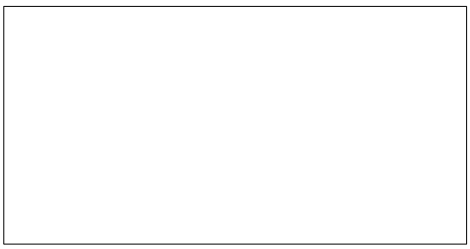

Curiosity Killed the SAT

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The Role of Research in Redirecting Performativity in Initial Teacher Education

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Our number one priority … is to help our students gain essential skills to master all Standardized Assessment tests (US middle school handbook, 2017)

Introduction

Curiosity can be the virtue at the centre of research, and living curiously can make for a life in research, in initial teacher education (ITE) (as tutor and as student), in teaching, and as a school pupil[1]. Understanding this virtue therefore means understanding the activity known as research, and its role in schools and universities. Research – by which I mean 'a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared' (Hefce 2011, p 48) – has a strange life. Some see it as an esoteric, other-worldly, practice only to be completed by those unable to do anything 'real'. Others – including some academics working in universities – see it as 'just another thing to do', a mundane burden on already overworked staff, used as an excuse to set even more performance goals. Both of these views are – in my experience – often heard within universities. Those unconnected to universities tend to see research as the main defining characteristic of academic staff: the activity that separates the work of a university academic from a teacher in schools or colleges, and therefore contributing to the first of the stereotypes of research as other-worldly and unconnected to 'real life'. Some university academics hold this view of research as other-worldly. But of the two stereotypes, the second – that of research being a mundane, heavy, burden is, in my experience, the more common – often expressed in terms of the difficulty in finding *time* to complete the research required (Stern 2014, p 12-13).

This paper explores curiosity as a virtue underpinning research in universities, focusing on its actual and potential position in ITE – and therefore, directly and indirectly, in schools. Within a framework exploring research virtues – that is, the personal qualities or character strengths that researchers might be expected to display – there is an account of the virtue of curiosity not only in research but also in ITE and in schooling. Such a virtue may help overcome the influence of external performance-drivers – the various 'terrors' of performativity as described by Ball (2013). One such performance driver is the SAT, an acronym used in the UK for national curriculum tests (for 7-, 11- and 14-year-olds) and in the USA for assessment at all school levels and for college admission tests, variously 'scholastic aptitude tests', 'standardized attainment tests', the 'Stanford Achievement Test Series' (known as 'SAT 10'), and so on. Such performance drivers are well represented in the extract from a US middle school student handbook, quoted in the heading of the article (with school kept anonymous to avoid 'shaming' an institution under considerable external pressures to 'perform'). Curiosity, I suggest, may 'kill' the (potentially harmful influence of the) SAT, in contrast to its older use in killing the cat (Speake 2015).

[1] I use 'pupil' of those learning in school, to separate pupils from 'students' in universities.

Curiously, the phrase ‘curiosity killed the cat’ is roughly a century old, but for three hundred years before that, the phrase used was ‘care killed the cat’ (as in Shakespeare’s ‘care kill’d the cat’, in *Much Ado About Nothing*, and Speake 2015). The word ‘curiosity’ is closely related to ‘care’, deriving as it does from ‘cure’, meaning ‘full of care or pains, careful, assiduous, inquisitive’ (OED 2005). ‘Care’ and ‘curiosity’ are etymological cousins: both may kill the cat, and both may kill the SAT. So this article is not presenting curiosity as the only virtue relevant to ITE, but, instead, as one of a set of related virtues amongst which its cousin, care, is its closest ally. Noddings (2003, 2005, 2006, 2012) is noted for her application of care ethics to schooling, and she also relates this to curiosity, as ‘the teacher sets an example with her whole self – her intellect, her responsiveness, her humour, her curiosity … her care’ (Noddings 2003, p 244).

