MA Achievement in City Schools
Leeds Metropolitan University

Module 1   Diversity and achievement: geographies of opportunity
- Explore issues such as de-industrialisation, migration, neoliberalism and social class
- Different explanations of how poverty relates to underachievement (motivation, family, school)
- How do some inner-city schools raise achievement?
- Developing more intelligent analysis of performance data

Participants will develop a portfolio on a vulnerable group of learners in their school.

Module 2   Productive pedagogies: enhancing the quality of teaching and learning
- How can theories of teaching and learning help engage pupils and improve learning?
- How does teaching differ in more challenging situations? Can this be changed?
- Classroom communications, differentiation, experience and abstract knowledge, etc.
- Examine recent developments e.g. Productive Pedagogies, funds of knowledge, dialogic teaching
- Skills of supportive classroom observation for CPD

Participants will engage in classroom observation and write a reflective commentary.

Module 3 Meeting learners' needs: diversity and differentiation
- What is 'intelligence' and can it be enhanced?
- What is 'attention deficit'?
- Supporting the learning of bilingual learners, white working class pupils etc.
- How do attitudes towards 'race', asylum seekers, gender and sexuality impact on achievement?
- Alternative forms of differentiation – avoiding stigma and disengagement

Participants will engage in a close study of the needs and support of 2-3 pupils.

Module 4   The curriculum challenge: engaging and achievement
- How does the curriculum need to be adapted both to engage learners and raise achievement?
- What forms of assessment can enhance learning, especially of the 'hard-to-reach' student?
- How can democratic citizenship and environmental responsibility connect to core learning?
- Seeking out opportunities for critical literacy, place-based learning, project method etc.

Participants will introduce some of the above approaches to their teaching and evaluate them.

Module 5   Changing schools, changing minds: processes of school improvement
- What can School Effectiveness and School Improvement contribute to challenging schools?
- Practical processes of evaluation and change
- Understanding and practising leadership in city schools
- Debating concepts such as accountability, choice, school culture, vision and values.

Participants will describe a critical incident in school development and explain their response.

Module 6 Rethinking school improvement: complex lives and societies
- How should schools respond to the challenges of urban poverty, globalization, migration, linguistic and cultural diversity, changing youth cultures and social division?
- What should be the aims of schooling? economic / cultural / ethical / citizenship etc?

Participants will engage in a critical review of their school development plan and other school improvement documentation or processes, in the light of some of the above issues.

Final dissertation based on the participant's own school situation

Module 1   Diversity and achievement: geographies of opportunity

- Examine relationships between schools and complex urban environments
- Explore issues such as de-industrialisation, migration, neoliberalism and social class
- Different explanations of how poverty relates to underachievement (motivation, family, school)
- How do some inner-city schools raise achievement?
- Developing more intelligent analysis of performance data

In this module, MA students will explore the relationship between schools and the complex environments in which they operate. It will look at issues and concepts such as de-industrialisation, globalisation, neo-liberalism, urban regeneration, migration, ethnicity, gender, social class and poverty. It will discuss the challenge they pose for schools and alternative responses in policy and practice.

The attainment of all pupils is high on government agendas both in the UK and abroad, and there is continuing attention to schools in urban areas where the attainment of certain groups of pupils is habitually low. The module considers inequality in a fast changing world and asks the questions, 'Do schools overcome or reproduce inequalities?' This module will critically examine the relationship between education, achievement and social factors of class, ethnicity and gender, with a particular focus on explanations linking underachievement to poverty.

The module will consider why some schools and teachers are more successful than others, in relating to their community environments and social contexts, enabling achievement for all.

The module will include an examination of the collection of data on pupil performance, at classroom, school and national levels, including the dangers of accountability-driven systems. A particular emphasis will be placed on how data can be collected by teachers and used to identify gaps and inequalities in achievement and guide the regeneration of teaching to improve pupil progress.

Assessment

Participants will develop a portfolio on a vulnerable group of learners in their school. This should include official school data, supported by interview or focus group discussion. A reflective comment will draw on knowledge from the course and explore different perspectives and narratives.

Readings include Stephen Ball, Pierre Bourdieu, David Gillborn, Ruth Lupton, Rob MacDonald, Sally Power, Christine Skelton and others.

