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# Please, Sir! Passionate teachers make much better educators for our kids

With exam results due out tomorrow, and on the back of the recent Hayward Report which questioned the future role of testing within schools, James Forrest, history teacher at Lomond School in Helensburgh, discusses the benefits of the International Baccalaureate for teaching practitioners.

By James Forrest  
COMMENT

**The question of whether pupils learn better through examination or continuous assessment has again been raised with the publication of the Hayward Report.**

This debate is nothing new. However, it prompted me to reflect a little on the nature of learning itself, and its impact on teachers.

The question of effective learning is centred around the impact on our pupils. This is unsurprising as it is, after all, their futures we are debating. Yet, to what extent do we consider teachers when designing curricula and assessments, and exploring pedagogy?

Conversations about different teaching methods rarely mention the impact on the teaching staff. Given that the passion of our



**History teacher James Forrest.**

teachers is vital to the success of pupil learning, this could be seen as a missed opportunity. Just as we are hearing of pupil boredom with rote learning and regurgitation in the recent OECD report, I am hearing of colleagues who are fed up teaching the same content, to the same examination formula. We want our teachers to be able to bring their own experiences into the fold.

Teacher satisfaction is at an

all-time low: just 15% of Scottish educators are happy in their role and huge numbers are leaving the profession.

So if we are to keep teachers engaged and motivated, it is imperative we find new ways to reignite their love of education.

My passion was reignited with the chance to teach the International Baccalaureate (IB). It is no cliché to say that it has brought the magic back into my classroom and given me a fresh perspective on both the pupils' learning and my own. The experience has been intellectually stimulating and personally fulfilling and has undoubtedly made me a better educator.

The IB teaches pupils to become lifelong learners and independent thinkers, a adaptable and able to problem solve, whilst also placing a strong emphasis on teamwork and collaboration to achieve a common goal.

The two IB programmes at Lomond have been universally welcomed by our teaching community. The history course has provided the freedom to teach topics I am passionate about and that pupils find fascinating: from interwar Europe and the Cold War to apartheid South Africa, European dictators and Castro's Cuba.

It has allowed me to explore and link key concepts with pupils, rather

than simply encouraging them to remember the details and dates of important events and their immediate impact. Instead of telling pupils about how Hitler used propaganda, we can focus on the nature of propaganda itself. What is its purpose? Does it change minds? How does it feature in today's society? To me, learning from the past, making connections and critically analysing it and applying it to our present is what history is all about.

Equally rewarding has been teaching theory of knowledge, a central component of the IB diploma programme core which challenges pupils to question the nature of knowledge itself and how we acquire, share and produce knowledge. Through thought-provoking discussions, it develops their critical thinking skills and their ability to detect misinformation – essential skills in today's world.

The entire experience has been incredibly enriching. It has allowed me to witness the intellectual development of my students, fostering their ability to analyse the past and question the world around them.

I have become a more skilled and reflective teacher, continually striving to create a dynamic and stimulating learning environment where students can flourish academically and personally. Most importantly, I have become a learner again.