Curious Research in Universities

Research has an increasingly high profile in universities around the world. It has an ever more significant role as a differentiator of staff – as the dominant performance indicator for academic staff – for example for gaining tenure in US universities, or for gaining promotion or a more coveted ‘teaching and research’ in contrast to ‘teaching and scholarship’ contract in UK universities. Research has also become a more significant differentiator of universities, in audits, and consequent league tables, of university performance. The highest quality and quantity of research contribute to universities being deemed, for example, ‘research-intensive’ or ‘research-led’ (in the UK, Jenkins and Healey 2005), ‘Research 1’ or ‘R1’ (in the USA, carnegieclassifications.iu.edu/) or ‘universities of excellence’ (in Germany, www.bmbf.de/de/1321.php). Those deemed to have a lower quality or quantity of research may be described as ‘teaching-led’, and so on. In the sense that research is absolutely embedded in the careers of individual academics and in the trajectories of universities, research is certainly *mundane* – an everyday activity, a performance to be undertaken, for the sake – perhaps – of one’s career or one’s employer’s ranking. There is indeed a risk that research becomes almost entirely ‘mechanical’. Noddings describes her colleague Elliot Eisner bemoaning the state of educational research: ‘We’ve got graduate students wandering up and down the halls saying “what shall I correlate?”’ (Eisner quoted by Noddings, in Stern 2016, p 35).

The definition I have used of research – a mainstream definition used by UK research funders and universities – is itself a sign that research can be quite ordinary. ‘A process of investigation’ is something very general and the degree of rigour of the investigation is not determined by the definition. That research might be ‘leading to new insights’ indicates originality but not the *degree* of originality required. And the research being ‘effectively shared’ is vital – and a reminder to all researchers that sharing the research (including eliciting others’ comments on the research, and discussing the research, as well as writing for publication) is part of the research itself, and not an *additional* activity. But sharing is, like investigating and generating new insights, a rather ordinary activity.

However, in a number of ways, an alternative position is even stronger: research is indeed esoteric and stretches beyond the ordinary. The process of investigation is an alternative to merely repeating what others have said, or making declarations based on no more than their coming from people or institutions deemed authoritative. ‘Common sense’ is not – or not necessarily – the result of investigation. And so much of what is published – even, I am afraid to say, by academics – is the routine repetition of what others have said, or of uninvestigated authoritative statements, or ‘common sense’. So

investigation is special, and never more so than in an age that all too often appeals to populist disquiet amongst alienated or excluded people in rejecting research-active 'experts' as superfluous – from UK prime minister Callaghan criticising education 'experts' in 1976 (Chitty 1989), through UK justice secretary (and recently education secretary) Gove saying that 'people in this country have had enough of experts' (Deacon 2016), to (at the time) US presidential hopeful Trump declaring 'the experts are terrible' (Gass 2016).

So investigation is special, and the originality and significance implied by insights being 'new' is also vital and potentially transformative. A book on educational leadership asks '[w]here do administrators find originality, independent thought, and reflective judgement in order to transcend current conditions or the status quo?' (Samier, in Samier and Bates 2006, p 24). To have insight is itself a significant quality, and for those insights to be new is creating something new, it is somewhat literally 'making sense'. And by the nature of originality, 'effective sharing' of new insights is a challenge. It is relatively easy to share material that is already well-established; sharing original insights requires skill – both skill in expression (as 'new' ideas must be expressed largely in 'old' language to be understood), and skill in persuasion (as new ideas almost inevitably represent a rejection of the ideas that are already established). Of course, originality – in research as elsewhere in life – is a relative concept. Young children are constantly making discoveries that are original within their own, small, worlds, whilst established academics might be expected to be original in a 'world' as large as a whole academic discipline or – even better – a whole set of academic disciplines. Research is therefore both mundane and esoteric, ordinary and transformative, burdensome and potentially life-enhancing. This cannot be understood simply by looking at the 'outcomes' of research, the published papers and books, the grants received, the individual or institutional rankings.

My own understanding of research as curiosity-driven has in part been developed though a large number of more or less formal and systematic conversations on research with colleagues working on education, analysed and reported in Stern 2014, and Stern 2016 (with extended transcripts freely available at https://www.peterlang.com/view/product/46993?tab=aboutauthor&format=PBK). It is worth providing extracts from one of these conversations, in order to describe something of the lived reality of the virtue of curiosity in educational research in a university, and how the ideal of a 'commitment … to an ethos of curiosity driven inquiry and intellectual excitement on the part of students and staff' (Jenkins and Healey 2005, p 25, quoting the University of Southampton in the UK) may be realised. The extracts are from a conversation with Professor Ginger MacDonald, at the time both a professor of educational psychology and associate vice chancellor of the University of Washington at Tacoma in the USA. All the extracts are from the online transcript (much of which is also published in Stern 2016).

