Big ideas in education

What every teacher should know

Dr Russell Grigg

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Introduction

Imagine a competition to vote for the greatest idea in the history of education. Which idea would win your vote? The concept of schooling itself opens up lots of possibilities, from the introduction of certain types of schools (grammar, private, comprehensive, faith, etc.) to ideas about learning virtually 'in the cloud' without the need for physical school spaces. Perhaps your idea would be something to do with the role of education in promoting equity, such as the beginning of free elementary education in 1890 or, more recently, grants to support learners from low-income families. What about an idea relating to children's physical well-being, such as the provision of school meals pioneered in Bradford in the 1880s? Or, on the same theme, the introduction of breakfast clubs in the 1990s? How about something to do with school equipment or resources? Historic examples might include the blackboard, the first 'primer' reading books, school uniforms or even the humble school bell. Their significance may be difficult to appreciate in a modern digital age when children learn via interactive whiteboards, use e-books and other multimedia resources and when schools have sophisticated timekeeping systems, but these were, once upon a time, significant breakthroughs. The bell, for example, alerted children to when school was to start and this was particularly useful in rural areas. There are also ideas relating to school design, from the first playgrounds and school gardens to open-air schools and state-of-the-art eco-schools.

Perhaps you would vote for a particular curriculum idea or initiative, such as the principle of a national curriculum, particular assessment practices or the introduction of a baccalaureate-style qualification for post-16-year-olds. Or, at the other end of the age range, you might decide that a play-based approach to learning, which characterises early years provision,

is the greatest idea in education. Then there are a host of subject-specific ideas and approaches, such as learning through investigations in science or the move from religious instruction to religious education. In Wales, the inclusion of Welsh as a compulsory subject in the curriculum might win many votes, while the same might be the case with the introduction of modern foreign languages into English primary schools.

Some ideas draw on a more philosophical and moral basis than others. As such, they often provoke controversy. The increasing emphasis on children's rights during the twentieth century led to the widely (though not universally) supported idea that corporal punishment should end in state schools, which happened in 1987. Surely few would seriously question the efficacy of this. Yet it was not until 2003 that legislation was extended to private schools in all parts of the United Kingdom. Moreover, in 2005, headmasters of private Christian schools unsuccessfully challenged the ban on corporal punishment, claiming that it was a breach of their freedom of religion under Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights. Ideas then can be controversial. Take the philosophical view that children should be treated as independent and autonomous individuals which lies at the heart of human rights. This is alien to many belief systems, such as Confucianism, where the collective need of the family and society take precedence over individual needs.

Suggestions should not be limited to schools. What about the spread of higher education beyond Oxford and Cambridge (established in the thirteenth century) to 'new universities' throughout cities in the United Kingdom? Or a specific idea, such as the opening up of universities to women (which began in London in 1878), the start of the Open University or moves towards a masters level teaching profession? Perhaps you think that teaching, as a profession, is in itself the most significant idea. There is also a bank of ideas associated with education management and leadership, such as performance-related pay or dedicated time for teachers to plan, prepare and assess.

In sum, there are plenty of contenders for our imaginary competition. The popularity of some ideas has waned (e.g. learning styles) while others have stood the test of time, even though their relevance to modern life is seriously questioned (e.g. the three-term school year). If such a competition were to be run, it would need clarification on what we mean by an idea and how to assess its significance.

Definitions and characteristics

The word 'idea' has lots of meanings and applications. It can refer to:

» **Particular thoughts** – e.g. 'This idea of paying teachers by performance really interests me.'
» **Specified plans, aims or objectives** – e.g. 'The governors' idea is to cut back on waste within school.'
» **Mental representations of something** – e.g. 'She has a good idea of the classroom layout.'
» **The belief that something is the case** – e.g. 'The parents have the idea that their child has been poorly treated by the school which has not met his needs.'
» **Comparative thoughts** – e.g. 'His idea of a good school is not the same as mine.'
» **Vague notions or inklings** – e.g. 'The head teacher has no idea what she is letting herself in for.'
» **A philosophical model** – e.g. 'Plato's view of the world was one of ideals or forms, the highest of which was the form of good which empowers humans to understand the spiritual, immaterial world.'

