

Written evidence

Members of the Oracy APPG will consider written, verbal and audio-visual evidence and oversee oral evidence sessions. All evidence will inform the final report.

The extended deadline for submitting written evidence is 20th September 2019. We would appreciate if the submissions would follow the following guidelines:

- Be in a Word format
- No longer than 3000 words
- State clearly who the submission is from, and whether it is sent in a personal capacity or on behalf of an organisation
- Begin with a short summary in bullet point form
- Have numbered paragraphs
- Where appropriate, provide references

Please write your evidence below and email the completed form via email to inquiry@oracyappg.org.uk with the subject line of 'Oracy APPG inquiry'

Madeleine Holt

Full name:

The Media Coach

School or Organisation:

Freelance Media Trainer

Role:

Written evidence:

Value and Impact

Par 1: Spoken language doesn't have the same status in the curriculum as reading and writing because reforms made by Michael Gove (and with input from his special adviser, Dominic Cummings) were inspired by an old-fashioned traditional concept of education, which was perceived to be more 'rigorous'. This was wrong on two counts: it is possible to be just as rigorous in the way you judge the way someone speaks (this is what media training is all about); and failing to provide children with the tools to speak confidently beyond school life will hold them back in so many ways in the world we live in now.

Par 2: If young people don't receive oracy education, I believe they will be held back in every aspect of their lives. This means not being able to communicate effectively in job interviews; to get a promotion or try to bring about change in their work; to become leaders in their field and present their ideas in a public forum; and in their personal lives it can affect their ability to meet the right person, to deepen relationships and deal with bumps on the road, and to show how much they care about people who are important to them. Beyond this, in social situations the ability to be polite, to stand up for themselves, to help others: all these capabilities spring from oracy.

Par 3: The impact of oracy education on future life chances is immense. It's confidence in the way you speak which gets you a job in the first place; being able to communicate effectively and to win people over is what enables you to rise within an organisation, or to get the bank loan to set up your own business; research shows that those who have been privately educated get more highly paid jobs – while much of this could be down to family contacts, it's depressingly true that being educated in a silo of similarly confident students (largely due to their family background) reinforces their ability to speak in a superficially confident way. I don't believe these skills automatically embrace being able to listen to others, to reflect, to reconcile differing opinions – so in this sense I think the oracy that is learnt within selective education is severely limited. But so many factors combine to give these students an advantage when getting and keeping a job.

Par 4: I believe from talking to young people that they are often acutely aware of the skills they need when leaving school. They know that the fact regurgitation which is the cornerstone of the Govian education system is largely useless. They know what they need: to come up with ideas, to work in a team, to problem solve and to think creatively. The glue in so much of these activities is being able to communicate well.

Par 5: The value of oracy is huge in terms of social mobility/social justice. You only have to read the book *Miseducation* by Diane Reay to understand how talking fluently is to some extent seen within some social groups as challenging and something that 'other people do'. When it comes to dealing with mental health, clearly half of the problem is with not finding the language to explain a state of mind. Unless people are encouraged in school to articulate their feelings and emotions – something that there is no requirement to do within the national curriculum – their mental health issues will be compounded by their lack of confidence in talking about them in the first place. Here again, this links to social justice: more educated families are sometimes (but by no means always) more used to talking about these issues.

Par 6: The ability to communicate effectively is at the heart of becoming active citizens. Communication is all. It is viscerally linked to taking action within your community, to discussing politics, to becoming empowered. Perhaps there is a reason why the national curriculum doesn't encourage this?! The really poor representation of working class and BAME citizens in political parties could be directly linked to a lack of oracy in schools.

Provision and Access

Par 7: High quality oracy education should be like a stick of rock through the curriculum from early years until when students leave higher education (and for life if the National Education service comes about). It means encouraging early years students to play freely and talk amongst themselves rather than being put behind desks; it means encouraging far less writing in primary and far more performance and presentation of projects to families at the end of teach term and a huge injection of drama; in secondary it means shifting to project based learning, telling the community what they have learnt with formal presentations/performances; and instead of endless written exams we need to shift to modules of capability, much of which can be conveyed through oracy/vivas. This can be developed further at university and beyond. You can show understanding through talking about it – you don't have to write everything down!

