

# Messages from the home front ...

## No bird alighted ...

**Question:** "You never went to school? Or you did for one day?"

**Yehudi Menuhin:** "Not even one day; one morning ... When I came back from the morning, my mother asked what I had learnt. I said, 'I really didn't learn anything'. I sat at the back of the class, and there was a little window high up on the wall, through which I could see branches. I hoped that a bird would alight. No bird alighted, but I kept hoping, and that's about all I could report. So my mother promptly said, 'Well, we'll educate you at home.'"

(Yehudi Menuhin, July 1996, Radio Interview 'In the Psychiatrist's Chair', noted by Bryn Purdy.)

## No quarrel with teachers

"Home-schoolers as a rule have no quarrel with teachers. My own parents are both teachers; I've seen a lot of work that teachers do, in their own time and out of their own pockets ... Our reservations are about the system of schooling, not the people who are doing their best within it."

(British Columbia Home-schooler, in D. Smith *Parent-generated Home Study in Canada*, 1993)

## Bad days compared

"A bad day at home is a whole lot better than a bad day at school."

(Computer bulletin board note from a home-schooling parent, quoted in Home School Researcher, 9, 2. 1993)

## Two kinds of courage

"When my friends or neighbours tell me that I am "so brave" to take on home-based education, I contradict them. I say that *they* are the brave ones because they hand over their children to a bunch of complete strangers and then hope for the best."

(Bev. Turpin-West, Worcestershire home-educator)

## Taxi-service

"The parents role in homeschooling is not to be the fount of all knowledge ... Our role is to be enthusiastic and experienced learners, role models for our children, providing support and advice - and transportation to the library."

(British Columbia Home-schooler, quoted in D. Smith, *Parent-generated Home Study in Canada*, 1993)

## Conscription for children?

"That children do not come to school by choice is another terrible indictment of our whole educational system."

(John Kirkbride, home-educator, in *That'll Teach You!*, 1978)

## Home-based Education

Education Now is one of several groups supporting home-based education. The ones known to us are Education Otherwise, Home Education Advisory Service, Education Now, Educational Heretics Press, Educational Heretics Videos, Human Scale Education and Libertarian Education. Education Now is perhaps the most steadfast advocate, after Education Otherwise and the Home Education Advisory Service. Human Scale Education presents its support as part of its advocacy of flexi-schooling. Libertarian Education, following its main purpose, gives its support conditional on families following libertarian approaches.

Education Now has not changed its stance since it began in 1986. Its supports home-based education in its own right, as part of a more flexible system which allows *educational* choice, rather than mere choice of standardised schools, to be on permanent offer to all families. It does not attempt to rival Education Otherwise or the Home Education Advisory Service, but to complement them.

## All you need is ...

"We can sum up very quickly what people need to teach their own children.

First of all, they have to like them, enjoy their company, their physical presence, their energy, foolishness and passion. They have to enjoy all their talk and questions.

They have to think of their children as friends, indeed very close friends, have to feel happier when they are near and miss them when they are away.

They have to trust them as people, respect their fragile dignity, treat them with courtesy, take them seriously.

They have to feel in their own hearts some of their children's wonder, curiosity, and excitement about the world.

And they have to have enough confidence in themselves, scepticism about experts, and willingness to be different from most people, to take on themselves the responsibility for their children's learning." (John Holt in *Teach Your Own*, 1981)

## An inspector calls

"I so wish I'd given my daughter the opportunity you're giving your sons."

(School inspector to a home-schooler, in D. Smith op.cit.)

## By no means easy

"... although home-schooling may work, it is by no means easy. No-one should undertake to home-school without coming to terms with this fundamental truth: it is the fabric of your own life you are deciding about, not just your child's education."

David Guterson ('When schools fail children', *Harpers Magazine*, Nov 1990)

## Developing the Global Teacher

By Miriam Steiner (ed)  
Trentham Books in association with World Studies Trust (1996)  
ISBN 1-85856-032-2

This lively collection explores how initial teacher training can incorporate a global perspective. It is the outcome of a collaborative project begun in 1993 between twelve University Schools of Education and a wide range of education workers from non-government organisations promoting world studies. Contributors to the book include many impressive teacher educators in this field.

