

# From Section Eleven to Aiming High – forty years of struggle and story

Robin Richardson, Insted consultancy, London ([www.insted.co.uk](http://www.insted.co.uk))

*A lecture apropos the government's Aiming High programme*

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## Words strain

EMTAG, EMAG, EMA, EMAS, EMASS, EMTAS, METAS, MELAS: colleagues, we assemble at this conference amid competing acronyms and abbreviations to crystallise who and where we currently are. We belong to a professional community that has moved from EFL to ESL to E2L to EAL, and the pupils who are our concern have moved from being NCW, then NCWP, then NCW again, then BME. We ourselves have been mobilised over the years through ATEPO, NAME, ARTEN, EYTARN, ALOAME, AFFOR, ALTARF, NALDIC, NASSEA and MASSEA.

And we have lived with other kinds of linguistic change as well – multicultural, intercultural; West Indian, Afro-Caribbean, African-Caribbean, the latter with or without a hyphen; assimilation, integration, equality, diversity, community cohesion, inclusion; ethnic minority and minority ethnic; race with or without inverted commas. And we have struggled with all those defining tomes and reports that are – or, in their time, were – full, as Oscar Wilde found *Hamlet* to be full, of quotations: Rose, Bullock, Rampton, Scarman, Swann, Eggleston, Burnage, Lane, Macpherson, Parekh, Cattle.

Words strain, said the poet:

Words strain.  
Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,  
Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,  
Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,  
Will not stay still.

Do words strain because reality – stuff out there – does not stay in place, does not stand still? Or because our understanding of reality changes? Or because of changing power relations and access to the platforms, tomes and reports where reality is defined? Are we straining and struggling to interpret the world in order to change it? Or are some of us, rather, scrambling from one euphemism to another in order to avoid even interpreting the world, let alone engaging to change it?

Yes, our story is not only a story about semantics but also about arguments, questions and uncertainties. It is therefore with mixtures of pleasure and duty, and of gratitude and suspicion – innit? – that we have accepted our invitations from the DfES to be with them at this conference here today.

This contribution to today's conference begins by recalling events in our stories, and in our predecessors' stories, of the last 40 years. It was 40 years ago today, we may imagine, that an apocryphal conversation took place at 10 Downing Street. 'It won't do, Harold, it won't do,' said a deputation from various metropolitan councils up and down the land. 'Our people are not at all happy about the arrival of all these immigrants.' – 'So how much do you want, lad?' – 'That's very handsome of you, Harold, how much have

you got?' – 'As much as you like.' – 'Extremely handsome. You'll compensate our supporters for having to put with immigrants?' – 'Yes.' – 'Will we have to spend the money on the immigrants?' – 'No, you can spend it on whatever you like.' – 'What's the source of this money to be called?' – 'I have in mind, lad, to call it Section Eleven.'

The purpose of recalling 40 years of history and story is to prepare and equip us for the rest of today and, more especially, for the months and years ahead. The near and mid-term future will be the subject-matter of the lecture's second half.

In a few moments I will recall the story and stories as a sequential narrative. But the problem with sequential narratives is that they can imply causality and consequence when in fact what happened was ODTAA – one damn thing after another. And they can obscure not highlight recurring leitmotifs and themes. Has the grand narrative of the last 40 years been, to quote the Beatles song released shortly after Section 11 of the 1966 Local Government Act came into effect, 'it's getting better all the time'? Or has it been, to quote a young South Asian disc jockey speaking recently about race relations in Britain over the years, the story of 'same shit, different lyrics'? To ask such questions, and to show recognition of ODTAA as well as of pattern and causality, here's an alphabetical *tour d'horizon* for our times, like in a Victorian schoolbook:

### **Forty Years from A to Z**

A is *Aiming High* and achievement and antiracism, essential each  
B is Black History Month, Burnage, bilingualism, Bullock, Blair Peach.

C is colour and culture, categories for us/them dividing  
D is DES, DfE, DfEE, DfES, sometimes dithering, at times deciding.

E is EMAG, EMTAG, EMA and EMAS and, oh yes, equality  
F is the future of our multi-faith, multi-ethnic polity.

G is Gypsy Traveller communities, our attention urgently claiming  
H is Home, as in Office, and High, as (again) in *Aiming*.

I is inter and intra national Islamophobias, fears, hostility, hate  
J is the justice for which Muslims and others still wait.

K is kids, and the key stages where they spend their days  
L is the loony left label applied to certain LEAs.

M is the mischievous, malicious, malevolent *Daily Mail* and what other papers say  
N is the neutrality that, even on a DfES platform, I am failing to display.

O, then, is opposition to what this conference stands for, though not always overt  
P is the pressure we withstand, hopefully, and hopefully exert.

Q is the QCA, on our topics rather queasy and quiet.  
R is race relations legislation, an ingredient in our staple diet.