> GM: I think that my research has always been motivated by both my curiosity, my desire to make meaning for myself, and then also opportunities. When I started, my doctoral studies focussed on cognitive processing and developmental psychology – how people think as they learn and they grow. Then, when I became involved in teaching, in counselling, and then very quickly moved into university administration [i.e. leadership], it took a different form. While it was still around how people think about themselves and how they learn, this idea of identity formation became much stronger for me, because I was always helping faculty [i.e. academic staff]. In my work I was helping faculty learn who they are, how do you become, how do you think of yourself as a faculty member, as a scholar? I began doing research around that, because of the opportunity. And then most recently my work in higher

education has taken the form of how universities or colleges form their sense of identity. So that's the short version of how curiosity and meaning-making plus opportunity made for my research.

JS: I'm interested that you're curiosity driven.

GM: I think for me, it's partly my personality: my parents say I was always saying 'well why, why does that work that way, how does that work?' I used to get into trouble questioning authority, because I didn't like the answer of 'because', or 'because I said so', or 'it just is that way'. I've never liked that and so I think that there's a personality part of this: just by temperament I'm always wondering what makes things go the way they go. So as a scholar, that motivates my work. It motivates my administration, too, like 'why did you make that choice?'

JS: I often quote William Hanks who says 'learning is a way of being in the social world, not a way of coming to know about it' (in Lave and Wenger 1991, p 24). It sounds like you are curious as your way of being in the world. It's not you versus the world, it's you living curiously. Would that be fair?

GM: I think that is quite fair. One of the values that I hold in my research, but also in my practice (as a theory-to-practice person or a scholar-to-practice person), is that it's the process of identity formation that is really important. I don't even think there ever is a 'product' of higher education, or of research or of practice: we have a sense of who we are that grows and changes all the time. What's interesting is to look at that process. That is my theory-building. I know it's true for people; I think it's also true for institutions. If institutions decide 'we are this and it will never change', then they will probably die.

JS: Research is clearly a deeply personal thing for you. It isn't a thing that you happen to do, it's not only of yourself but as you say it's central to your identity.

GM: I would say yes.

This conversation helps explain how curiosity-driven research can be a life-position for an academic. How this applies to the life and the different kinds of work of Ginger MacDonald is relevant also to those working in ITE. It is to the specifics of research in ITE that this article therefore turns.

Initial Teacher Education

Accredited ITE developed in the UK in the early nineteenth century with older school pupils initially being given responsibility for the learning of younger pupils, using an apprenticeship model (Furlong and Maynard 1995, p 3, Taylor 1996). Colleges of education using this model dominated teacher education until the 1950s (Furlong and Maynard 1995, p 9), notwithstanding the gradual growth through the twentieth century of education (including some ITE) being regarded as a 'proper' university activity – notably through Dewey's work for the University of Chicago 'laboratory' school (www.ucls.uchicago.edu/) and the Teachers College of Columbia University (http://www.tc.columbia.edu/). It was in 1964 that a key meeting was held by a number of education academics to determine how the 'discipline' of education might best be established in UK universities (Furlong 2013, p 28-29). However, 'the study of pedagogy and curriculum were specifically excluded from the Hull conference' (Furlong 2013, p 29), and although later research on pedagogy and the curriculum did emerge (in the UK and elsewhere), Furlong notes that 'only mathematics education and science

education survive as strong curriculum-based areas of enquiry in the UK' (Furlong 2013, p 30). This history of ITE – a long 'apprenticeship' history that is still popular with policy-makers (as in *Teach for America* and *Teach First*, Back 2012), and a limited engagement with research on pedagogy and curriculum research in education departments in universities – has limited the role of research in ITE, recently described as part of the 'proletarianisation' of ITE (Ellis et al 2013). However, in recent years, there has been a move, internationally, towards school teaching as a master's-only profession. This has put pressure on ITE to include master's-level work, with several countries requiring the completion of a master's degree either prior to or during the first few years of a teaching career. In the UK, a master's-only policy was not fully-implemented, and was withdrawn after 2010. But master's-level work in postgraduate ITE in the UK, and expanding master's and doctoral provision for school teachers around the world, provides an increased stimulus to research in initial and in-service teacher education. That opportunity is encouraged by the influential work of Goodlad on the ways in which the learning of teachers and of teacher-educators is linked to the learning of pupils (Goodlad et al 1990, Goodlad 1994), and the related work of action research and practitioner research advocates (McNiff 2010, Cochran-Smith and Lytle 2009).