Par 8: There are lots of examples of oracy education: the Edge Foundation is encouraging innovation in various schools, among them School 21, XP in Doncaster (students end every term with a public presentation of their work to their families); the Edge Future Learning programme being pioneered in the North East; the Mastery Transcript within American private schools, in which students are assessed in modules of capability, many of them through talking about their learning.

Par 9: Oracy inequality is driven by the results-dependent accountability system within English education. Because the highly academic curriculum favours schools with students from higher socio-economic groups/families with positive attitudes to education, this puts huge pressure on schools to keep up in areas that lack these groups. This leads to teaching to the test to get these kids delivering the scores, and this means that anything that distracts from fact memorisation is zapped. Put crudely, schools in broadly white, non-middle class, post industrial areas are at a huge disadvantage, and the natural tendency from headteachers is to react by drumming in the facts at the expense of anything else. However, schools like XP in Doncaster (which fits the post industrialised category) show that injecting oracy into the curriculum is the way forward (and their GCSE results this summer show that it also delivers within the current accountability system).

Par 10: we know that there are key regions where students are being left behind within our current, hugely limiting education system. I would argue that these areas need targeted CPD to help staff free up their curriculum for oracy.

Barriers

Par 11: The barriers teachers face in introducing oracy education are essentially an accountability system which places no value in it. Teachers are judged and paid according to narrow, academic targets, so what is in it for them to introduce oracy? The answer is that schools like School 21 and XP show that it leads to better academic results. But this is not widely publicised, so schools will naturally just do what is expected of them by the powers that be.

Par 12: I think teachers need not just initial CPD with oracy, but ongoing CPD. It is a big mind shift, and teachers need as much support as possible.

Par 13: I think that assessment is crucial when it comes to justifying CPD in the curriculum. There is no reason why you couldn't give a score to an effective piece of communication as long as it takes account of the particular learning trajectory of an individual student (so an EAL student for example is clearly at a disadvantage compared with a fluent English language speaker). But you could also develop a way of evidencing effective communication rather than putting a score to it.

Par 14: as a parent I am not aware of any speaking and listening elements of the current curriculum beyond foreign languages. I speak as a parent of children doing GCSEs.

Par 15: The solution is an education system that values far broader skills beyond regurgitating facts.

Par 16: Other encouraging pedagogies are: XP, School 21, Relational Schools. Probably lots more!

Additional guidance:

Value and impact

1. Given many teachers recognise the importance of oracy, why does spoken language not have the same status as reading and writing in our education system? Should it have the same status, and if so why?
2. What are the consequences if children and young people do not receive oracy education?
3. What is the value and impact of quality oracy education at i) different life stages, ii) in different settings, and iii) on different types of pupils (for instance pupils from varied socioeconomic backgrounds or with special educational needs)?
4. How can it help deliver the wider curriculum at school?
5. What is the impact of quality oracy education on future life chances? Specifically, how does it affect employment and what value do businesses give oracy?
6. What do children and young people at school and entering employment want to be able to access, what skills to they want to leave school with?
7. What is the value and impact of oracy education in relation to other key agendas such as social mobility and wellbeing/ mental health?
8. How can the ability to communicate effectively contribute to engaging more young people from all backgrounds to become active citizens, participating fully in social action and public life as adults

Provision and access

1. What should high quality oracy education look like?
2. Can you provide evidence of how oracy education is being provided in different areas/education settings/extra-curricular provision, by teachers but also other practitioners that work with children?
3. What are the views of teachers, school leaders and educational bodies regarding the current provision of oracy education?
4. Where can we identify good practice and can you give examples?
5. What factors create unequal access to oracy education (i.e. socio-economic, region, type of school, special needs)? How can these factors be overcome?
6. Relating to region more specifically, how should an oracy-focused approach be altered depending on the context?

Barriers

1. What are the barriers that teachers face in providing quality oracy education, within the education system and beyond?
2. What support do teachers need to improve the delivery of oracy education?
3. What accountability is currently present in the system? How can we further incentivise teachers to deliver more oracy education to children and young people?
4. What is the role of government and other bodies in creating greater incentives and how can this be realised?
5. What is the role of assessment in increasing provision of oracy education? What is the most appropriate form of assessment of oracy skills?
6. Are the speaking and listening elements of the current curriculum sufficient in order to deliver high quality oracy education?
7. What is the best approach – more accountability within the system or a less prescriptive approach?
8. Are there examples of other educational pedagogies where provision has improved and we can draw parallels and learn lessons?