



CURRICULUM VITAE

Patrick began teaching English and Drama in Southampton in 1972. After having been the Head of an English department, and Chair of the National Association for the Teaching of English (NATE), he was Deputy Head of a school in Durham and then adviser for English and Drama in Cleveland. He made the then unusual switch from adviser to officer, as Deputy Director of Education in Redcar and Cleveland and became Director in 1998. In 2001 he moved to York as Director of Education and Leisure, where he was responsible for bringing education and children's social care together into a single department. He now works as a consultant for the NCSL and is a Development Director at Navigate.

by the job. It was a huge privilege to get to see the whole system from 0-19. I have also got to know and work with many utterly inspiring people. I don't think I would have got that range of contacts if I had stayed as a teacher.

What is the role of local authorities?

It's no longer a command and control system and that's a good thing. When I started as an adviser, I used to have to order the furniture for the schools that I was linked with. That was madness. The delegation of power and responsibility to schools has been a good thing. Having said that, I do sometimes reflect that 25 years ago, schools might not have been able to buy their own furniture but they had complete control over what they actually taught. Now, the position has been pretty much reversed!

Today that's the kind of thing that Navigate has been supporting. On succession planning, for example, Navigate has worked hard with local authorities to address the issue of leadership – to show that it's a whole system necessity – not something that can just be left to individual institutions.

Career high points?

It's all been good. I don't, for one moment, regret that decision to become a teacher. The best thing that has happened to me recently was getting an email from someone I taught 20 years ago – who is now a successful singer/songwriter. She wrote: "we were just talking about teachers who made a difference in our lives and I thought about you..." That made me feel quite special.

What do you do?

I'm interested in the role of culture in education and I have just spent a year working with Yorkshire Museums.

I have also joined the board of Project Mala which provides education for poor children in India. I am terribly excited by the prospect of going there – it may change the whole way I think about education!

What's your background?

I grew up in Whitstable in Kent, the son of a Navy man and a teacher, who had been a WREN during the war and trained as an actress afterwards. Whitstable is trendy now but in those days it was pretty seedy, you used to have to scrape the tar off the beach before you could sit on it. I used to keep quiet about coming from there but now I can bask in the reflected glory!

What was your own education like?

I was at school in Eastbourne and then I went on to Cambridge to study English but I wanted to be an actor. Because of my mother, performing was second nature. I did a lot of acting at university. In my third year, I was warned that I was in danger of getting 'a theatrical third' so I had to cut back a bit. Everybody always wants to know if I was in Footlights, not realising that actually Footlights is a club. So the answer is that I spent a lot of time there drinking, but I was never in any of the reviews.

Why become a teacher?

The truth is that I decided to go into teaching for a year or two until something more glamorous came along, but once I started I got hooked.

There's nothing else quite like it for the feeling it can give you of emotional highs and lows.

When you are in a classroom and the kids are learning and they are enjoying learning, there's no better feeling. Of course, on a wet Wednesday when they are all fed up and your lesson plan has disintegrated and you have no idea what to do next, that's awful.

I believe in education's power to make a difference

Was the actor in you attracted to the performing element of teaching?

Teaching is not just about showmanship. To be a really good teacher you have to be a really good listener. It's an interactive process, you have to listen to what the young people in the class are telling you.

And the schools you worked in?

I have always worked in schools and colleges in disadvantaged parts of the country. It has just happened that way but I believe in education's power to make a difference and I suppose it's in places like Salford, Durham or Cleveland that education can make the most difference to people's lives. Helping to get a child to university to study English, someone from a background where education had not been valued at all, giving them a chance to get some qualifications... that's what's important about teaching.

What made you move into local authority work?

Again I did it in a way (taking up a post as an English and Drama adviser) while I was waiting for something else to turn up but soon became completely hooked