



# Prep School

Conference Edition

IAPS/ESHA Conference, Edinburgh, 4th October 2005



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Picture by Siobhan Etheridge

Princess Anne, the Princess Royal, pictured arriving at the Edinburgh International Conference Centre yesterday where she was greeted by Mike Beale, Chairman of IAPS. She went on to address their joint conference when she spoke to an international gathering of heads about her experience of the Olympic movement, her charitable work, particularly in the third world and her approach to competition. A special report will appear in the next issue of *Prep School*.

## Conference Diary



He was far too modest to say so when he spoke to the annual dinner, but Sheriff James Irvine Smith presided over one of Glasgow's most bizarre cases. In November 1971, the manager of a firm of funeral directors received a large steel casket containing the body of an American writer who had asked to be buried in Scottish waters. The body was transferred to a chipboard coffin before being committed to the sea in the Firth of Clyde.

The manager was charged with theft of the casket. During the case in 1972, Sheriff Smith said that the casket was so grand that it might well have satisfied the demands of some Renaissance prince. The less grand replacement coffin resurfaced about half a minute later. Its lid reappeared and was recovered with some difficulty. The undertaker removed the nameplate throwing it over the side before giving the lid to one of the crew, suggesting that it might make a good coffee table.

Less than 24 hours later the body and the remainder of the coffin returned in the nets of a fishing boat. The body and what was left of the coffin were quickly re-committed and remained on the bottom of the sea for five days until they became snagged in the nets of the aptly named *Valhalla*. Two weeks after the first attempt, the body was finally committed to the sea in the original steel casket covered in canvas.

For the record, the manager of the funeral directors was subsequently found guilty of dishonest misappropriation of the casket.

The conference gave a warm welcome to Margaret Morris, wife of the IAPS general secretary. She is making a good recovery from illness and some broken bones. There was a fond farewell to Fran Hubbard, association administrator, who is leaving the organisation, which she joined as a temp 13 years ago.

The 500 plus conference was truly international with nearly 50 representatives from America and heads from a wide range of countries including Australia, Belgium, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Dubai, Egypt, Kenya, Kuwait, the Netherlands, New Zealand and Switzerland.

It might just be that *Insider* is not as fit as his colleagues but he found the dynamic and enthusiastic presentation from the former Olympic silver medallist and European and Commonwealth gold medallist Kriss Akabusi completely exhausting. It was easy to see why this passionate man who is on a mission to create 'world class business athletes' is one of Britain's most respected motivational speakers by some of the country's leading businesses. Just think, though, if he had put us through our paces on an athletics track. He deserved his standing ovation.

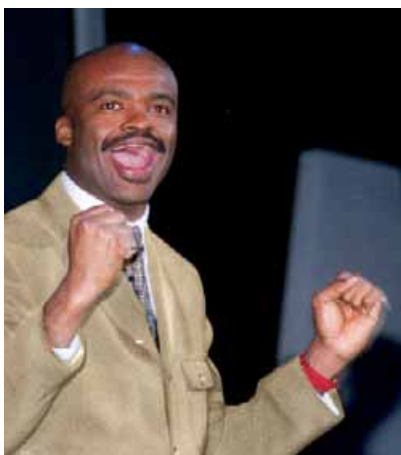
Dr Jack Mapanje, of the University of Newcastle, challenged conference to consider how education can help us all survive in an increasingly difficult world in which the traditional freedoms of the west are being threatened, when hecklers at political gatherings are muffled whilst others are labelled as terrorists, traitors, or unpatriotic for expressing radical views on the inadequacies of multicultural society.

In his view, many young people are being failed by traditional education. He teaches creative writing in schools, colleges, universities and runs reading and writing groups in public libraries and city centres. An acclaimed poet, who fled to Britain from Malawi, after being held in prison there for more than three years, Dr Mapanje certainly gave conference something to think about.

The not inconsiderable comforts of the Apex International Hotel, opposite Edinburgh Castle, were enhanced by the little orange and brown squeaking duck in the bathroom. It is pure speculation as to how many of the IAPS guests staying there took the little chap home as a memento.

Golf is never far from the minds of prep school heads and this year's winner of the Prichard Salver was Richard De Figueiredo of St Michael's School, Jersey.

Fears that George Bernard Shaw might have been right when he said that America and Britain were divided by a common language proved unfounded at the first joint conference in the magnificent city of Edinburgh. Although one visitor did look puzzled when it was suggested that he put his luggage in the boot, understanding ruled. It was though, probably just as well that Billy Connolly did not attend as was once proposed.