The book is written in the context of the rapid formation of a global society. In his foreword, Tim Brighouse emphasises the need for inclusive approaches to supporting learners' understandings of what it means to be a global citizen. The notion of inclusivity, he suggests, must incorporate approaches to assessment, achievement, intelligence and learning as integral to life, throughout life.

In her introduction to the book, Miriam Steiner argues the case for global approaches to citizenship, which include viewing the planet as an interconnected whole, economically, politically, as well as physically. Themes underlying the book have as their source the complex and interconnected issues of development, of supranational economic, political and social forces, and of world-wide environmental risk and degradation. Having said this, a recurring theme through the book is the need to balance global and local, personal and political. The author argues persuasively that teacher training institutions have a responsibility to sharpen learners' commitment to universal welfare, and to redefine and refine communitarian values.

The book is organised in two parts. The first is '**Principles and context for developing the global teacher**'; the second is '**Pedagogies, partnerships and practices**'. Both are wide-ranging in scope and very readable.

In the first part of the book, the ground is laid for inclusive approaches, both in the range of contributions as well the development of a theoretical framework. Particularly notable chapters include the one entitled '**Listening to the South: Creating Partnerships in Education**', by Jaya Graves which explores the involvement of Southern people in teacher training. Jaya argues her case powerfully. Drawing on her experience as a Southern educator, campaigner and 'amateur' living and working in Britain, she identifies a number of practical aspects of working in partnership. These include developing an understanding of key differences in style, in human interaction and in attitudes to time. There is also the important issue of 'representation'.

John Huckle's chapter, '**Globalisation, Postmodernity and Citizenship**' explores ways in which social and cultural theory have informed the theory and practice of 'critical pedagogy'. His readable style brings alive a difficult set of concepts. He argues for approaches to learning which allow space to contextualise and re-construct world views. He goes on to argue powerfully that despite the modernist policy framework within which they must work, new kinds of teachers are needed for postmodern society. As he put it, "*their ability to educate for global citizenship will be a critical factor in all our lives*".

The second half of the book is as rich as the first and explores, through many case studies, how principles for global citizenship have been applied in practice. Enriched with pupils' work and extracts from transcripts, each is well written and well argued. Most studies are set clearly within the context of current education policy. They are drawn from practice in primary and secondary schools and higher education, with student teachers and pupils from across Ireland, Wales and England.

This book will be of interest not only to teacher educators and student teachers, but to any educator who is keen to explore global citizenship. This is a timely and up to date source-book, which I feel sure will provide inspiration and support to educators who recognise that we live in a postmodern world.

*Anna Craft*

### **Thirty Years On: Is Comprehensive Education Alive and Well or Struggling to Survive?**

By Caroline Benn and Clyde Chitty  
David Fulton (1996) ISBN 1-85346-353-1

This is the equivalent in the field of education of Will Hutton's *The State We're In*. It complements the book written in 1970 by Caroline Benn and Brian Simons (aided by Clive Chitty), entitled *Half Way There: Report on the British Comprehensive Schools Reform*.

The new book charts the history of the establishment of a comprehensive system of education in this country. It says where we have arrived and how we have got here and makes certain clear recommendations for action to promote comprehensive schools further. The writing shows a remarkable absence of rancour, given the chilling story it relates.

Some of us would give the answer that we need to grasp the nettle and overthrow the whole idea of conventional school, since it has already passed its sell-by date. Benn and Chitty, however, commit themselves to the view that: "*What is required now are practical proposals that continue the development of the comprehensive schools and colleges towards a system in which unification can continue, ownership of learning can be made more complete, and decision making more accountable*". What worries me is the implicit assumption that school equals education.

