice over the last decade?***

I think ultimately it is an increased sense of confidence for professionals as professionals, which flows from lots of things: the growth of interest in teaching as a research informed profession (3% interest in 1997 to over 40% in the teacher census survey in 2010); the successes of Teach First and the publicity campaign about the strength and depth of the profession; more attention to continuing professional development and especially enquiry based professional learning; and involving schools and the profession more broadly in the important work of training and inducting teachers into the profession. We learn so much from supporting others' professional learning!

### ***Why do you think it is important to think about how to transform teaching?***

Pupils are the citizens of the future. The world is very uncertain and offers huge challenges and opportunities. Teaching and learning in the public education system is fundamental to developing a positive national identity and the skills we need to build an intellectually generous and sustainable

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future full of wisdom alongside knowledge. This is deeply dependent on the profession and its leadership.

### ***What do people who wish to help transform teaching need to remember?***

If you want teachers and the profession to learn you have to model learning through the leadership you offer and the systems you create. Evidence about how pupils are responding to the changes we make, organised around teachers' aspirations for pupils, is the best springboard for depth, inclusivity and engagement.

### ***What are the biggest challenges faced by those who wish to transform education for teachers?***

The high stakes assessment and accountability regime and the impoverished view of the curriculum is front and centre. Increasing our focus on depth of knowledge does make sense, but it is depth that matters and even that is not an end in itself – purpose is absolutely key as well. Teachers and policy makers have to organise curriculum thinking around using clarity about why the things we teach matter, and how they work in contexts that are meaningful to pupils, for such depth to make a difference.

### ***What have you been involved in which you think has made the biggest positive difference to teaching practice, and why is/was it so successful?***

I think promoting teaching as a research and evidence-informed profession in the mid-nineties. Key to making this work was working bottom-up (e.g. through the NUT's support for systematic reviews and evidence based co-coaching and by establishing the National Teacher Research Panel). Developing biennial National Teacher Research conferences also helped create a critical mass of interest and respect for the profession. The panel played a very important but not widely-known part in, for example, setting up the ESRC Teaching and Learning Research Fund. Campaigning for evidence informed Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is the other strand. But we worked top-down too, helping national agencies like the Teacher Training Agency, the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency and the National College for School Leadership to promote and facilitate evidence-informed practice. Top-down support included creating things like the National Framework for Mentoring and Coaching and videos and tools to exemplify it. The Framework is still in use today – in fact the Welsh government recently asked us to update it and have made it a core part of their CPD policy. The last big building block has been using the evidence to campaign for a focus not just on CPD done to teachers but on continuing professional development *and* learning done by them too.

### ***What are the aspects of teaching you would most like to see transformed over the next decade?***

I would like to see teachers in England and around the world focusing on and being given substantial roles in and time for curriculum design. By design I mean planning, developing, evaluating and refining learning experiences beyond the level of individual lessons by, for example:

- Developing diagnostic assessment well before the start of a scheme of learning, so teachers can make informed judgments about where to linger and where to work at pace because pupils will progress anyway
- Working collaboratively with peers to develop coherent schemes of learning and enable depth in learning by making cross curriculum connections
- Using their content knowledge and knowledge of pupils to make the formal curriculum meaningful to pupils, especially those with low social capital for whom school is an alien environment.