



## **Editorial:**

### **Professional Learning and Moral Debate**

Welcome to this, the second edition of *WeLearn*.

We realise that this has been an opening term like no other and are very grateful both to those teachers who submitted material to be included in this edition, as well as to our colleagues and partners in the Higher Education Institutes who have contributed and supported us as well.

This has been an incredibly difficult and uncertain year -- a time of re-evaluating, rediscovery and realignment. Because of all the fundamental disruptions that have characterised this school year, it is perhaps not surprising how often the notions of value, evaluation, re-evaluation and devaluation come up across all the essays in this edition. If ever was needed evidence that educators in Northern Ireland are reflective practitioners, read on!

We were happy to find exactly the sort of questioning and critical approaches to the idea of 'educational values' which we had hoped *WeLearn* would soon become home to. (It would be disappointing if a visit to the *WeLearn* website didn't prompt teachers to question some aspect of their own educational values.) A range of topics are interrogated in this issue from a variety of perspectives, including

- a critical review of SEN provision,
- a demand for the re-evaluation of league tables,
- reflections on the impact of governance structures on how education is implemented,
- a discussion of the impact of Covid from the perspective of a classroom assistant,
- a set of searingly honest 'lockdown lessons' from a post-primary teacher,
- a thought-provoking analysis of our assessment system and its impact on education.
- questions about how we value the educational opportunities and journeys of every person from every socio-economic background.

Amid the variety of perspectives and views found within *WeLearn*, we may not always find general agreement. One idea, however, does seem to run through all the pieces found here. It is the idea, often expressed elsewhere by the educational theorist, Michael Fullan, that education has a ‘moral purpose’; teaching, for Fullan, is clearly a values-driven profession. As learning leaders here in Northern Ireland, then, *WeLearn* seems to be suggesting that teachers must strike out with the courage of their convictions to challenge practices which threaten the moral values that underpin education. They must equally, though, regularly clear a space in which to reflect critically on their own values, to discuss those values with others, and to be professionally and morally engaged with their community.

It is in light of these requirements that *WeLearn* hopes to provide just such a space for discussion, debate and disagreement. In fact, we hope that you find something in this edition that you disagree with strongly enough that you will be motivated to join the discussion by submitting a piece of your own. It is only through such exchanges that we have any hope of building a community based around meaningful professional learning.

The essential value of teaching is felt by some to be the joy of enabling *others* to learn. As the title of this journal reminds us, however, that essential value must always be linked to our joy in continually learning as professionals. Remember, teachers don’t usually get burned out on teaching unless, somewhere along the way, they lost interest in learning for themselves. Perhaps *WeLearn* can help to reignite that spark of interest for all of us in learning more about our own practice as professionals.

We hope you enjoy both reading and discussing these pieces with each other. Please contact us with comments or suggestions, or join in on twitter @WeLearnNI .

*WeLearn* is your publication.

*The editors would be delighted to discuss your possible contribution to the publication.  
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