As I set up our stall in Burton-on-Trent shopping centre to issue leaflets inviting applications to Flexi College, and spent the day having 42 conversations with confused and worried parents, I wondered if **reform** could meet the needs of our present situation more than **replacement** of the mass-schooling concept.

I read *Thirty Years On* while convalescing from an operation in hospital. It helped! I was gripped by the narrative and analysis. After all this has been the story of my working life, trying to fulfil the ideal of comprehensive education as described in the words of Pat Daunt - that each child's education was of equal worth - first in schools and now in Flexi College.

In my own book, *The Head's Tale*, published in 1983, I wrote: *"The dilemma we are in today in the comprehensive community school movement has two horns. On the one hand we are bound to be reformist ... On the other hand we have to recognise that in the new social and economic circumstances the whole definition of school needs revision ... The key to this reform and replacement is the enabling of learning-teaching relationships"*.

Now in 1996 in *Thirty Years On*, Benn and Chitty trace the course of the development of a philosophical critique of comprehensive education within several groupings. The **original motivation** was for **social justice**. But this was undermined by the cry of "Grammar Schools For All". One response to this was to take the reforming work out into the community, prompted by units such as the Centre for Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham, and leading on to Educational Priority Area Projects such as the one in Liverpool with Eric Midwinter.

A **further development** was in the movements for gender and racial equality and thence to the approach arising from a **"post-modern" critique of society**. Society, according to this, is being deconstructed, therefore educational reform ought to proceed along the same route. This needs a *"raft of alternative educational solutions"*. This view is presumably behind Human Scale Education's 'Third Sector Alliance' whereby small alternative schools are encouraged (paradoxically) to apply for Grant Maintained status, presumably in the hope that their alternative nature will be allowed to continue.

**Finally**, in keeping with the intense awareness that the authors display of the thinking and writing of *Education Now*, Benn and Chitty identify a **"futurist" school of thought**. Thus, nine of the group's titles appear in the bibliography. This vision sees the system as being either at or past the point of breakdown and sees school, in its conventional form, as the problem. This implies re-schooling along different lines.

*"They see the entire education system breaking down in its institutional integrity, with the prospect of individuals and groups forming and reforming around various centres of learning ... the use of facilities and teachers in different ways at different periods of their lives, with universal access to a vast range of learning materials and information sources in a variety of venues, where learning programmes are negotiated and work is much more self-directed."*

*Thirty Years On* is an essential historical source book for any track of reform, revision or replacement of the school system. Benn and Chitty give priority to the needs for Lifelong Learning and for the integration of vocational and academic strands in post 16 education.

This should be the agenda of the next century ... the agenda of the 6 months old baby of the 16 year old girl who asked in Burton shopping centre whether she could come with her baby to do a GNVQ with Flexi College!

*Philip Toogood*

#### The Catalogue Curriculum

The *Royal Society of Arts Journal* featured the idea of the Catalogue Curriculum in its June 1996 edition. A first airing of this concept appeared, as you will no doubt recall, in *Education Now News and Review*, Number 9 proposing that a Catalogue Curriculum should replace the dreary, stultifying and anti-democratic model of the National Curriculum.

#### A Visitation from the Department for Education and Employment

Janet and Roland Meighan were pleased to host a visit from the Head of the new Strategy Division within the DFEE, Richard Harrison, towards the end of July 1996. He made the appointment at the suggestion of Sir Christopher Ball (of the above mentioned RSA). Education Now's *The Next Learning System* (Winter 1996 Feature Supplement) was the main subject of the consultation. The starting point of the discussion was Edward Fiske's pronouncement:

*"Trying to get more learning out of the current system is like trying to get the Pony Express to compete with the telegraph by breeding faster ponies"*.

So much common ground and so many areas of agreement were found that there seems to be some danger of Education Now's agenda becoming acceptable and respectable!

#### Early Voluntary Freedom or 'In One Bound He Was Free!'

Another triumph for the Escape Committee: Professor Philip Gamage achieved early voluntary freedom from the University of Nottingham at the end of August.