My own practices in, and principles of, research within ITE are set in this ambiguous context of a long tradition of apprenticeship models, a limited engagement with pedagogic and curriculum research within the academic discipline of education, and an increasing engagement with master's- and doctoral-level work with teachers. Important further contextual pressures in and beyond the UK are provided by performance pressures – in the UK related to professional standards in schools (Page 2015) and the inspection of ITE by the schools inspection body, Ofsted (2016). Nevertheless, some teacher education programmes have given research a central place, with students being systematically trained in action research or research-rich reflective practice – as in the Oxford internship scheme in the UK (McIntyre et al 1994, see also Ellis 2010) or the ACE scheme in Israel (Back 2012, p 175-179). Other programmes are 'research-informed', perhaps based on research evidence of what is referred to as 'best practice' (Florian and Pantic 2013, p 12-14). This latter approach is well represented in a recent policy document encouraging universities to 'establish 'centres of excellence' in ITT, *drawing on* their world-leading subject knowledge and research' (DfE 2016, p 31, emphasis added). The idea that ITE should be 'drawing on' rather than 'participating in' research is significant in that document. But the debates – such as they are – on the relationship between research and ITE have rarely portrayed the direct link between academic staff, students of ITE, and school pupils, *as researchers*. This article uses curiosity to link the activities of all three groups, through the process of research, following previous work on ITE students as researchers (Stern 1994, 1997), teachers and pupils as researchers (Stern 2018), and research as a proposed pedagogy (Stern 2010).

My own first articulation of the role of research in ITE was to describe how educational research 'should help people become better teachers' (Stern 1994, p 3, a book for school-based ITE tutors), complemented by moves towards more practice-based research within education as a discipline, and towards more school-based learning in ITE. An additional reason was the simple one that '[a]ll of us in the teaching profession are expected to continue learning – INSET [i.e. in-service training], Appraisal, and other forms of staff development are built in to the system, and the education system changes at such a rate that anyone unwilling to learn and adapt would be left far behind' (Stern 1994, p 3). The book continues that '[m]any [student teachers] underestimate the amount of learning they will be expected to do once they begin their professional careers', so '[o]ne of the purposes of the [course], then, is to provide

[student teachers] with some of the techniques and attitudes needed by teachers: techniques of research and development, and attitudes of openness to diverse ideas' (Stern 1994, p 3). From the perspective of tutors (as this book was for school-based tutors), the research by ITE students was also framed as of use to the schools. 'Schools all need good quality research – they may pay thousands for consultants, … and they may appoint people on high salaries to help analyse and develop aspects of the school's work', it said, but '[s]chools … are able to make use of the research skills of enthusiastic and professional students, supported by the [university]' (Stern 1994, p 4).

ITE students on brief – perhaps less than a year long – school-based programmes (for which Stern 1994 was a guide), are often seen as somewhat peripheral as university students, as they spend relatively little time in university and follow different schedules to those followed by other students. Similarly, within schools, student teachers – even those on three-to-five year programmes – are often seen as somewhat peripheral as teachers, as they are not in school for the whole year, and (of course) are not fully qualified as teachers so the established teachers retain responsibility for their classes. This doubly-peripheral position may challenge and confuse the students. In the literature this tension has been described in terms of 'learning how to fit in' in view of the (different) powers of school and university staff over success in the course (Ellis 2010, p 109), or in terms of the disciplinary and pedagogical knowledges and the 'difficulty relating the two bodies of knowledge' (Bates 2002, p 219). These are genuine tensions that cannot be wished away, but an approach to ITE focusing on the practice of research underpinned by the virtue of curiosity is, I suggest, a way of overcoming the sense of being peripheral. It can also help in building strong links between universities and schools, and between university academic staff, ITE students, teachers, and school pupils.

