

Notes from the Nuffield Seminar, 27th September 2007.

Group 1. Chair Ken Ruthven. Scribe Chris Sangwin.

Discussion opened with the question "So what as a result of audit?" What follow up and the problems of time pressure.

We talked in depth about the differences between primary and secondary PGCE students. The former teach a range of subjects, whereas the latter are usually specialists.

It was reported that a shift in the pattern of recruitment has been observed over the last 20 years or so. Previously the majority were subject specialists whereas now mathematics is either rather mechanical or absent all together.

We discussed the "mathematical ecosystem": school students, university students, university lecturers, PGCE students and school teachers.

We discussed the predictability of GCSEs and the autonomy of examination boards.

While it is possible to audit simple items of mechanical competence, complex processes (such as how to teach effectively) was more difficult to audit. This results in few PGCE students taking an original approach. Many just use the three part lessons as instructed.

The "Critical issue" for us is the following: over the last decade audit is now firmly in place. What do we do to follow this up. For example, this audit process may have unintended consequences.

Are all students educable? (School students, university students and PGCE students). This is a widely held contemporary notion, but does it need to be challenged?

The phrase "deep understanding of fundamental concepts" was discussed, and reference was made to the work of Ma and Ball. This included notions of "packing and unpacking" and procedure vs concept. Ball's tests are used to audit teachers, but how transparent are these?

Do primary teachers "fail" as a result of a formal audit of their subject knowledge? Yes, apparently so in Cyprus. Not so much in the UK?