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# A small world with lessons for us all

**Mike Beale, explains why international co-operation is vital to an all-round education and asks how we can best deal with the issues that face us all**

It seems appropriate to think in global terms today, not least because the G8 Conference took place in July hardly a stone's throw from here. Furthermore it is not long since 9/11. Both these events prompt me to think of Mark Twain and his notion that travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry and narrow-mindedness in the world. In opening some windows on the world together maybe we can contribute to the globalization of our world in our own way. There can be few better ways of helping our children understand the world more effectively than by our individual schools promoting their own international links.

Education has always been involved in the valuable process of schools borrowing from, and lending to, one another. Our modern world has international boundaries that have become far less distinct. The fact that we are dealing in huge distances but very short periods of time by virtue of the jet plane and the Internet alters only the context, not the principles of borrowing and lending. We have huge opportunities to see if ideas and good practice that work perfectly in Perth, Western Australia, might work just as well in Perth, Scotland, or Perth, Canada. Education through the world is faced with issues and challenges, rewards and successes that ignore national boundaries and arise wherever there are children.

Are schools in other countries faced with too much paperwork? Too many teachers are spending valuable time in the paper chase that would be much better spent being with the children. In the UK we are faced with completing different forms from a range of different organisations and initiatives. It should not be beyond the ingenuity of all of them to come up with one set of paperwork, online, from which they can all draw just what they need.

Are schools in other countries in real

danger of pricing themselves out of a market? For a long time that thought has not been far from our minds. I do not believe that price elasticity will forever be on our side. The inevitable move to a test of public benefit does not help our cause especially if part of that test involves a judgement as to what constitutes expensive fees. Somehow we have to innovate in such a way as to square a circle that says on the one hand that fees are too high and are thus discouraging potential customers, whilst on the other hand knowing that a much higher proportion of families in Britain would afford private education if they possibly could. Another part of that circle that has to be squared is the need to keep fee increases down and yet teacher recruitment is an increasing challenge that can only be met by a more attractive salary arrangement.

Fees in other countries are tempered by various means such as government funding of salaries, church funding of faith schools, underlying core costs being funded by 'giving'. We are not so good at these things, fearing as we do with some justification that government funding brings with it unacceptable levels of control, faith schools being exploited by the narrow minded, and 'giving' being a step too far for British reserve. I believe that the challenge is on: if we cannot find solutions parents may well vote with their feet and seek cheaper alternatives.

Are there other countries where modern parenting is a challenge to be faced? Too often the walk from home does not reflect the talk. The best practice of co-operation between home and schools mirrors the common belief that the home is the cultural capital of the child. Values have been learned before school begins. Language development in the first two years determines the pace of learning for evermore. Yet, school and teachers are held responsible for any shortcomings

that children demonstrate as they pass through their education. Heads are too often at the centre of trying to educate parents that it is OK to say no to their children. It is essential to draw lines for those children beyond which they are not permitted to go. It is not essential that families are democracies. My heart still sinks when mum or dad say to me that they have made a decision, they don't really like it, but Maggie Rose really wants this that or the other and they are afraid not to agree - after all, we have to be best friends. Parents, like heads, sometimes have to say no because they know best.

Is the development of a professional group of Governors or Trustees such a challenge elsewhere? Of course, governors or trustees they should encourage, advise and even warn, but for the most part, they might consider a little more recognition of the fact that they have a managing director and they should let that person manage the school. Governors are in danger of strangling the ability of heads to be enterprising, creative and innovative if they meddle, not knowing how to use the gentle hand on the tiller.

If these are some of the challenges before us, what are the rewards? Inevitably, for me these come through the children. Two of the greatest gifts that we can give those children are roots and wings. Roots come from discipline, and appreciating that the pain of hard work is nothing like the pain of disappointment; from lines being drawn, and by not being afraid to say no. Wings come from setting positive examples and role models; from gaining confidence from success and by understanding that it is OK to fail if you have tried your very best.

Wings come from recognising, as Ann Frank did, that it is wonderful that nobody need wait a single minute before starting to improve the world.

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6. It is remarkably resistant to recession.

Truly, it is amazing that it has taken so long for a few of the brighter investors to work this out!