One of the most entertaining definitions is 'a flight of fancy, result of thought, product of reflection, proposal for action, a candidate for euthanasia in any institution because of the terror it induces in the staff, especially senior ones' (Burgess, 2002: 71).

The significance of an idea can be judged in terms of its impact in education, although measuring this is challenging. At the University of California, Berkeley, students have the opportunity to suggest their own big ideas in business to be assessed by expert panels of judges. The proposals are evaluated in terms of creativity, how well they address a pressing social issue, value for money, research and market viability.[1]

Big ideas have been defined as 'highly selected concepts, principles, rules [and] strategies that facilitate the most efficient and broadest acquisition of knowledge' (Kame'enui et al., 2002: 9). Usually, big ideas share several characteristics – Table 1.1 focuses on how these apply to education.

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1 See http://bigideas.berkeley.edu/toolkit-judging/.

Characteristic	Meaning
Important	Big ideas have broad educational significance. They may open up new ways of looking at issues and help educators to make sense of seemingly isolated facts.
Distinctive	Big ideas have unique selling points or propositions. They stand out for their originality.
Empowering	Big ideas are transformative, or potentially so, in that they can change people's attitudes, behaviours or beliefs and contribute to improvements in teaching and learning. For teachers, the critical feature is that they have 'pedagogical power' (Gunter et al., 2007: 49).
Adaptable	Big ideas can be adapted to different contexts – for example, educators can apply the idea irrespective of who or where they teach.
Simple	Big ideas are clearly expressed, concise and straightforward to understand.

Table 1.1. Characteristics of big ideas in education.

At first glance it may not seem that all the ideas in this book are important, distinctive, empowering, adaptable or simple to understand. Arguing, for example, that education goes beyond the school gates may not seem particularly important. But economists forecast that by 2033 one in four people will be over 65 (Whitehead, 2009). This ageing population will place an unsustainable burden on taxpayers unless people work longer and update their knowledge and skills. This is why the government has called on the over sixties to consider further education. As David Willetts, former minister of state for universities and science, put it: 'There is evidence that the idea that you first study and then stop isn't what the world is like any more' (cited by Ross, 2013). So, the idea of lifelong learning challenges the conventional thinking that limits education to schooling and the young. Education is extended to include all ages who participate in a range of learning environments, including preschool groups, community projects, online courses, weekend retreats, summer schools, apprenticeship schemes, placements and foreign exchanges.

Some big ideas, although widely endorsed, are not always consistently understood or implemented in schools. Take the example of assessment data being used to improve (rather than prove) learning. This idea of assessment for learning was introduced in the late 1980s, but the authors, Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam, have since complained that most schools are doing it wrong (see Stewart, 2012). The bottom line is that although big ideas are well conceived, in practice they can be misunderstood, ignored or only partially implemented.

Ideas become big when they offer a particular insight. The original Greek meaning of 'idea' was 'to see' (from *idein*), and the notion of 'getting it' (simplicity) remains a powerful characteristic of big ideas. When teaching history, for example, learners improve their chronological awareness when they understand that there is often a time gap between when something is invented and when it is adopted by the general public. This is a big idea. It means that when they are studying the Victorians, they come to realise that the sixty-four years of Queen Victoria's reign (1837–1901) was an age of inventions, but many of these did not filter through to ordinary folk for some time. Historically, on average, technologies such as the steamship, telegraph and electricity were adopted forty-seven years after they are invented, with the United States and the United Kingdom leading the way in adoption rates for much of the past two centuries. This matters because the longer the lag in technology adoption for any given nation, the lower the per capita income (Comin and Hobijn, 2008).