Module 2   Productive pedagogies: enhancing the quality of teaching and learning

- How can theories of teaching and learning help engage pupils and improve learning?

- How does teaching differ in more challenging situations? Can this be changed?

- Classroom communications, differentiation, experience and abstract knowledge, etc.

- Examine recent developments e.g. Productive Pedagogies, funds of knowledge, dialogic teaching, Cognitive Acceleration

- Skills of supportive classroom observation for CPD

In this module students will examine a range of issues connected to classroom teaching and learning, with particular relevance to complex urban environments.

Moving beyond explanations which place blame on learner 'deficits', it will examine everyday practices which may limit achievement, and ways of transforming them through more sustained dialogue and discussion, challenging questions, cognitive development, and greater use of thoughtful activity and enquiry. This will be underpinned theoretically and practically by research informed by social-constructivism and the 'productive pedagogies' model.

It will draw on practices developed in Britain and internationally, under headings such as 'productive pedagogies', 'funds of knowledge', 'dialogic teaching' and 'cognitive acceleration'.

It will raise the key question of whether there are 'pedagogies of poverty' which develop in response to the difficult challenges of inner-city schools but which limit learning opportunities.

Throughout the module, an emphasis will be placed on approaches to classroom research, particularly non-threatening observation methods.

Assessment

Participants will engage in classroom observation and write a reflective commentary, pointing to patterns in their owon teaching and opportunities and potential benefits of some of the approaches and concepts studied in the module.

Readings include Robin Alexander, Jean Anyon, Douglas Barnes, Harry Daniels, Bob Lingard, Lev Vygotsky and others.

Module 3 Meeting learners' needs: diversity and differentiation

- What is 'intelligence' and can it be enhanced?
- What is 'attention deficit'?
- Supporting the learning of bilingual learners, white working class pupils etc.
- How do attitudes towards 'race', asylum seekers, gender and sexuality impact on pupil engagement and performance?
- Alternative forms of differentiation – avoiding stigma and disengagement

In this module, students will explore issues relating to the needs of particular groups of learners which constitute the diverse populations of urban schools. It will critically examine how we speak of and categorise individuals and the barriers to their learning.

It will look at different conceptions of ability and intelligence(s), and labels such as ADHD. It will examine how attitudes towards 'race', asylum seekers, gender and sexuality can impact on pupil engagement and achievement. It will provide time to discuss the implications of 'deficit' perspectives and how they can hinder school improvement.

It will draw on innovative thinking internationally about ways to support the learning and progress of bilingual / EAL pupils and working-class pupils including white English, especially those affected by poverty. It will look at the relationship between sensitivity to pupil identities and biographies and the challenges of improving literacy, for example.

MA students will explore a variety of ways in which teaching can respond to pupil diversity and forms of differentiation which maintain challenge and avoid stigma.

Assessment

Participants will engage in a close study of the needs and support of 2-3 pupils. They will write a report, drawing on the perspectives deriving from different methods (observation, interviews, focus groups) and theoretical explanations. This should include a critical discussion of alternative explanations, and recommends for practice. They should relate their discussion and recommendations to the challenges of school improvement.

Readings include Clyde Chitty, Jim Cummins, Nancy Fraser, Gwynedd Lloyd, John Smyth and others.

Module 4   The curriculum challenge: engaging and achievement

- How does the curriculum need to be adapted both to engage learners and raise achievement?

- What forms of assessment can enhance learning, especially of the 'hard-to-reach' student?

- Which activities enable cognitive development, critical thinking and improved key skills?

- How can democratic citizenship and environmental responsibility connect to core learning?

- Seeking out opportunities for critical literacy, place-based learning, project method etc.

- Learning from other curriculum models (Opening Minds, Area Based Curriculum etc.)

This module will explore a variety of curricular models and pedagogical approaches and support students in critically re-examining current policies and practices in terms of curriculum design and the assessment of pupil learning. The relationship between the formal curriculum and pupils' life worlds will be considered.

This module aims to deepen MA students' professional knowledge base about curriculum and its relationship to pedagogies and assessment, and to furnish them with critical understandings of the significance of knowledge and culture and the ways these are selected and delivered in the classroom.

