

The Data Rich School

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Dubrovnik 2011

'Data doesn't always provide answers but it does suggest what some of the right questions might be...'

The Problem

- **‘National tests do not serve all of the purposes for which they are in fact used.....the data devised from the testing system do not necessarily provide an accurate picture of the performance of schools and teachers, yet they are relied upon by the Government, QCA and Ofsted to make important decisions affecting the education system in general and individual schools, teachers and pupils in particular....‘The fact that the results of these tests are used for so many purposes, with high stakes attached to the outcomes, creates tensions in the system leading to undesirable consequences...In short, we consider that the current national testing system is being applied to serve too many purposes.’**

House of Commons, Children Schools & Families Select Committee on Testing and Assessment, *Third Report*, (2008), p.20 & p.92.

Range of Data

- wealth of data about pupils
 - wealth of data about the community
 - wealth of comparative data for all schools
 - Data includes tests and teacher/professional assessments
 - not just academic progress
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Intelligent Use of Data

- ❑ enables schools to spot children who are not making (expected) progress
 - ❑ targets early intervention and support
 - ❑ adapting teaching approaches to suit individual and group needs
 - ❑ helps teachers and schools to evaluate success of teaching styles and approaches
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Intelligent Use of Data

- ❑ identifies individuals and groups at risk of falling behind
 - ❑ provides fruitful and fair comparison with other schools
 - ❑ directs the allocation of resources to match need appropriately
 - ❑ limits judgments made on 'hunches and anecdotal' evidence
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Caveats, cautions and limits

- ❑ consequences and objectivity
 - ❑ data becoming used as weapon rather than a source of enquiry
 - ❑ not everything of value can easily be captured in numerical form and analysed
 - ❑ dangers in a heavy reliance and use of data to inform decision making
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Time, time, time...

- ❑ time spent testing or assessing is time not spent teaching
 - ❑ time spent analysing data is time not spent leading in other ways
 - ❑ benefits of data collection and analysis must be weighed against the cost
 - ❑ smart managers and leaders use data but don't rely on data alone
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Who else agrees with this?

- “There is no straightforward, formulaic link, for example, from contextualised or any other form of data to the judgments inspectors make during inspections. And data must never be used – by schools or inspectors – to furnish excuses for poor attainment or slow progress... so data are valuable... But, data are only numbers on a page, or a spreadsheet on a screen. They only measure what has been tested. And people often only test what they feel they can measure. The challenge for schools, and for inspectors, is to understand the data available and get behind the figures to explore the strengths and weaknesses they indicate.”
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Barriers to success in school

- ❑ effective use of (good) data is particularly relevant to helping those who tend to do less well at school
 - ❑ barriers (learning) come in many different forms and combinations... they can only be addressed when they are noticed... and they are more easily addressed if they are noticed quickly
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10 suggestions

- ❑ schools know, discuss and act upon the expected and actual progress and development of every child and... progress is measured at various points in each year, and is connected with salient characteristics
 - ❑ schools do not rely solely on data collected for accountability purposes
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10 suggestions...

- ❑ only as much data as is necessary is collected, and no more
 - ❑ prime use of data is the early identification of progress and the application of relevant support
 - ❑ schools possess and use a range of tested strategies
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10 suggestions...

- schools look for patterns in achievement to help identify groups at risk
 - data is not used as an excuse for under-performance
 - the school knows its children as people not data sets
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10 suggestions...

- data is used to generate questions and hypotheses, which are subject to debate, enquiry and investigation
 - dnd, lastly...
 - success is celebrated!
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