S is Swann and the 3 S's, and struggles and stories without cease  
T is two Twiggs on, like, the same family tree – Twigg *père* and Twigg *fils*

U is a unified understanding of all this stuff  
V is the virtuous circles that make a school or a system good-enough.

W is whiteness and white identity and the welcome not given, because  
Of X, xeno-racism, to those seeking refuge within our shores.

Y, though, is all who are the young, in dream and desire  
Z is the zest with which they (let's hear it again) aim always higher.

If 'all this stuff' were to be presented as a sequential narrative, there would be references to the following, amongst others:

- 1960s    The creation of Section 11, but with no clarity or agreement about the purpose
- Bussing
- The formation of ATEPO – association of teachers of English to pupils from overseas
- 'Children of West Indian parents, the largest of all the immigrant groups, have been a source of bafflement, embarrassment and despair in the education system... They have often presented problems which the average teacher is not equipped to understand, let alone overcome.'  
(*Colour and Citizenship*, E J B Rose et al, 1969)
- 1970s    'How the West Indian child is made educationally sub-normal in the British education system: the scandal of the black child in schools in Britain...'  
(Bernard Coard, 1971)
- Campaigns against bussing, successful
- 'No child should be expected to cast off the language and culture of the home as he crosses the school threshold...' (*A Language for Life: The Bullock Report*, 1975)
- ATEPO changes its name to NAME, the national association for multiracial education
- Committee of Inquiry into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups, chaired by Anthony Rampton, set up in March 1979
- Killing of Blair Peach, April 1979
- 1980s    Publication of *Rampton Report*, 1981. Sacking of Anthony Rampton, 1981
- ILEA papers on race, gender and class, 1982
- Founding of the journal *Multicultural Teaching*, 1982
- Publication of *Swann Report*, 1985. Amongst other things, it includes and commends an LEA policy statement entitled *Education for Racial Equality*
- Home Office attempts to bring clarity into Section 11 arrangements, circa 1982 onwards
- Home Office agrees to fund an LEA's Development Programme for Race Equality (DPRE), summer 1986. *Mail on Sunday* says the LEA is appointing race spies and Home Office freezes the funding, autumn 1986. Lane Report concludes DPRE is fundable under Section 11 rules, 1988. Home Office changes Section 11 rules, 1989

Throughout the decade, the rise and increasing hegemony of anti-racism

Abolition of ILEA, 1988

*Murder in the Playground*, 1989

1990s National Curriculum Council produces multicultural guidelines, 1990.  
National Curriculum Council shreds multicultural guidelines, 1990

Section 11 rules make explicit attention to raising achievement, but there's a banal, narrow and mechanistic concentration on so-called stages of language acquisition; virtually no reference to issues affecting African-Caribbean pupils; and huge de-emphasis of anti-racism and race equality

Throughout the decade central government seldom if ever talks about race equality, but many LEAs and schools keep the torch alive

Despite a massive lobby of parliament by Section 11 staff, 21 October 1993, great cuts in levels of funding and uncertainty about future. Many Section 11 staff forced into retirement or other jobs

Move from Section 11 to EMAG, and simultaneously from Home Office to DfE, causes further turbulence at end of the decade

Stephen Lawrence Inquiry report puts institutional racism back on the agenda, 1999, and paves way for Race Relations Amendment Act, 2000

2000s By law, all schools and LEAs must have a race equality policy or scheme, 2002

*Multicultural Teaching* changes its name to *Race Equality Teaching*, 2002

The DfES conducts the *Aiming High* consultation, 2003, and starts to move towards a needs-based formula for allocation of EMAG. One consequence is a substantially larger share of resources from 2005 for raising the achievement of African-Caribbean pupils

Within the framework of the *Aiming High* programme, the DfES sets up several national projects and publishes a range of guidance documents, 2003-2005; the famous quotation from the 1975 Bullock Report (see 1975 above) gets pride of place on a DfES website

EMAG rules include references to whole-school management and to combating racism, autumn 2004

'For too long now, black Caribbean children have been let down by our education system ...Some schools in ethnically diverse areas are plainly nervous about opening up ... debate for fear of making things worse.'  
(David Bell, *Times Educational Supplement*, 14 October 2004)

The DfES organises three regional conferences in early 2005 to review, consolidate and take forward the *Aiming High* agenda.

## **Fights and tensions**

As we look back on the sequential narrative sketched above, or in the alphabetical ODTAA, we recall many fights and tensions. Between the Home Office and the DfES; central government and local government; LEAs and schools; the Section 11/EMAG community and the rest of the educational community; and – not least! – within the Section 11/EMAG community itself. The fights have been about power and resources, as all struggles are deep down, and have generated competing terms and definitions, as all struggles do. They have been about who gets what, and why, and what for. EAL or raising achievement or moving to equality? Equality of opportunity or equality of outcome? Bilingual kids or black kids? Early or advanced stages of language development and use? Change in the core and the mainstream or add-on special provision? Teachers or teaching assistants? Training, development and consultancy for existing staff or appointment of new staff? The shires or the metropolitan authorities? Long established communities, for example and in particular Gypsy Traveller communities, or the newer communities post-*Windrush* and the even newer ones of the last ten years? Assimilation, integration and cohesion or equality and respect for difference and diversity?