Philip is now Emeritus Professor and free to continue his work unhindered by the growing commercial degeneration of modern university life.

Despite Philip's international reputation as an expert in early childhood education, readers will be interested to hear that his kind (and free) offer to advise his university on the setting up of a nursery school on campus, was turned down in favour of the (expensive) services of Coopers and Lybrand.

#### Minister of Education for South Africa to visit next year

The committee organising the 1997 conference, *Democratic Discipline, Democratic Lives: Educating Citizens for a Changing World*, were pleased to have an acceptance from the Minister of Education for South Africa, **Professor Bengu**, to give a keynote address. The conference will be held on May 12th, 13th and 14th at The International Co-operative College, Stanford Hall, Loughborough. Booking forms will be sent out with the next *News and Review*.

#### New Centre of Holistic Education

A new Centre of Holistic Education will be established in Central London from September 1996. The Centre will provide flexible learning opportunities for young people, a consultancy service for parents and teachers, along with speakers and trainers on an holistic approach to education.

For further information please contact: Caroline Martin MA, The Centre of Holistic Education, 28, Pancras Road, London, NW1 2TB Tel/fax 0171 837 1661.

## Feelings Education:

## The development of emotional literacy

**Most of us believe that pupils should be brought up to realise their potential, have self-esteem and care for others. In addition, they should learn moral values, together with the strength of will to stick to them.**

To achieve this desirable objective, every child needs sufficient opportunity to gain a good degree of self-knowledge. This, in turn, is best achieved by talking and listening, in a responsible climate, to other people.

As the psychiatrist Dr. Anthony Storr says, *"Self-realisation enables the fullest possible expression of innate potential. This leads to inner harmony - being in tune - which is innate in all men, true of those who are high or low gifted. Too wide a divergence from this leads to great distress. So the attempt to be what one is not, or the failure to be what one is, or could be, leads to conflict, neurosis and emotional isolation"*.

To address this huge issue, we adopted a programme of Personal and Social Relationships lessons, between 1971 and 1986, at a large comprehensive school in the West Country. The lessons were conducted in groups of sixteen pupils of mixed ability and gender. The process involved discussing a range of topics - drugs, parenting, sex, health, careers and so on. The pupils shared their feelings about these personal and social issues. Lecturing was restricted to a minimum. We soon learned that it was the group which taught and healed - not the teachers or fact-giving.

As the months went by, we found that the youngsters developed far greater self-knowledge. They became more and more aware of their own feelings, feelings which may have been put on hold for years for fear of ridicule. Due to the drip, drip, drip effect of learning that others had feelings too, they began to trust each other more and confidence grew.

A factor which soon emerged and became vital for successful group discussion was honesty. Things didn't work if people kept on pretending and posing. So, a great deal of debilitating baggage, clutter, myths, falsehoods and damaging attitudes were seen for what they were. As one young man said, years after leaving school, *"It was like a breath of fresh air, since you were able to have a serious discussion for the first time in your life; and it was doubly welcome because you were able to get down to truth"*.

Self-esteem grew rapidly amongst the teenagers and with this self-respect they began to see the value of respecting others - and a general caring attitude became important to them. Planning for the future, wisely, took on a new meaning since feeling worthwhile became a concept to be appreciated. This included peer co-operation and other personal planning in order to survive a future of uncertain employment.

However, effective personal development education could not have taken place unless we adopted the following policy:

- mixed groups
- groups meeting preferably for five years, weekly
- sixteen only in each group. We did this at no extra cost, and all departments agreed upon the necessary alterations to the timetable
- group teachers must be trained in listening skills - active listening that is - in order to facilitate and not lecture. This only took a few hours of teachers' time.
- pupils must sit in a circle and not at desks
- proper status and time given to these lessons - not in administrative time and not looked upon as an adjunct

that interferes with the far more important work of exam lessons

- no written work, or testing, or anything that limits pupils' discussion time
- each group to remain with the same teacher - no groups going round to the drugs teacher, then the sex educator, then the financial 'expert' or God 'expert'
- this work needs full commitment from the teaching team and especially the head teacher.