Steven Johnson (2011) points out that very few ideas begin with individuals experiencing 'eureka' moments of sudden discovery. Rather, they take time to develop and people build on what others have suggested – what he describes as 'liquid networks'. In education, ideas filter through to classrooms and lecture halls, sometimes over many years. These are often adapted from other fields such as sport (e.g. coaching techniques), business (e.g. target setting), technology (e.g. tablets) and industry (e.g. vocational training).

Choice and structure

The aim of this book is to provide readers with a concise and reliable introduction to a dozen ideas which are at the core of educational

practice. It is not exhaustive in its coverage. The dozen ideas chosen are general rather than subject-specific in nature. The first two, education and childhood, invite the reader to look at teaching in wider society. This should enhance our understanding that children and young people's experiences in school are shaped by many factors beyond the classroom. The next three ideas concern elements of learning which teachers promote – knowledge, skills and dispositions, followed by four ideas about aspects of teaching – ethics, instruction, curriculum and feedback. These raise questions about why, how and what to teach. Finally, there are three ideas that are essentially about improving the quality of education through reflective practice, research and professional leadership.

Some big ideas in education have not been included even though there are strong arguments to do so – specifically about the teaching of literacy and numeracy, or more generally about parental engagement, tackling educational disadvantage or promoting behaviour for learning. However, the twelve included cover a broad range of topics and taken together should equip teachers with a good understanding of current thinking in a diverse, fluid and dynamic field.

Each of the big ideas is discussed within the framework of four questions: what is the big idea, who is behind it, why is it important and what can you do? To begin with, the meaning of each idea is explained. This includes a general discussion of the context today and, where appropriate, how it is presented and interpreted in different ways. Then the origin and development of the idea is discussed, including the contributions of key individuals, before considering why it should matter to teachers and examples of practical strategies to use. Some ideas reflect the influence of psychology and other social sciences on our growing understanding of how children learn and develop – for example, recognising the importance of cultivating positive dispositions. Others are rooted in a more philosophical discussion – for instance, what education is for and the kind of knowledge and skills children and young people need to become educated citizens in the twenty-first century.

So why bother reading this book? In short, it offers readers a synthesis of ideas presented in a largely objective manner, free from ideological positioning. Having been involved in education for more than twenty-five years, as a historian, teacher, teacher educator, leader, inspector, consultant and researcher, one of the conclusions I have reached is that there is far

too much polarisation in education – what Robin Alexander (2010: 21) calls a 'discourse of dichotomy'. Talking about education purely in terms of 'child-centred versus teacher-centred', 'traditional versus progressive', 'formal versus informal' or 'teaching versus learning' sets the profession back – it is both divisive and not particularly representative. In my experience, most teachers are not so fixed in their thinking or practices that they can be labelled one thing or another. Good teaching is more nuanced, inclusive and contextual than this, drawing on a range of approaches and strategies – for example, in planning, the deployment of resources and classroom skills. We need to adopt a more balanced view in discussions about education: technologies can be both a help and a hindrance; there are times when teachers should instruct and at other times guide; children need to acquire both knowledge and skills. We then need to focus on the important things. So, while it is necessary to understand the arguments about how the curriculum is organised (e.g. subjects, themes, areas of experience), what really matters is what learners take from school and how we can ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently good.

There is another reason why this book may be of interest. The recent spate of publications (e.g. Adey et al., 2012; Christodoulou, 2014), which set out to debunk myths in education, suggests that many teachers are uncertain about some of the core ideas that shape what they do. Didau (2015) goes further and claims that teachers are simply wrong about lots of ideas – for example, the value of group work or that they should talk a lot less in class. Believing in half-truths and myths is not an occupational hazard confined to teaching. Over several years, Ben Goldacre (2009) has been exposing dodgy medical data and questionable 'scientific' practices, while organisations such as the Child Poverty Action Group, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and others remind us of the myths about those experiencing poverty, such as 'they' are on the fiddle or 'they' don't want to work (Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Methodist Church, the Church of Scotland and the United Reformed Church, 2013). Too often in education we make assumptions – for instance, lessons should last between forty-five and sixty minutes; young children should be guided rather than instructed; research is undertaken by academics in university; and, fundamentally, schools are places where children are taught. Throughout the book, these kinds of assumptions are questioned and the reader is invited to reflect on and beyond their own experiences.