Rather than being peripheral university students and peripheral teachers, ITE students can be seen as 'cheap consultants' (although that is perhaps not the best phrase to promote this proposal), providing research/consultancy support for schools, based on the students' required completion of university-supported research tasks. In this way, research can 'unlock' ITE, releasing it from its longstanding debate between schools and universities, disciplinary knowledge and pedagogical knowledge, and some conceptions of 'theory' and 'practice'. The research work of students within their subject disciplines and within their pedagogical and curriculum studies can all be underpinned by and encouraged through the same virtue of curiosity. Curiosity about 'the world' – whether the physical world explored by physicists, the world of languages explored by linguists, or the world of people acting in time explored by historians – and curiosity about how and what people may learn (in pedagogy and curriculum studies) are the same forms of curiosity, linked through research as systematic investigation leading to new insights effectively shared. What is more, this use of curiosity is also relevant to the university academic staff supporting those students, and to school teachers and to school pupils. Curiosity is a virtue that can drive university-based research careers. Within schools, curiosity-driven research can be the professional underpinning of the work of teachers, as teachers learning about their subjects and about their pupils will be more professionally helpful if it results from some kind of systematic investigation. (Norwich and Daniels 1992 is a simple description of the considerable power of teachers investigating then sharing their insights into how their pupils learn, in 'teacher support teams'.) School pupils, too, will also be expected to be 'creative' in how their work (as promoted even in the Ofsted school inspection handbook, Ofsted 2016, p 35), and being creative will – by most definitions – require a systematic approach leading to the production of original material (i.e. new insights), which will be expected to be shared with teachers and typically also with fellow pupils.

Seeing pupils as researchers, and as appropriately curiosity-driven, is important in all school subjects including in my own subject of religious education. I portray 'researchers in the classroom' as central to the learning of pupils and teachers and external researchers, and I provide examples of activities that combine the features of 'lesson plans' with those of 'research tasks' (Stern 2018).

Curiosity-driven research is in these ways presented as central to the whole process of schooling, such that research can be proposed as a pedagogy. Pupils can be seen as 'independent, original and reflective learners working in teams, alongside teachers who themselves have a research orientation supported in some of their work by university-based researchers' (Stern 2010, p 144), and teachers can be recognised as 'fine example[s] of lifelong learners whose own educational needs are continually evolving' (EUA 2008, p 6). The Robbins Report on higher education of 1963 said of all teachers that '[t]he element of partnership between teacher and taught in a common pursuit of knowledge and understanding, present to some extent in all education, should become the dominant element as the pupil matures and as the intellectual level of work done rises' (quoted in Jenkins and Healey 2005, p 11). How such a model of ITE (and schooling) can affect the external performative pressures on schools and universities has been hinted at throughout this article, but should be explored in some more detail.

The Influence of Curiosity

In recent decades, a significant amount of work has explored the significance of performativity in schools and universities. Professional performativity is attacked by people such as Ball and Troman. Ball writes of the era of 'performativity', when what he refers to as 'a kind of *values schizophrenia* is experienced by individual teachers where commitment, judgement and authenticity within practice are sacrificed for impression and performance' (Ball 2003, p 221). This is a threat to the teacher's 'soul': 'while we may not be expected to care about each other we are expected to 'care' *about* performances' (Ball 2003, p 224). Describing problems with the meeting of quantitative targets, he also highlights the 'set of dualisms or tensions' between 'performance' and 'authenticity', between the measures by which their 'impression and performance' are valued and 'authentic and purposeful relationships' (Ball 2003, p 223). Troman also contrasts performativity with creativity (Troman 2008), with performativity needing to be mediated or subverted in order to maintain creativity. For researchers, students of ITE, teachers and pupils alike, performativity can distract from learning. As the philosopher and action researcher Griffiths describes it (of academics), people no longer talk about research itself:

> I think it's the performativity: we find ourselves having conversations about how to get more publications, how to get more money, how to get other people to write more publications at the right level, and then when we get out of that, we talk about the interesting things that we've seen in the research – but by then there's no more chance to talk about what it's actually like to do it. There's just this big performative pressure which is having some really corrupting effects on how people view themselves, and what they think they need to do. In the 1980s, there was some value to the then RAE (Research Assessment Exercise, the predecessor to the REF, Hefce 2011), because it allowed the former polytechnics to value research. But then the sharpness of the selectivity made the performativity go through the roof, whereas if the selectivity had been much more gentle, I think that the audit regime could be quite useful. Because the stakes are so high, it pushes people into the worst aspects of performativity, 'Look, I will pretend that I am doing this, and I will pretend really well'. And you have to collude with the idea that good educational research is world leading, when education is absolutely context dependent.

