

Schools chief found teachers too 'moany'

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Education Correspondent

The director of a chain of independent and grammar schools has said he left the classroom because of whinging teachers.

Heath Monk, executive director of King Edward VI Foundation, was formerly an English teacher. He said he missed the interaction with the children and it was his fellow teachers, rather than pupils, who drove him out of the profession to become a civil servant at the Department for Education.

"I always loved teaching GCSE English literature, which was mad as it was huge amounts of coursework and marking," he told the *Times Educational Supplement*.

"I got to a point where I got a bit sick of teachers, actually. I love teaching but I think teachers can sometimes be, maybe not as appreciative of how good their job is. They are quite moany places, staff rooms. And also quite political, with a small p, and cynical."

Mr Monk left teaching in 2000 to become a civil servant and was deputy schools commissioner for England until 2007.

He found himself around the table with teaching unions, creating a national agreement on workforce reform. He said: "It was painful at times. But that was something I look back on and think, 'We actually turned back the tide on teacher workload for a while.'"

Mr Monk took up his current job as director of the foundation that runs some of the most successful schools in Birmingham in 2016. He is creating a multi-academy trust and taking on non-selective state schools.

He said he wanted to "bring the curriculum and the high expectations" of selective schools to other comprehensives. Having taught in both selective and non-selective schools, he said: "Teaching is teaching. I wouldn't say that was radically different. But it is that sense of what is possible with the children. The main difference was that kind of atmosphere of expectation."

The King Edward VI grammar schools were among the first selective schools in the country to ensure a proportion of their intake came from disadvantaged backgrounds.

They revised their admissions code to give priority to children on free school meals and set a target of recruiting 20 per cent of pupils from poorer families. They also offered training to teachers from the city's primary schools to show them how to prepare children for the 11-plus entrance tests.

Now Mr Monk would like to increase that target. He said: "I would hope for at least 30 per cent."

So far there has been no evidence to suggest that children from poorer homes at the schools are achieving lower results. However he is "massively" worried about funding cuts, particularly in smaller schools.



Robot pizza chef isn't such a half-baked idea after all

The long-suffering pizzaioli of Naples have seen many perversions of their art over the years: the deep pan, the stuffed crust,

even the Hawaiian (Oliver Moody writes).

Now comes RoDyMan, a robot that is learning to flip, spin and knead a lump of dough. It is a skill that takes humans decades to master and RoDyMan — short for robotic dynamic manipulation — is being programmed with information gleaned from video of a master pizza chef in a motion-capture suit. By the time the

RoDyMan's movements are based on information from a motion capture suit. It even supports Napoli FC

Naples pizza festival comes round next year, it should have the knack.

RoDyMan is not intended to replace the human touch though. It is in equal parts a mascot for Italian robotics, which is suffering a brain drain, and proof that machines can deal with objects that

change shape from split second to split second.

Yet still not everyone is happy: Bruno Siciliano, professor of electronic engineering at University of Naples Federico II and RoDyMan's conceptual father, said local opinion was divided. "The innovative chefs can see what we're trying to do here. The other guys are concerned that some of the pizzaioli could lose their jobs."



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