

Reflections and a personal view on the last day of the Roots and Wings Experience.

Much has been said by all participants regarding the effects of the RW on individual leaders and individual schools. I consider my personal reports which are attached, and I apologise to those who cannot understand these written in the Welsh language, are an honest record of my views at the time on my return from Italy and Denmark. My slide show, which was viewed publically on Monday, is my own personal record of my visits and they continue to be a reminder of some of the leadership issues and questions raised. Like many of my colleagues I can emphasise the following:-

- I have learnt a great deal from my discussions with experienced heads from different countries and after visiting various schools
- Experience has widened my horizons and I have gained confidence in doing things differently and yet continue to make mistakes
- Sharing experiences on a personal, professional and school level
- Developing a range of strategies from the ideas learnt to deal with various situations
- Gain confidence in trying to do things differently.

But taking a view back over the past two years and the lasting influence of RW in myself and my school I should like to emphasise the following:-

1. As Welsh heads we tend to emphasise what we learnt from our visits to the other two countries, but I should like to return to the experience of having two foreign heads in my own school and a key issue that was discussed at the end of the first day when Lene and Elisabetta had visited Y Strade. It was an issue of communication and improving communication. I suppose in the day to day running of a school, much is taken for granted by experienced managers not always bearing in mind that a school has many new members and people who need continual reminding. It was not the issue of improving the day to day communicating within the school but getting the point of why we were doing things and the reasons for getting involved in certain initiatives. This issue was raised by teachers who had been interviewed by the my visitors. I took this on board through SMT immediately and we believe that the message is getting across. It is a case of being clear and concise when we are emphasising certain procedures on getting involved with new ideas. My and our communicating improved immediately.

2. During my visit to Tuscany and our discussions of issues at Elisabetta's school, I felt immediately that the lack of structures in the school confirmed the importance of the structures established and implemented at Y Strade. I felt confident that the structures in a Welsh school are an area of strength and essential in avoiding difficulties experienced in the Italian school. The morning briefings, after-school meetings, staff meetings, departmental structures, schemes of work, performance

management, NC and assessment are an important and vital management and leadership tool in our school.

3. On returning from Denmark what left a lasting impression (apart from resources, forward planning, flexibility of staffing and relevance to workforce remodelling, and the lack of challenge in the lessons) was the emphasis on values and relationships. This despite the fact that there are no PSE lessons and teachers are reluctant to do more than teach their subjects. I felt it necessary to emphasise values and relationships at Y Strade and a self-evaluation of whole school issues and particularly PSE is currently taking place. The school aims have also been revised and agreed based on clarity and improving communication. The re-structuring of PSE based on the new framework and the self-evaluation, based on coaching techniques, has raised the importance of values and relationships in the school.

In conclusion, and these were shared with the group before the Hobby presentation on Monday, it is interesting that the lasting effect of the visit to Tuscany was the emphasis on structures, and Dr Jekyll comes to mind, and from the visit to Denmark the lasting effect was the emphasis on values and relationships, and Mr Hyde comes to mind. I hope that Y Strade is somewhere in between.

Many thanks to all that contributed to the success of the Roots and Wings programme.

Geraint Roberts,
October 12th, 2004.