(Griffiths, in Stern 2016, p 28.)

This suggests that the *degree* of performativity is what determines whether or not it is problematic. There is another approach (explored in Stern 2009, p 119-124), that says that performance and performativity are not in themselves problematic: rather it is the *direction* of the performativity (i.e. the 'audience' for the performance) that may be problematic. Externally-directed performance is of its nature distracting from internally-directed care – care for the discipline, for the subject-matter being studied, for the people with whom you are working. But in both analyses of performativity, externally-directed performances are problematic.

A principal of a Hong Kong school (interviewed for Stern 2009, with the quotation taken from the original transcript and not appearing in the book), described external pressures, but also said that he felt he was not entirely subject to those pressures. When asked how he mediated such pressures, he responded 'if I disagree with some external demands, I will first see if they are reasonable, then I can decide whether I should modify or reject it', adding 'I had made both kinds of decisions before'. He continued:

> How do I deal with external assessments? I would just use those good assessment tools to assess the school, and foster a positive attitude among colleagues when they are faced with external assessment. I tell them not to consider external assessment as a core task that they need to work at, but rather, to work hard in educating students, and make use of the tools and terminologies in external assessment to let the assessment team know what we have done. Then if they understand and appreciate what we have done and give us positive feedback, we would gladly accept it.

There is some evidence to suggest that this more relaxed attitude to external demands, in contrast to the kind of conformist and alienating performativity implied by Ball, is typical of the current Hong Kong education system. A study comparing English and Hong Kong school leaders notes that 'English headteachers were more critical of, and embattled by, their legislative context than their Hong Kong counterparts' and that, therefore, 'Hong Kong inspectoral processes were viewed as much more helpful and benign than the English processes' (Bottery et al 2008a, p 56). Troman's view that (externally-directly) performativity needs to be mediated or subverted is important, and it is that activity that the Hong Kong principal demonstrates, not only subverting external pressures himself, but also encouraging teachers in the school to focus on educating students and, if the external bodies decide to value what the teachers do, to accept their compliments. This focus on education is supported – I suggest – by the virtue of curiosity, the wish to find out, to discover, to make sense of the world. And it can be enacted through research.

The more troubling attitude in the face of external performative pressures is to succumb to them. This is all the more likely – and more understandable – the greater are the external pressures. Bottery and colleagues describe a response to external performative pressures more typical of an English principal, in a portrait of 'Harry':

> 'If you have a series of bad results, which unfortunately we have, then … you're likely to get Ofsted again'. … [T]his was not just a concern for the school; the LEA was also under intense scrutiny, and there was therefore considerable pressure on Harry to change this situation. The result, Harry felt, had been that 'the focus of what we are doing has been skewed enormously towards preparing for SATs', and this was problematic for him in all sorts of ways. … [H]e had inherited a staff who

> ‘don’t agree with SATs at all’, and … [n]ot only did the staff dislike ‘the notion of training for the SATs … they also didn’t like that it detracts from the other subjects on the curriculum’. Such an intense school focus also went against Harry’s personal philosophy of the need for a broad education. (Bottery et al 2008b, p 188.)

Despite Harry’s apparent dislike of a SAT-oriented school, Bottery et al are clear that Harry is genuinely interested in SATs, and even that, ‘in terms of ‘the kudos of getting Level 4’, Harry candidly felt that ‘at the moment we’ve let some of our pupils down’’ (Bottery et al 2008b, p 189). The stronger the external pressures, the more likely that they will take over the leader’s and the school’s ‘focus’, and in this way go against the fundamental beliefs of the staff. That is why Ball can describe performativity as a danger to the ‘soul’ of the teacher or, in more traditional sociological language, as a dangerously alienating influence. It is also why Wright wishes for ‘the devolution to schools of the moral dimensions of leadership’ (Wright 2001, p 288).