Most schools have a nucleus of teachers, about 15% to 20%, who are only too willing and able to take on this kind of work. Thousands of them are frustrated because twenty years of current methods are seen to be ineffective and bring little improvement to teachers' and society's distress.

\* \* \* \* \*

**What is the evidence that Feelings Education, properly delivered, will be effective where current methods of PSE seem to have failed?**

**First**, our own past pupils have said that these discussions were the best times of their lives. In fact they pleaded that their experience of group work should be adopted by all schools in the country. Here are some of their statements:

*"I learned to communicate."*

*"I could go into my exam lessons in a calmer frame of mind because I had sorted out some of my worries."*

*"Boys know nothing of feminine problems and pain until these issues are raised with girls present."*

*"In the academic classes there is far better behaviour towards girls because of greater knowledge of what it is like to be female."*

*"If it hadn't been for the group I would have committed suicide because I was sexually abused."*

**Second**, may I refer you to a book (a best seller and the only one of its kind) called *Emotional Intelligence*, by Dr. Daniel Goleman (pub. Bloomsbury 1996). Goleman lists schools in the United States that have adopted programmes of Emotional Development Education. The results of this show a marked improvement in behaviour, attitudes and potential among all students.

**Third**, one's own self is probably the best judge. Ask yourself this question, "As a teenager would I have welcomed the weekly opportunities to talk seriously with my peers about hang-ups, doubts and fears, without being judged or 'lectured', in the presence of a non-threatening referee?"

\* \* \* \* \*

I would suggest that all those who are not naturally gifted with traditionally academic intelligences are just waiting for the chance to use school to make the best of themselves. By this I mean they would feel equal in satisfaction to, but not necessarily the same as, their 'gifted' peers. This means having job satisfaction and a life-style, including marriage and family life, commensurate with their precious individual identities.

This can only come about if each young person's self-worth and potential are increased sufficiently to enable them to make appropriate individual choices. So far as I know, this has never been seriously and systematically attempted in schools. Exam subject lessons have never done this - how can they when they are geared to impersonal matters not directly concerned with young people's personal lives, no matter how challenged the pupils are by the rigours of academe?

So, is it realistic to expect that every pupil's self-worth and potential can be increased to enable that quantum leap to personal fulfilment? I submit that it can be done for every child, since each young person has feelings and the ability to get to know himself or herself more and more. In other words, each pupil can be successful in personal development. They can obtain a standard of self-esteem and caring equal to that of any other person. On the other hand, a highly gifted pupil who relies too heavily on his academic ability to 'get him by', may well be at a disadvantage and fall well below the standards of personal worth set by his 'less gifted' peers.

Therefore, I suggest that those educational outcomes that are vital to everyone (high self-esteem and respect for others), should be given at least equal acknowledgement alongside those that are, in the end, not so important. This means that Personal Development lessons should have a priority in every school, with no more than sixteen pupils in each group.

\* \* \* \* \*

**What is the next step?** Certain things are clear:

1. There has been, and still is, a great injustice perpetrated on at least 65% of the nation's children. They fail to achieve the arbitrary standards set by our culture - after 15,000 hours at school.
2. Both the 'bottom' 65% and the 'top' 35% miss out on moral, spiritual growth and the development of potential, no matter what is or is not provided in the home. True, most do not go to prison, many are careful debtors, a (decreasing) majority work, many understand right from wrong ... I think. However, does this prevent widespread avarice, adultery, crime, drug and sexual abuse, divorce, poverty, unemployment and corruption?
3. Parents need the support of schools in bringing up their children. Be wary of the person who says she or he needs no support. Influences outside the home are sometimes so strong and corrupting that correcting measures are urgently required to support those parents who are loving, decent, conscientious and terribly worried. And what about the children who receive little moral guidance from their parents?

Where else but school can this support in nurturing take place? Giving priority on the timetables of all schools, immediately, for effective personal development education is the only way to bring justice to all our children and support for their families.