When I was training to be a teacher in the 1980s, I followed a four-year BA Ed programme that included modules on the history, philosophy, sociology and psychology of education. We were introduced to the Greek trinity of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, and the likes of John Locke, Basil Bernstein, John Holt and Paulo Freire. At the time, much of this seemed far too abstract and irrelevant to those of us eager to get into school. They are certainly perceived as luxuries in the world of teacher education today. Many of those entering the profession do so via shorter school-based courses where there is an understandable emphasis on acquiring the technical and practical skills that teachers need. University colleagues are under pressure to 'fit in' what they can and, inevitably, there is limited (if any) time to spend on some of those who have been dead for centuries. Throughout this book I have resurrected some of these names to illustrate their relevance to the issues that teachers face today. It was the twelfth-century philosopher Bernard of Chartres who is credited as first using the oft-quoted expression, 'If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants', but we also need to look around at what is happening in the world today. So this book includes brief reference to past and present figures and organisations relevant to each idea.

We have a responsibility as teachers to be well informed about our practices and the evidence that underpins what we do and what could be done better. This book is a modest attempt to provide a base camp for the reader to explore further.

Chapter 1

Education

Education goes beyond the school gates
and is a lifelong experience

What is the big idea?

Think about something that you are very good at doing or passionate about. Perhaps it's playing golf or some other sport, gardening, singing or playing a musical instrument, showing compassion to others, running a business, supporting a charitable cause or organising things. While a teacher at school may have provided the initial inspiration, more than likely you developed these skills and passions outside school. This could have been due to the influence of family and friends, members of clubs and societies or perhaps something that caught your eye on a television programme or on the Internet triggered your interests. The point is that learning – the acquisition of new knowledge and skills – is a continual process from the moment of birth. Scientists tell us that prenatal babies can recognise specific rhythms and patterns of stories they hear. In one study, doctors gave day-old infants dummies that were connected to tape recorders. Depending on the babies' sucking patterns, the dummies either turned on a tape of their mother's voice or that of an unfamiliar woman's voice. Within ten to twenty minutes, babies were able to adjust their sucking rate to turn on their own mother's voice (Flynn McCarthy, 2014).

If learning begins in the womb, when does it end? According to a report by an insurance company, life in Britain really begins at 60. The

researchers revisited the premise of an American psychologist, Walter B. Pitkin, who suggested in 1932 that 'Life begins at 40'. Pitkin thought that with the advent of the machine age, workers would be set free from back-breaking labour and enjoy more prosperous times when their thirties were over. The new research, based on the views of 2,000 adults, points out that the concept of what it means to be old changes as we age. For those under the age of 35, the word 'old' applies to those aged 61 and over. For those over 70, being 'old' doesn't begin until they reach the age of 77 – only four years short of Britain's average life expectancy (Doughty, 2015). Between 2006 and 2013, Internet use by the over-65s more than tripled, while 25 per cent of over-55s own a smartphone (Tame, 2015). Although something of a cliché, a generation of 'silver surfers' presents a growing market for business and learning, illustrated by the Barclays Digital Eagles scheme, which provides advice on technology for the older generation. In higher education, there are a growing number of mature students over 50 studying for degrees to improve their qualifications or pursue their love of a particular subject. In 2012, Bertie Gladwin became Britain's oldest recorded graduate at the age of 90, having left school at 14 to work as a greengrocer's delivery boy. A former MI6 agent, he gained a master's degree in intelligence history from Buckingham University (Garner, 2012).