A focus on curiosity, underpinning research-oriented learning throughout schools, is not – or not simply – a protest against externally-driven performativity, it is a positive approach to learning that need not be seen as counter-cultural, but can be seen instead as a way of promoting creative, original, learning for pupils and teachers alike. Curiosity can ‘kill’ the focus on the SATs. As a virtue – a personal characteristic of the curious person – curiosity is a more comprehensive quality than, say, ‘inquiry’ (as promoted by Cochran-Smith and Lytle 2009). And here I would want to add another sense in which curiosity can ‘kill’ the SATs, albeit one based in part on my own professional experience as a school teacher and university academic rather than on research evidence. As an examiner for GCSEs and A-Levels (the standard exams typically taken by UK 16- and 18-year-olds, respectively) in the 1980s and 1990s, I was struck by the differences between how the curriculum was taught in different schools – evident from the pupils’ exam papers. Two schools might be given a very similar range of marks to each other, each, say, getting a high proportion of top grades. However, the papers from one school would look very similar to each other, each response apparently ‘coached’ and with elements apparently learned by rote. The papers from the other school would look very different to each other, and each paper would show a degree of originality and genuine interest in the topic. Even though the pupils might end up with the same grades, the pupils in the second school seemed – in my view – to have been more curiosity-driven, whilst the pupils in the first school seemed to have been more performance-driven. I would respect the choices of the teachers in both schools, but I would value the work of the teachers in the second school more than I would value the work of the teachers in the first school. What I learned for my own practice – as a school teacher and then as a university academic – was that I could use curiosity to underpin learning, and the pupils/students would be able to respond with more original work. If I had, instead, focused mainly on the grades and exam performance for its own sake, I might have helped the pupils/students to similar grades, but they would not have been achieving those grades with the creativity that even a performance-obsessed government wishes for its children and young people. The current UK government says that ‘[a] teacher must … promote a love of learning and children’s intellectual curiosity’ (DfE 2011, p 10-11). Choosing curiosity is not giving up on good grades but, potentially, is a way of getting good grades whilst *also* promoting a love of learning.

There are more examples in the research literature of pupils’ perspectives on this issue than there are of teachers’ or examiners’ perspectives. Working in the USA with pupils aged 15-18, Geiger and colleagues introduced a dialogic approach to assessment, encouraging a relational encounter by teachers exhibiting genuine curiosity about and care for their pupils. The pupils found it easy to differentiate between those teachers

who were genuinely curious and those who admitted to the researcher that they were not. The pupils, realising this, said they 'were faking it' with the teachers uninterested in them (Geiger 2015, p 177). That is, the pupils could differentiate between teachers who were directed at grades alone, and they were able to perform (in a 'fake' way) in order to achieve those grades, whilst they also recognised genuine interest and would relate directly to their teachers' interest – as it were, 'performing' within a personal relationship, rather than for the sake of an external grade. Similar examples can be found in research with 9-10-year old pupils and university students (Stern and Backhouse 2011, Stern 2017). These all suggest that pupils understand better than might be expected the 'real' drivers of teachers, and can differentiate between those who are genuinely interested in them and their work from those who are interested more in meeting external targets. What is more, they are likely to respond to the teacher focus in their own work.

Curiosity can, I believe, 'kill' the SATs in the sense of helping pupils achieve good grades in those exams whilst also being creative and – in a sense appropriate for their age – being engaged in *research*. Being curious and gaining high grades in SATs should not be seen entirely as alternatives: pupils might say 'I really *killed* that exam!'. More curious teachers, then, will create more curious pupils, just as more curious university research managers will create more curious university academics – and those academics will create more curious ITE students. Schools making use of those curious students (as 'cheap consultants') will help integrate the influence of universities and schools on those students, and will help create the next generation of curious teachers. It is a virtuous circle, one that can 'kill' the adverse effects of SAT-directed schools policy, and that might also help pupils 'kill' (i.e. succeed in) their SATs.