What is the alternative?

*Robert McKechnie*

We hope that Robert's article, like most published in News and Review, will provoke responses. Please send your comment to the Ed Now office, indicating whether or not you wish your letter to be considered for publication. Unpublished letters will be forwarded to the relevant authors for reply.

### Open Forums, Open Minds

Well-attended forums about holistic education were held in June at the Muswell Healing Arts Centre. The first of their kind, they were followed by two 3-hour workshops entitled **Building Your Ideal School** and **Learning How To Love Learning**. All these were facilitated by Christopher Gilmore who, at present, is teaching philosophy at the International Centre for Inquiring Children (ICIC) in Enfield.

Participating were 7 to 11 year olds with their parents. Christopher held the attention of both children and adults for nearly two hours. which speaks for itself.

The ideas behind the concepts came from many sources, but the discovery of the mind and brain being separate yet complementary was made by Jung. Thinking processes are now recognised as the combined working of both halves of the brain. Logical intellect comes from the left while intuition and lateral thinking come from the right half. Howard Gardner's work on the artistry of teaching FOR, WITH and ABOUT multiple intelligences extends this to SEVEN WAYS OF KNOWING. An open forum is therefore an ideal setting in which to explore complementary ways of looking at learning.

The educational methods presented by Christopher were simple and child-centred. The children led more reluctant adults into exercises using rhythms, rhymes, riddles and movement. Many moral and social implications were tackled in role-play or in discussion. Creative options were always on offer. Explanations followed, not preceded, an experiential approach.

This approach stimulates personal creativity, and also raises self-esteem, unhindered by academic expectations or assumptions. Indeed, the individual becomes more important when no blanket system is imposed.

The children who attended were not just from ordinary local primary schools. Some came from homes where in-house learning is the norm, thanks to members of Education Otherwise.

ICIC aims to build its own school which will incorporate the ideas of the children in its plans, giving them great scope to contribute to their own learning needs. Already, once a week on Saturday, children learn thinking skills, making education an exciting prospect and inducing a love of living knowledge.

Those interested in more Education Now Open Forums and further workshops are invited to contact Christopher at: 63, Abbott Road, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX14 2DU. Telephone 01235 528028. Fax 00441 235 520067.

*Phyllis Higgins*

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## Developing a Learning Culture: empowering people to deliver quality, innovation and long-term success

By Sue Jones,  
McGraw-Hill (1996) £19.95 ISBN 0-07-707983-3

This book is a logical follow-up to Sue Jones' first major work, *The Human Factor* (1992). Features of its accessible format include the extensive use of sub-headings, key points, bullet points and chapter summaries.

From its title, you might be forgiven for thinking that *Developing a Learning Culture* is written about schools and education, though the use of the word 'people' in the subtitle is a bit of a giveaway - books on education don't often talk about people. The book's central concern is the challenge to the life and economy of the West, and particularly the UK, from rapidly increasing global competition. The key distinction it draws is between two different types of working cultures: traditional, hierarchical cultures that characterise so many companies in the UK and North America on the one hand, and collaborative learning cultures on the other. It is the latter, Sue Jones argues, which are needed in business if the challenge is to be met successfully.

So what do these cultures look like? A learning, collaborative culture is one in which everyone is involved in taking responsibility and making decisions, where genuine teamworking gives equal value and equal say to all team members, where core interpersonal and functional skills are recognised as essential working tools and where all activity is underpinned by interpersonal attitudes such as respect, trust, honesty, humility, fairness and a liking of people. And yes, such cultures do exist, though not in droves in the West. Incidentally, a rich seam of case studies runs throughout the book.