Students will be introduced to a range of advanced classroom methodologies and frameworks, including supporting principles and aims, such as:

- 'the knowledge question' (Young, Whitty)
- discussion and dialogic communications (Bakhtin, Barnes)
- relating abstract representations to experiential learning (Wartofsky, Cummins, Wertsch)
- literacy – the phonics debate
- literacy for learning (readability, identifying key ideas etc.)
- critical literacy (Comber)
- multi-literacies (Cope and Kalantzis)
- cognitive levels (Bloom)
- thinking skills and Philosophy for Children (Guinness, Fisher)
- the application of maths to citizenship problems (Gutstein)
- project method (Dewey,)
- storyline (Bell)
- place-based learning (Sobel).

They will have the opportunity to choose some of these to study in greater depth, including designing new examples within that model.

Assessment

Participants will introduce some of the above approaches to their teaching and evaluate them. It should include some examples and illustrations found in key texts as well as the student's own adaptations or designs; and an analysis and evaluation of the curriculum-as-taught relating to one class.

Readings include Philip Adey, Barbara Comber, John Dewey, Eric Gutstein, Hilary Janks, Pat Thomson and others

Module 5   Changing schools, changing minds: processes of school improvement
- What can School Effectiveness and School Improvement contribute to challenging schools?

- What is the contribution of ICT to school development?

- Practical processes of evaluation and change

- Understanding and practising leadership

- Debating concepts such as accountability, choice, school culture, vision and values.

This module aims to provide students with a greater understanding of educational achievement and change which they can apply to their own professional circumstances.

It will examine practices and ideas associated with the concepts of School Effectiveness and School Improvement, including the concept and practice of leadership.

It will examine these paradigms as particular approaches to evaluation and change in relation to issues of globalisation and neo-liberalism, and with particular regard to the complex challenges of urban schools.

Students will explore key ideas such as accountability, school vision, choice, leadership and values within current policy and in terms of real contexts.

They will read some of the literature on successful schools and school improvement in the English system, but also consider some features of school change in other environments.

Students will strengthen their understanding of processes such as school self-evaluation and development; CPD; and partnerships (local communities, business, universities etc).

Assessment
In response to a case study, presented in documentation and developed through a simulation exercise:

i) Produce a school development plan, including aims, processes, success criteria and evaluation, etc.

ii) Describe a (fictitious) critical incident, the issues this would raise for you, and how you would respond.

iii) Relate aspects of the above to your wider understanding of educational quality and change.

Readings will include Michael Fullan, Helen Gunter, Andy Hargreaves, David Hopkins, John MacBeath, Pasi Sahlberg and others.

Module 6 Rethinking school improvement: complex lives and societies

This module will relate knowledge of school change to issues such as urban poverty, migration, youth culture, environmental and citizenship issues, etc.

*   How should schools respond to the challenges of urban poverty, globalization, migration, linguistic and cultural diversity, changing youth cultures and social division?
*   What should be the aims of schooling? economic / cultural / ethical / citizenship etc?

This module will explore some of the major changes taking place in the world, and the challenge they pose for schools.

It will relate dominant theories of school change to issues such as de-industrialisation, poverty, migration, youth culture, environmental challenges and citizenship.

It will engage students in questioning how the standard structures and cultures of English schools relate to the complexity of our society, and consequently on whether the direction of school reform is a fitting response to the environmental, social and cultural challenges.

It aims to expand the horizon and imagination of students by exploring alternative ways of organising schools and case studies of innovative school reform.

It will review the history of school reform, and relate key principles and practices to current needs.

By exploring these issues and alternative models, it will strengthen the potential of participants to develop a vision for school change in their own professional context.

Assessment

Present your design for a 'school of the future'. Explain to potential pupils, parents and other stakeholders how this relates to the real-world context and its challenges.

Write a proposal to the local council or a parents' or community forum for this school, explaining its aims, structure, curriculum, etc. and how you will support teacher development in this innovative new environment. You may wish to include photographs and quotations from the previous presentation. You should refer to key theories from this and earlier modules.

Readings will include Carlo Raffo, John Smyth, Pat Thomson, Martin Thrupp, Terry Wrigley and others.

Final dissertation

This is based on the participant's own school situation, and will draw on knowledge from across the modules.

Candidates will be supported through this by course tutors, who will remind them of readings from earlier modules, help them design suitable investigations and guide them in shaping the dissertation.

Meetings will be arranged with other students to share findings and discuss ideas.