Conclusion

To conclude, the future of ITE is intimately connected to (perhaps co-dependent with) the future of schooling and the future of higher education. All three can be curiosity-driven and the way in which curiosity is enacted can be through a research orientation. That orientation links the work of university academics, students of ITE, school teachers, and pupils. University-based academic work in education departments can – for those who had previously worked in schools – be a continuation of the curiosity-driven professional identities developed in schools. And school pedagogy can *be*, not just be *informed by*, research. Curiosity contributes to a number of virtuous circles, helping integrate the work of schools and education departments in universities, pupils, students, teachers and academics. And it can kill the SATs.

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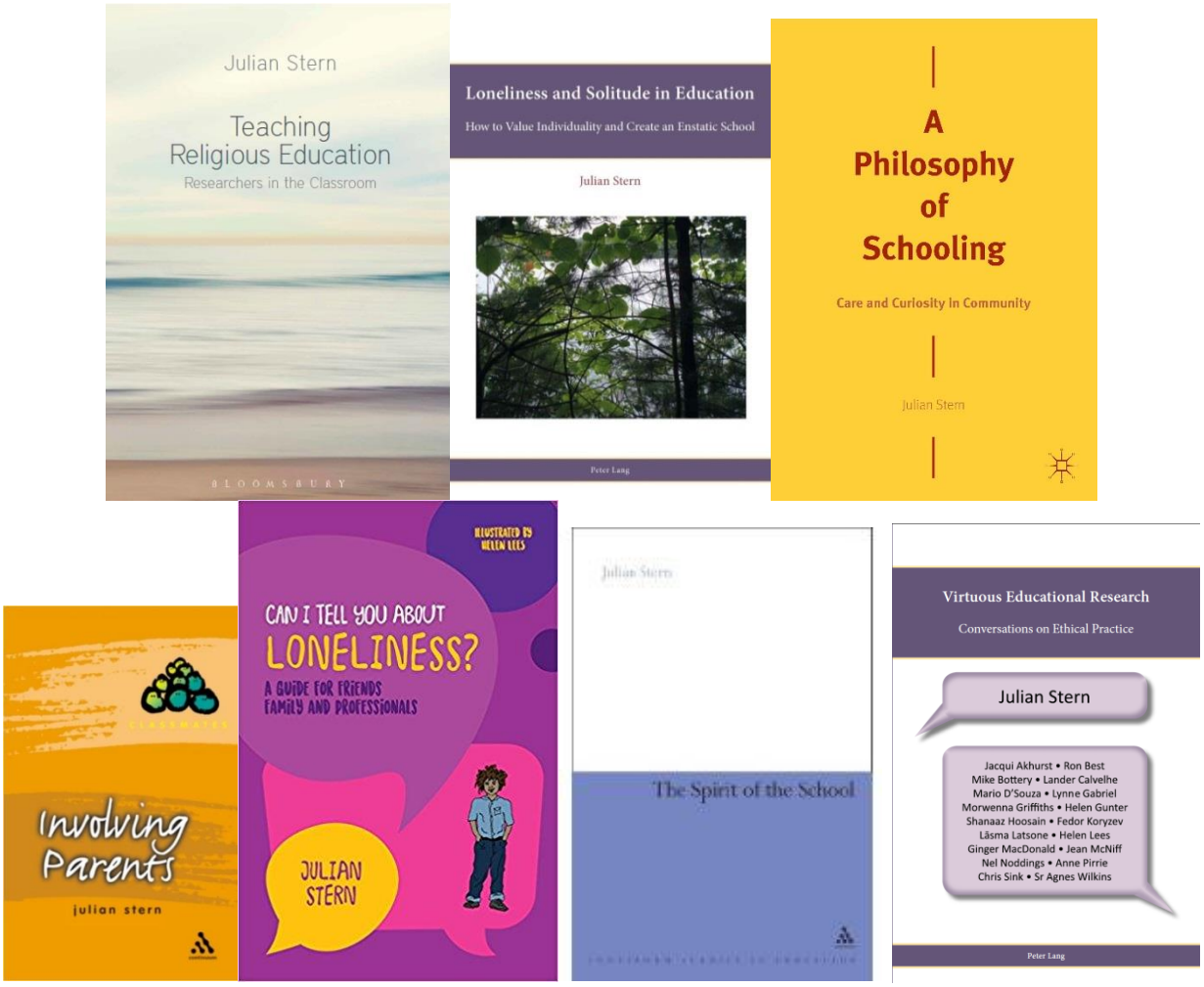

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