Education, training, schools and learning

Most dictionaries and commentaries describe education as a process of learning aimed at equipping people with knowledge and skills to enable them to become well-adjusted members of society. There is less agreement over what exactly such knowledge and skills should be and what education is for (see Chapter 3). Do schools exist to equip children with literacy, numeracy and other basic skills needed to become an active citizen? What about other aspects of learning, such as spiritual and moral values, social and emotional skills, artistic appreciation or a sense of heritage? Are schools about building open-mindedness, risk taking, creative and critical thinking skills? Most commentators conclude that schools exist to pass on cultural heritage and to prepare young people for life. When asked what is the point of education, former Education Secretary Michael Gove replied:

To introduce people to the best that's been thought and written. Our children may never enjoy the prodigious wealth of Roman Abramavich's children, but they're just as capable of enjoying Dostoyevsky or Wagner or appreciating the Gherkin or the Shard – but only if the education they've had has given them an understanding of everything from metaphor to scientific principles. (cited by Horowitz, 2014)

Gove highlights a particular classical view of what it means to be well educated. The ancient Greeks believed that it involved cultivating the intellect through a study of great literature. Later, medieval universities added the arts and sciences to what became known as a liberal education – liberal in the sense of liberating the learner from preconceptions, dogma and parochial attitudes. By the nineteenth century, the value of education in its own right – the joy of reading poetry, exploring nature, looking at paintings or debating the meaning of life – was increasingly undermined by a more instrumental view of education as a means to an end, namely preparation for work. *Training* in specific skills rather than a broader *education* assumed importance.

The notion of training rather than educating remains prevalent today – for example, in the emphasis on teacher training rather than teacher education – reflecting a focus on development of technical skills in an instrumental, competence-led model rather than broadening the mind of young teachers through teacher enquiry, reflective practice and personal development (see Chapter 10). Sir Ken Robinson (2015: xii), using his customary wit, recalls debating as a student the difference between education and training: 'The differences were clear enough when we talked about sex education. Most parents would be happy to know their teenagers had sex education; they'd probably be less happy if they'd had sex training.'

The longstanding link between education and schools is understandable – one would hope that in every case the latter promotes the former. Yet around a quarter of secondary schools require improvement compared to one in seven primary schools (Ofsted, 2014a). But this is not the full story. Thomas (2013: 106) reckons that around 40 per cent of children leave school disengaged, uninspired and bored. Another estimate suggests that a third of 14- to 16-year-olds are not taking part fully in

lessons, have given up or resist (Stamou et al., 2014). While the main business of schools is to educate pupils, not everything that happens in school is educational – schools perform other functions such as childcare, certification, selecting for further training and preparing youngsters for occupational roles.

It is common for the terms education and schooling to be used interchangeably as if they are the same thing – they are not. There have been many quips about this. The American writer Mark Twain pointed out that he never let his schooling interfere with his education, while Albert Einstein, perhaps the greatest intellectual of all time, suggested that 'Education is what remains when we have forgotten everything that has been learned at school' (cited by Thomas, 2013: 2).

Education is more than the act of teaching or learning. Education is the process whereby one generation initiates the next into the ways of the world, acquiring the knowledge they need to make sense of it (Furedi, 2009). Formal education implies a sense of order and direction, where learners are supported to know and achieve things that they might not gain on their own. Much education takes place informally through spontaneous conversations with family, friends and neighbours, self-taught projects and the myriad of folk teachers who offer their expertise through online videos on channels such as YouTube.