## Who buys?

Acquisitions are of interest to private buyers, charitable trusts and a wide variety of educational companies backed by private equity and venture capital.

There have never been more well-funded private individuals looking for schools.

Companies backed by venture capital will usually exit and sell on within three to five years (having increased the profitability of their schools by any means they can). They cannot pay the best prices as they are governed by quick return on investment.

Some Charitable Trusts are looking at merging. Some feel uncertain about the future of Charitable Trusts for independent schools. Others are confident about their futures, prepared to invest for the long term and looking for suitable acquisitions.

Independent education is in a period of healthy self-examination and radical change. Independent schools are businesses and they need to move with the times to survive and thrive.

School owners, charitable trustees and investors who are considering their options are invited to talk in complete confidence to Peers Carter at STC on 01474-833150.

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# Being a head – hard but fun

by David R. Trower

We know that as heads of school we have the best jobs in the world and that children seem to keep us relatively young. Sometimes my younger students wonder what a headmaster does. They come up with some pretty funny thoughts:

- You have to make sure that the teachers work hard.
- You have to shake our hands each morning.
- You have to make sure that the windows get cleaned.
- Or my super all-time favourite: you have to make sure that the lights don't flicker.

Our schools, wherever they are, do not exist in a vacuum. They are not islands set apart from the world, nor are the children in our care and their families isolated from life's tragedies, disappointments, and failures. In this chaotic world, life is fragile, and order is sometimes all too elusive. It is shockingly easy to become inured to these realities: to lose sight of the true, the beautiful, the noble, and the ideal. For me, the idea starts with that great



Illustration by Linda Ashwell

slogan of the Green Movement: "Think global, and act local." For me, school is just that—the local. As a former 1960's activist who worked for civil rights and tirelessly, but unsuccessfully, protested against the Vietnam War, I still want to change the world, to change curses into something better.

Now I try to do that at a local level by running the best school I know how. My own school has just under 400 boys aged 5 to 14, and it's in the middle of

Manhattan. Clearly, I don't mean to suggest that it's an easy task; just that it's a really important one.

In most good primary and elementary schools this is a joyous task, not an onerous one. Most of us heads of school are there because we love children. We believe that we hold the future in our hands, and we know that this is a great time to be in education. We assert that we make a difference, that our work matters, that it can have tremendous impact for good on the quality of life so many others might be able to experience.

I think of schools as people, not buildings. The interpersonal relationships—student to teacher, teacher to teacher, student to student—are so much more important than bricks and mortar, which at their best simply support the good work that people do. And we could not do our work without the good will of our parents, our graduates, and their parents as well.

*The author is President of the Elementary School Heads Association*

## Developing sustainable schools

The National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), believe it is essential to push for an all-embracing definition of school sustainability in a conscious move to make independent schools stronger and more publicly accountable institutions. While it may seem to some to be an idealistic goal, we believe that it is, in fact, a survival imperative. Unless independent schools evolve to embrace a multi-dimensional approach to sustainability, they may not thrive in the future as well as they have in the past. Unless they change, they run the risk of becoming more like the independent schools much of the public already imagines them to be: elitist, unapproachable, stodgy, and financially and socially inaccessible institutions concerned only with taking care of themselves.

Schools should be:

- Financially sustainable, becoming more efficient and less costly

- Environmentally sustainable, becoming more green and less wasteful
- Globally sustainable, becoming more networked internationally and less parochial
- Programmatically sustainable, becoming more focused on the skills and values needed for 21st century and less narrowly isolated in a traditional approach to teaching and learning
- Demographically sustainable, becoming more inclusive and representative of the school-age population and more accessible financially and socially

Sustainability, like technology, may be led by the children, with adults catching up later or, in some cases, never. The theory of generations holds some hope for this to be the case. This suggests that each fourth generation repeats the characteristics of the first generation in that cycle. That would make the current

generation in schools now, the millennial generation, the natural inheritors of mindset and attitudes of the GI Generation.

That postwar mindset and attitude believed that it was possible for us to partner with others, to be problem-solvers on a global scale, that no problem, however seemingly insurmountable, could withstand the combination of faithful optimism and purposeful determination.

So here's the challenge: let's both teach our children about the decisions we'll have to make individually and collectively so their children will have a world worth inheriting; and since doing rather than telling is the best teacher, let's find ways, together, to model what a sustainable school and world would look like.

