

Chair of the Association 2009-2010

I was approached about becoming the ASE Chair some years ago, but felt unprepared and inexperienced. Last year, I accepted the challenge.

Being elected to this post and representing our 15,000 members is a privilege and an honour. I approach the start of my year in the Chair with anticipation and caution. A task such as this builds on the good work initiated by previous Chairs. Of course, it is not the Chair alone who advances the Association, but the membership as a whole. If you have read this far, then many of you will be saying 'Manoj who?' Below is the answer!

I came to the UK from Uganda as a refugee in my early youth and settled in England. I was a biologist who 'turned' and became a chemist, stumbling into teaching during my research days at what is now the University of Plymouth. I moved to Exeter College (an FE college) as a lecturer and was encouraged to join the ASE by a colleague, who got me involved with the section committee. Voicing my concerns about a few issues soon resulted in a nomination to the region committee. I assisted with the organisation of several regional meetings and found myself thrust onto the larger stage of Council, and the rest is history... Currently I am the Head of Sixth Form at Exeter School. I have taught all three sciences from Year 7 upward, as well as IT and A-level chemistry.

My main aim for my year is to unify the voices of all science educators, to enable them to be heard where it matters; wherever they work – the university sector, schools, colleges, specialist organisations or industry – and including those who support the activities of science educators, such as technicians and teaching assistants. No one should feel isolated in his or her pursuit of excellence in science education. This is especially true of the Independent sector, as many science teachers there feel that the ASE supports

only the state system. Bear in mind that it was teachers from the independent sector that founded the Association.

There is no doubt that the quality of education improves as educators engage in their professional development and I would encourage members to pursue this through existing routes at Science Learning Centres and on courses run by the ASE, as well as using the CSciTeach scheme to validate and recognise that development.

My aims for the year include:

- Continuing the work following on from the Quality and Audit report;
- Continuing to explore the question: 'What does it mean to be a membership-led organisation?';
- Clarifying what the ASE stands for in the 21st Century and what it offers the 'grass root' members;
- Improving our retention and recruitment figures, not allowing our position as the largest subject association in Europe to make us complacent;
- Continuing to offer help and advice;
- Rising to the challenge of curriculum changes that will follow during 2010, including the Diplomas, the Primary review, and the changes in GCSE;
- Continuing to be involved in consultations, both as individuals and as a membership, to ensure that science 'holds its own' and remains at the forefront of education reform; and
- Ensuring that there is continued support of curriculum needs in all areas of the UK, including of course Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland!

My main priorities are to:

- ensure that, in these times of economic uncertainty, we have sufficient

financial reserves to enable future educators of science to benefit from membership of the Association;

- oversee improved communications using the updated ASE Website, which should be online by May 2010;
- involve those who are new to and passionate about the world of science education to participate, ensuring that the Association continues to build on its success for the next 100 years, following on from its foundation 110 years ago;
- increase and strengthen our partnerships, whilst still retaining our identity, integrity and independence as the leading voice in science education with whichever political party is in power.

What have I gained as an ASE member?

- The fellowship of meeting like-minded people, who care about science education (at whatever stage) and the way it is perceived and delivered;
- Participation in improving and building upon strengths; to be able to promote excellence in science education for the benefit of students;
- Opportunities for learning about how science education systems work internationally;
- Space to share ideas and make a contribution, however small, to enhance the learning of science by all, not just in schools and colleges but in the wider community too; and
- Camaraderie between members who recognise the values of sharing and a social network, especially at meetings and conferences. This is where I hope to meet many of you, but I need to think of my fellow teachers in Exeter who will be covering my lessons – so a special thank you to the staff at Exeter School, in advance.



I wish you all a good start to the coming academic year and if there is anything you would like me to take forward, then please contact me via Headquarters, or e-mail me at mkc@exeterschool.org.uk or manojchitnavis@yahoo.com

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