Advances in cognitive and social psychology, educational practice and neuroscience are helping us to better understand the process of learning. We know that there are certain conditions which facilitate effective learning. These include frequent opportunities for learners to collaborate and talk purposefully about their learning, practise particular skills and receive constructive, timely and specific advice on how to improve (see Chapter 9). Motivation is also important. Learners are more likely to begin and keep at a task they actually want to do. Motivation increases the amount of time learners spend on a task (Larson, 2000). When learners are extrinsically motivated by the prospect of good grades, public recognition or other rewards, they tend to perform tasks as a means to an end. On the other hand, learners who are intrinsically motivated engage in tasks because they get pleasure from doing so, recognise the importance of the learning or perhaps believe it is the morally right thing to do. Sometimes learners are motivated by both intrinsic and external factors but, on balance, those who are intrinsically motivated achieve deeper levels of

learning. Sotto (1994) boldly claims that for many children around the world, the experience of going to school inhibits their motivation to learn: they are bored, made to look foolish, asked to study things that are unreal and reach a point when they know that they are not going to do well no matter how hard they try. More recent commentators acknowledge that school learning is often dull and uninspiring (e.g. Paton, 2009), but most children enjoy the overall school experience. According to the Children's Society's *Good Childhood Report* (2015), on average students gave their schools seven out of ten. This was based on a sample of 8,000 children aged between 10 and 17.

Discussing definitions may seem all rather abstract and academic. But understanding these terms strikes at the heart of what teachers do and how they see themselves. Teachers who feel that their primary role is to nurture children's natural inclinations are likely to teach in a very different way to those who value a body of knowledge that they think must be passed on to the next generation. This reflects a difference in the very etymology of the word education, which can be traced back to three Latin terms:

1. *Ducere* – to lead.
2. *Educere* – to bring out.
3. *Educare* – to mould or nourish.

The first and second terms were associated with leading troops into battle, with drill having a strong military resonance, whereas *educare* carried the notion of nurturing and tending, as in gardening.

Issues and challenges

These different meanings hint at a longstanding debate about what education should aim to do and the role of teachers therein. Should teachers lead through formal instruction or develop pupils' latent abilities by guiding, coaching and facilitating? What is their role in the Google Age, where learners can instantly verify what they are told? There is no universally agreed answer to these kinds of questions. In some cultures, particularly in Asian countries where Confucian beliefs emphasise obedience and listening, teachers are held in high esteem and valued for

imparting knowledge. A successful education is often equated with hard work, self-discipline, remembering lots of things and passing tests. Despite the success of Asian schools, their systems are frequently criticised for relying on rote learning: one study found that for each of their twice-a-semester exams, South Korean students have to remember between 60 to 100 pages of facts in order to do well (Jones, 2013). Generally, in Western countries, there is more scope for independent thinking, dialogue between teachers and pupils, self-assessment and informal teaching methods and classroom organisation.

One of the goals of education is surely to promote independent or self-directed learning. This is based very much on learners taking personal responsibility for setting their own learning goals and reflects models that value lifelong learning. Most studies suggest that children learn best when they are given opportunities to use their full range of senses, ask questions, talk, work alongside knowledgeable others and apply their knowledge in practical real-life contexts (Watkins, 2003; Husbands and Pearce, 2012).

One of the aims of this book is to support trainee and experienced teachers in reaching an informed view in a world where the profession is too readily vilified in the press. When there are problems in society, the tendency is to blame schools – they seem to be responsible in some way for everything from teenage pregnancy (Merrick, 2014) to the 'mental health epidemic' among young people (Tait, 2015). Schools and teachers are not miracle workers. In the 1970s, the sociologist Basil Bernstein controversially declared that 'education cannot compensate for society' (Bernstein, 1970). He wrote this at a time when neo-Marxists on the far left and eugenicists on the far right both claimed that schooling could do nothing to 'transform' society or address its inequalities and divisions. This fatalism did little to help the comprehensive school ideal or, more generally, lift aspirations in the teaching profession and working-class communities. Michael Apple (2013), an American professor, discusses the question of whether education can truly change society. Born in a very poor family, he attended schools in tough areas to qualify as a teacher and then progressed to graduate work at Columbia University. Education opened up possibilities for Apple but without challenging the structures that create poverty in the first place. Sir Michael Wilshaw, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, put it as follows: 'It is sometimes said that "schools cannot do it alone", but this is not quite true: exceptional schools can

make up for grave disadvantages faced by young people. In the process, they often become surrogate parents' (Ofsted, 2013a: 5).