What's our take on race, racism and racisms?

Not least, are we concerned with so-called minorities or with the whole?

Who or what won, who or what lost? Who or what's winning, who or what's losing? These are natural questions. But victory and defeat are not the final names of the game. For victories are often illusory or Pyrrhic and defeats are often re-groupings to live to fight another day – *reculer pour mieux sauter*. The more interesting and important question than who's won or winning is this: are we doing no more than achieving ceasefires, compromises and cessations of hostilities, or are we achieving peace? Are we going beyond thesis and antithesis and achieving synthesis? Are we getting from either/or, yet without compromise, to both/and?

The jury's out, as juries so often are. But we can name things to attend to if moves from either/or to both/and are to happen.

## **What next ?**

The move from either/or to both/and needs to take place in four separate though interweaving spaces: the Ethnic Minority Achievement Unit at the DfES; the LEAs represented at this conference; the EMAG community; and the rest of today as this conference continues. I will focus for the sake of clarity on the first space, the DfES. The danger is that everyone else will be left off the hook. It's crucial from the outset, therefore, to stress that the issues outlined below are every bit as important in LEAs and schools, and in the professional practice of everyone here, as at the DfES.

The suggestions and requests that follow are not necessarily about add-on things. Rather, they are about matters that should permeate the things that are already being done – for example, the valuable things we are hearing more about at today's conference.

### *Legislative framework*

The Ethnic Minority Achievement Unit has reported that responses to the *Aiming High* consultation included requests for guidance and support on implementing the Race Relations Amendment Act. The problems for the Unit in this context are to do with (a) protocol (b) electoral politics and (c) concepts. Protocol, because the CRE has to be involved. Electoral politics, since ministers fear a backlash from sections of the print

media. Concepts, because the RRAA's discourse is basically too thin to guide valuable action beyond minimal compliance. No doubt there are also complex internal politics at the DfES that make movement in this area slippery and hazardous and slow.

Though sympathising with their problems, let us urge the DfES minimally to talk more about, and maximally to say something helpful about, racism. Or, more accurately, racisms. Street and playground racism but also institutional racism. Racism in the mindsets, group-thinks and cultures of school staffrooms, and of LEA offices and committee rooms. Racism experienced by men but also the experience by women. Colour racism but also, crucially, culture racism. Amongst the forms of culture racism: antisemitism, sectarianism, anti-Irish racism, anti-Gypsy racism, anti-refugee racism (also known as xeno-racism) and Islamophobia. The latter two are increasingly muddled together by the print media.

In terms of the large numbers of pupils, parents and communities affected, and because it is so plainly connected with globalisation and therefore issues and events beyond easy control, Islamophobia is particularly important.

Promisingly, the DfES has recently indicated that it plans to expand on, and give a higher profile to, the guidance it has recently included in *Aiming High* documents on dealing with racist incidents in schools. Such work will valuably draw on the excellent and high-profile work it has done and is doing on anti-bullying. It is to include central reference to Islamophobia as well as to other racisms.

But racism exists not only on the streets and in playgrounds but in our professional cultures. A key element in any culture is expectation.

#### *Expectations and organisational culture*

'Low teacher expectations play a major part in the underachievement of African Caribbean pupils. In addition, inadequate levels of positive teacher attention, unfair behaviour management practices, disproportionate high levels of exclusion and an inadequate curriculum take their toll...' The points in this quotation appeared in publications in the 1960s and 1970s. The quotation is in fact from the London Development Agency, autumn 2004. (See also the quotation above from David Bell, similarly autumn 2004.) The concept of teacher expectations needs continually to be re-visited and we need to see and study the ways in which expectations are constructed and re-constructed in staffroom culture.

This is an enormously sensitive matter, not least since teacher unions and associations have traditionally been reluctant to admit that there's a problem. There are ways the DfES could nevertheless direct attention to it, for example through guidance on the use of EMAG.

#### *Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant*

The changes currently taking place in the national distribution of the EMAG are broadly to be welcomed. Clearly there are dangers and disadvantages, however, and the potential gains may not be sufficiently realised. We need to know how the DfES is intending to monitor and report on what the redistribution entails; and about the feasibility studies it is (presumably) conducting to refine the new needs-based national formula, particularly with regard to bilingual pupils and to the concept of under-achieving groups.