*Patrick F. Bassett  
President of NAIS*

# How computers can boost teaching and learning

The pace of change in information and communications technologies (ICT) shows no sign of slowing down in either capacity of existing systems or in the appearance of new products – smart mobile phones, lighter laptops, interactive whiteboards, data-projectors, wireless network in coffee houses ... the list goes on. In all levels of education we seek ways to take advantage of the technologies that (we think) we understand, scratch our heads to see ways to use those that are common but don't immediately fit into how education works now, and try to look into the near future to anticipate opportunities 'coming soon to a school or university near us'.

As curriculum and subject matter has linked educational sectors, so now we need to have some consistency in our use of and approach to ICT, if the aims of creating lifelong learning are not to be hampered by 'technical difficulties'. It has always been a truism that more learning takes place outside

by Jeff Haywood

educational establishments than inside (informal and non-formal over formal learning to use current terminology), but now the range of opportunities for self-development of knowledge and skills has expanded and diversified through ICT.

Formal education's role can shift emphasis towards developing the critical thinking and research skills needed to make sense of the enormous amount of information available 24x7x365. This key role of the young and the older learner in new skills for info/knowledge society – digital literacy/information literacy/e-literacy. Clearly this is part of a UK government and EU agenda, but it is also what we in education have always aimed to do.

Within the University of Edinburgh we apply these new technologies, from

the simple PC to the complex supercomputer, sms to virtual reality, to our teaching and to our research. As one of the leading higher education institutions in Scotland and the UK we serve a diverse community of learners, and bring them into an internationally-recognised research environment.

We use IT to increase options for assessment and self-assessment, for access to support from staff, to enable students to carry out research using many of the tools of the professional researcher, and to increase the efficiency and control over the learning process by staff and students through devolved authority and choice. Some examples of the ways the University of Edinburgh has applied these new technologies, and future directions will be available at [jeff.haywood@ed.ac.uk](mailto:jeff.haywood@ed.ac.uk)

*The author is professor of education and technology at the University of Edinburgh*

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# So what do you want IAPS to do for you?

**IAPS General Secretary John Morris looks forward to future developments intended to improve service provided for prep schools and all those involved in them**

Potentially the most significant action taken by Council this year is to set in motion the process by which the next five-year IAPS development plan will be prepared. Council wishes to review the strategic purpose, aims and direction of IAPS culminating in a new five-year plan, linked to a business plan that will be reviewed annually. A liaison group led by the chairman is facilitating the exercise, reporting regularly to the policy and promotions committee and to Council.

The first major step has been to engage the consultants RSAcademics to carry out some qualitative research in seeking the views of the membership about IAPS as it is now and how it might be in the future. Some members will already have taken part in face-to-face or telephone interviews with the consultants about these questions. In essence the association is being asked whether it wishes simply to continue along current lines of operation; whether it wishes to add new services or functions in keeping with its current strategy; or whether it wishes to change or diversify into new areas that would make IAPS into a very different organisation from the one we have at present. Members' views are awaited with great interest.

For many years IAPS has published the aggregate Key Stage 2 results of those schools taking the tests. In previous years this represented about 60% of the membership, although only 47% used the tests in 2005. Our results have been consistently 20–30% better than the national aggregates. Girls' results in writing at Level 5 are outstanding, while the gap between boys' and girls' results in writing at Level 4 is much narrower than the national average. In order to understand and demonstrate more fully the reasons for this, IAPS has commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research to carry out specific research into boys' and girls'

writing in a sample of 300 pupils representing the whole spectrum of IAPS schools. There will also be a comparative perspective with the maintained sector.

In liaison with the Independent Schools Examinations Board (ISEB), the Director of Education is moving towards the development of a new assessment model for Years 5 to 8 in independent schools. It proposes to provide a system to track and inform the progress of pupils from age 9 to 13, whether they transfer to senior school at the end of Years 6 or 8. Discussions are being held with the senior school heads' associations in the hope that, when fully developed, it will be possible for assessment profiles to follow children through the preparatory phase of education and into senior school. Current work is based on the principles of assessment for learning, stressing a diagnostic rather than a summative approach. ISEB has allocated £25,000 to support the project. It is emphasised, however, that there is no intention that the model should replace or alter the Common Entrance examination for those who wish to continue to use it in its current form.