There is no doubt that excellent schools and teachers can make a huge difference in children and young people's lives. We know, for example, that the significant improvements in many London schools since 2000 have paid off in terms of educational outcomes for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. The success is largely attributed to effective leadership at all levels. This is manifested in many ways, from the recruitment and retention of quality teachers to high levels of data literacy among leaders (Baars et al., 2014). But there is a danger that the work of schools has become so demanding that growing numbers of teachers are suffering from low morale, excessive stress and burnout (Precey, 2015). The relentless focus on measurable outcomes and the rhetoric around targets, results and league tables can detract from the joy of educating children and young people.

Perhaps the greatest challenge for policy-makers and leaders is ensuring that more children have access to high quality teaching. We know that those fortunate enough to be taught by a very effective teacher can make 40 per cent more learning gains in a single year when compared to those taught by a poorly performing teacher. Those pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds feel the greatest impact: over a school year, these pupils gain 1.5 years' worth of learning with very effective teachers, compared with 0.5 years with poorly performing teachers (Sutton Trust, 2011). In other words, this difference amounts to a whole year's learning. Imagine the impact of being taught by a string of very effective teachers.

The topics of education and schooling usually attract heated debate, partly because we all feel qualified to offer an informed opinion, as ex-pupils, students or parents. These experiences do not, however, necessarily put us in a position to make a fair and accurate assessment of the educational system as a whole. Our views are often selective and subjective, whereas an academic study of education can afford a more balanced and rounded interpretation. Put simply, we need to know what the most reliable evidence says about the topics discussed in this book. This is not straightforward, for various reasons. First, the experts themselves differ over the value of particular research studies and how these should be interpreted. They may have ideological views on how children should be educated. Second, substantial longitudinal studies in education are

Big ideas are important, distinctive, empowering, adaptable and simple to understand.

Russell Grigg provides readers with a concise and reliable examination of twelve such ideas which are at the core of educational practice. The teaching profession is saturated with ideas, many of which are half-baked, fundamentally flawed and not evidence-based. Throughout *Big Ideas in Education*, readers are invited to question assumptions and popular rhetoric and reflect on their own experiences. This book will equip teachers with an excellent understanding of current thinking in a diverse, fluid and dynamic field.

Suitable for teachers in any setting, from trainees and NQTs to more experienced practitioners looking to reflect on their practice. This book will also appeal to school leaders and teacher training providers.

Big Ideas in Education is a refreshing departure from the current preoccupation with the new, the novel or the innovative in education. It goes to the heart of twelve core ideas that matter and it speaks to teachers and school leaders in profound and important ways.

Dr Alma Harris, Director, Institute of Educational Leadership, University of Malaya

This is a must-read for any professional involved in education. It neatly captures the meaning, context and origins of several big ideas in education and talks the reader through each concept thoroughly.

Lindsey Watkins, Head Teacher, Millbrook Primary School

For anyone working in education, looking to dip their toe into educational research and reflection, this is an excellent book to start with.

Russell Dwyer, Head Teacher, St Thomas Community Primary School

Even though much more of the often very effective guidance and advice seems pitched at teaching in a primary school, no one who teaches in a school or teacher training centre should be without this book.

Alun Morgan, freelance education consultant

This book is a refreshing and inspiring read for teachers, those who aspire to be teachers and all those who have a stake in education.

Jennifer Owen Adams, Director, Teach First Cymru

Dr Russell Grigg is Executive Head of Research at the Wales Centre for Equity in Education where he leads applied research and policy development, aiming to address inequities in education. He has more than twenty-five years' experience in education in many roles, including teacher, head of school, trainer, consultant, inspector, writer and researcher. He is the author of the much-acclaimed *Becoming an Outstanding Primary Teacher* and has written many other education materials. He is a lifelong, passionate Swansea City supporter.