#### *Concepts and curriculum*

Much or most discourse in the media, but also even in the EMAG community, assumes tacitly that cultures are fixed and that most or all people belong to a single culture. In reality, as we in fact know, cultures are continually changing, partly because of internal tensions and contradictions and partly as a consequence of interaction with other cultures; and all people belong to more than one culture. Can the DfES lead the way on issues of terminology rather than, as it seems, slavishly following the Office for National Statistics?

But more important than terminology is political philosophy. Could the DfES lead in articulating debating the political philosophy that was latent in Bullock's famous assertion that no child should be expected to cast off the language and culture of the home as she crosses the school threshold. The Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain broached the topic by maintaining that there are three essential values that must be maintained in balance. It named these with the terms equality, diversity and cohesion. They are like the legs of a three-legged stool. Take any one of them away and you no longer have a stool; you no longer have a good-enough society, community or school.

The national curriculum needs to be based on certain big ideas and key concepts reflecting a coherent political philosophy. Otherwise there's a danger of just frittering time and energy on the 3 S's. QCA's *Respect for All* website could valuably be developed in this regard, as also the *EMA online* website and the *Multiverse* one.

### *Mainstreams and margins*

'Come out of the broom cupboard!' was a rallying call to Section 11 staff in the 1970s. Alas, too many EMAG staff are still to this day in metaphorical broom cupboards, partly because it's cosy in there and partly because mainstream colleagues often don't want them anywhere else, thank you very much. The move from appointing teaching assistants rather than teachers has absolutely not helped in this regard, nor has the increasingly temporary and precarious nature of many school-based EMAG-funded contracts.

Over the years a great deal of expertise has been built up in LEAs and individual schools about good practice in the use of Section 11 and EMAG funds, as valuably described in two recent Ofsted reports. The DfES could give impetus to this body of knowledge and experience by publishing guidance about the interaction of specialist and mainstream provision, for specially funded staff need to develop and hone their skills as consultants and mainstream staff, for their part, need skills in using consultancy. There's a great need for training materials on this topic, perhaps modelled on the valuable materials the DfES has provided on EAL for the induction training of classroom assistants.

Training materials need to broach, though, awkward and sensitive issues of professional identity. The great strength of the Section 11/EMAG community over the decades has been its empathy and solidarity with black and bilingual children and their families, and with Traveller and refugee children, and with Muslim children. There has been a dogged, valiant determination to speak for children and young people at the margins of society and the education system and to ensure they are not forgotten. But paradoxically and tragically this is also – the overall system of power relations being what it is – a source of the community's weakness. For if you work with and stand alongside the marginalised, you will yourself be marginalised, unvalued, unlistened-to, unheard; and the *déformation professionnelle* to which you are then prey is suspicion rather than pleasure if and when you are invited to come in from the cold margins.

You fear the loss of your identity, and loss of your roots in the margins, if you engage in collaboration and genuine partnership in the centre. To people with more power than you, your suspicion looks like defensiveness and empire-building – the worst sort of ring-

fencing. There is then a vicious spiral of growing distance between centre and margins, majority and minority, powerful and powerless, spider and fly, demonised centre and dignified margin. Everybody then loses, mainstream, margins and kids.

### **Concluding note: ourselves**

One of the things we must do today is salute and celebrate the grit and guts of large numbers of Section 11/EMAG staff up and down the land these last forty years. It would be churlish not also to salute civil servants at the DES, DfE, DfEE and DfES and members of HMI who, over the years, have worked in solidarity with the Section 11/EMAG community from behind the scenes. Without them we would quite literally not, as also metaphorically not, be here today. They too belong, we have to be clear, to the community of communities that is gathered here today.

Every community, and *par excellence* every community of communities, needs icons that represent it to itself. Symbols, pictures, custom and ceremony, stories and story, mementoes and monuments: things to see, both out there and in the mind's eye, and viscerally in the body's memory, to synthesise collective identity. Language alone is not sufficient for this task – words alone (we remember) strain, slip, slide, perish, decay with imprecision, will not stay still.

If you go to St Paul's Cathedral you may feel you need, and you may seek, an icon or symbol, a memento or monument, synthesising the person who designed it. ('Christopher Wren/ Said to his men/If anyone calls/ I'm designing St Paul's.') Wren's epitaph there famously reads *Si monumentum requires, circumspice*: if you seek his monument, look around you.

You want to see the Section 11/EMAG community of communities? You want to see, and remember in your mind's eye, both/and, not either/or?

EAL *and* raising achievement? Bilingual *and* black kids? Early *and* advanced stages of language development and use? Mainstream *and* special provision? Central *and* local government? The shires *and* the metropolitan authorities? Long established communities *and* the newer communities post-*Windrush* and the even newer ones of the last ten years? You want to see it? *Circumspice*.

We look around us a trifle circumspectly and warily, yes, but curiously, generously, hopefully, too. Innit?

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