By contrast, the watchwords of traditional, hierarchical - or mass production - cultures are command and control. Typically, as Sue Jones describes them, they

- separate jobs into simple mindless, repetitive tasks
- do not require the majority of employees to think
- give little or no responsibility to employees
- expect employees just to turn up on time and follow instructions like robots
- pay managers (the experts, the people with the brains who know everything) to be in authority and do the thinking
- use managers to supervise employees autocratically

Substitute the *curriculum* for jobs, *pupils* for employees and *teachers* for managers and suddenly all this feels a bit close to the bone. For many years now it has been too easy for us in education to reject the management experience of industry as irrelevant on the basis that schools are different: the children, we keep convincing ourselves, the children make us different.

The language of the marketplace has forced itself on public services over the past decade and many teachers are uneasy with talk of clients, customers and the rest of it. One of the dangers of dogma, however, is that it can shut down the minds of those who resist it as much as those who champion it. So we would do well to listen with care to Sue Jones' claim that the barriers separating management from workforce, company from customer, are both artificial and counterproductive. As much as anything, creating a learning culture is about breaking these down in practice and working together in joint enterprise.

Whilst many schools claim to have made progress on the home/school front, very few have made the conceptual leap to understanding that a true culture of involvement needs to

embrace, not marginalise, the real workforce/customer base. Put crudely, the concept of partnership needs to include parents and the community. Including children, genuinely, is far more problematic for most.

There is much to contend with in *Developing a Learning Culture*, not least when the book starts to address the nitty gritty of training approaches. Categorical statements about what works and what doesn't are risky in relation to the learning process and some claims made here betray a rigidity in thinking which is quite surprising.

Take this, for example: "*Telling people theories about how they learn will not help them learn*". This may well be true for some learners ('activists', for instance), but it is certainly not true for all. Perhaps the single most influential factor in developing my own ability to learn over the last ten years has been deepening my understanding of *how* I learn - and I have certainly needed others to inform this process.

Ironically, perhaps, the source of the problem is an assumed understanding of what learning itself is, which is never actually articulated in the book. But this should not deter us. The main messages - that a collaborative culture is the key to a successful organisation and that cultural change requires changes to structures, skills and attitudes - these are so fundamental that we ignore them at our peril. And the role of 'top managers' (as Sue Jones calls them) in change of this magnitude is so central as to make this a very important book indeed for managers in schools and head teachers in particular.

Peter Batty

### On the Spot: dealing with racism

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### Changing Times

The June/July edition of Derby based environment magazine *Changing Times* is still available. Contributors include

**Roland Meighan** on 'Creating the Next Learning System'; Derbyshire Humanities Adviser **Graham Ranger** on 'What is Education?'; Derby Rainbow Education Worker, **Helen Griffin** on tying environmental education concerns together in primary school practice; initial teacher education lecturer **Tony Cotton** on 'Democratising Education'; veteran anti-racist activist and former Sheffield head teacher **Chris Searle** on 'The Curse of Exclusions'; plus other features.

Copies are available for **£1.30** (inc p&p) from  
Derby Rainbow Centre, 88 Abbey Street, Derby, DE22 3SQ  
Tel 01332 298185 Fax 01332 368079.

# The Trailblazers ... part seven ... Howard Gardner

**Howard Gardner is a Professor of Education and Director of Project Zero at Harvard Graduate School of Education. As a psychologist, his major contribution to education has been to research and write about the nature of intelligence and creativity.**

His first major work, and the one for which he has received perhaps the most acclaim, was *Frames of Mind*, in which he challenged the more traditional IQ-based model of intelligence and argued for at least seven different intelligences. He defined intelligence in terms of a person's ability to solve problems or fashion products that are valued by a particular culture or community, and defined bodily-kinaesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical and spatial intelligences. Since then he has continued to assess different abilities against his criteria for intelligence, and has identified a 'naturalist's intelligence'. He is currently exploring what he describes as 'existential intelligence' - so would put his current list of identified intelligences at "eight and a half".

Howard Gardner began by researching human potential and has since diversified as he has become more interested in how children learn. He is concerned about the lack of understanding that young people have of some very basic concepts when they leave school. The concept of "the five year old mind", which on the one hand is creative, intuitive and world making, also carries a set of understandings or 'engravings' which are resistant to change and which embody a set of misconceptions about the world. Through the process of education, a layer of fine dust may be deposited onto these engravings, but beneath this layer the engravings are unchanged.