Not for the first time (usually about every five years) recent written articles, opinions, and comments have led to a fear that IAPS wishes to change Common Entrance beyond recognition without consultation. Currently some 73% of IAPS schools use Common Entrance for at least some pupils. On the other hand, only 20% of IAPS pupils in the relevant age groups take Common Entrance. Partly with this in mind, the education committee—in full consultation with the ISEB—is searching for ways in which a varied but additional approach to Common Entrance might serve more prep schools in ways that the schools themselves feel would be helpful and appropriate to their pupils. The question has also been raised whether

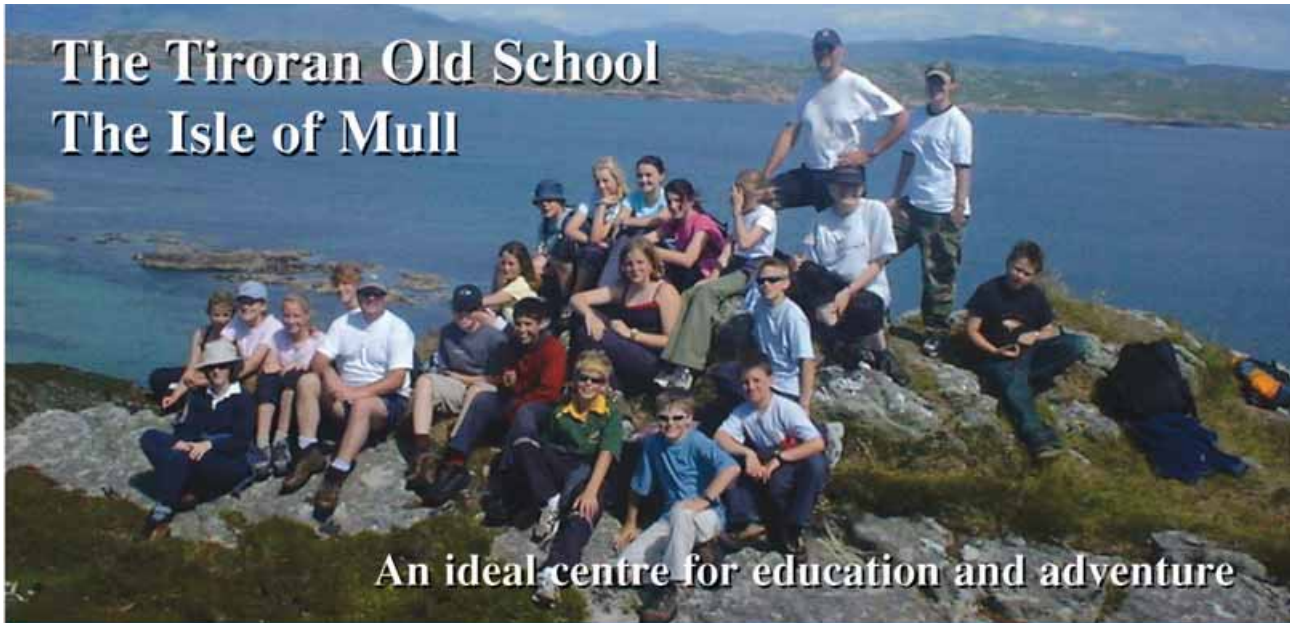
earlier timing of the spring term examinations would encourage more senior schools to use them rather than their own entrance examinations.

However, we cannot emphasise enough once again that the continuation of Common Entrance papers in their traditional form, for those prep and senior schools that wish to go on using them as a selection tool, is not under threat. That being so, at the same time there can be no reasonable objection to a search for additional forms of assessment for other schools that would welcome them. Any recent criticisms of Common Entrance voiced by some senior members should be seen in this light.

Council has, however, approved a longer term investigation of whether a new prep school value-added model, for analysing pupils' progress, can be developed by IAPS for internal use by the association and its schools. It will be important to include in any such model those schools that do not use the National Curriculum tests.

Nearly 52% of IAPS schools still take children up to the age of 13 and 42% still admit boarders. On the other hand, nearly 40% of IAPS pupils are in schools for children up to the age of 11. Concerns are expressed from time to time that IAPS allies itself more to one type of prep school than others. So, for example, some traditional boarding schools taking children up to the age of 13-plus complain that IAPS is no longer interested in education beyond Year 6, while comparatively new member schools serving children up to 11-plus may be suspicious of long-established IAPS traditions. We want to reassure everyone on this point. IAPS remains unashamedly a broad church serving equally all the rich variety of schools in membership. It may not be possible to please all members all the time; but we do try our best!

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