The challenge for educators is to find ways of changing these representations so that children come to know and understand their world in a more informed and sophisticated way, while still retaining the creativity and intuitiveness of the five year old. His book *The Unschooled Mind* explores these ideas in depth.

As a cognitive psychologist, Howard Gardner recognises that while he may develop theories and create models, it is the educational practitioners who make these work, and he is clearly somewhat overwhelmed by the enthusiasm with which his MI theory has been taken up in mainstream education. There are many different paths from a scientific theory to educational practice, and in America there are 'MI schools' and 'MI classrooms', where the different intelligences identified by Gardner are used in many different ways to structure the curriculum.

His work on learning for understanding is also becoming more widely acknowledged, especially at a time when educators are looking for new ideas to help children to learn effectively.

Educators in the UK and other parts of Europe are beginning to take an active interest in Howard Gardner's work, and he has a busy schedule of lectures and conferences.

While his Multiple Intelligence Theory is probably the most widely known aspect of his work, he has also written

analytically about creativity and leadership by studying the minds of people who have been recognised as highly creative and those who are considered to be effective leaders.

Unfortunately, there will always be resistance to some of Howard Gardner's key ideas. He is an advocate of individualisation, emphasising the differences between children, and therefore argues for the 'non-uniform school'. He suggests that schools should have assessment specialists, whose role is to provide a regular up-to-date view of the strengths, weaknesses and inclinations of the children in the school; student-curriculum brokers, whose role is to match children's strengths to specific courses and advise on ways to help students to access the curriculum; and school-community brokers, who search for learning opportunities in the wider community. While most schools do not separate these roles, there is a clear message here about the functional role of teachers.

Howard Gardner is not an educator, but he does have much of importance to say to those of us who are involved in educating the young - and not-so-young. He has a sharp, incisive mind and is very interested in people and how they think. He offers some useful insights into how children think and learn, and some concrete suggestions for ways of supporting that learning.

He is concerned with understanding rather than with content, although he identifies what he describes as 'rich concepts', or keys to thinking in a particular discipline. While we may wish all children to understand these concepts, there can be a variety of different entry points which acknowledge and accommodate different ways of learning. The present pre-occupation with content and levels is making it more difficult to take the time to help children to really understand what they are learning - as Howard Gardner says, "*coverage is the enemy of understanding*".

Key publications:

Gardner, H. (1983) *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. New York: Basic Books.

Gardner, H. (1991) *The Unschooled Mind: How Children Think and How Schools Should Teach*. New York: Basic Books.

Gardner, H. (1993)  
Extracts from:

Gardner, H. (1993) *Multiple Intelligences: The Theory in Practice*, Basic Books, and "Reflections on Multiple Intelligences: Myths and Messages", *Phi Delta Kappan*, Nov 1995

## On Intelligence

It is of utmost importance that we recognize and nurture all of the varied human intelligences, and all of the combinations of intelligences. We are all so different largely because we all have different combinations of intelligences. If we recognize this, I think we will have at least a better chance of dealing appropriately with the many problems that we face in the world. If we can mobilize the spectrum of human abilities, not only will people feel better about themselves and more competent, it

is even possible that they will also feel more engaged and better able to join the rest of the world community in working for the broader good. Perhaps if we can mobilize the full range of human intelligences and ally them to an ethical sense, we can help to increase the likelihood of our survival on this planet, and perhaps even contribute to our thriving.

#### On learning

The most serious consequence of the decision to educate for understanding is a radical foreshortening of the curriculum. If one wishes to have any chance of securing understanding, it becomes essential to abandon the misguided effort to "cover everything." Broad coverage ensures superficiality: at best, heads become stuffed with facts that are forgotten almost as soon as the short-answer test has been administered. Rather, one must move towards "uncoverage," or, to cite another current slogan, one must embrace the principle that "less is more."

#### On assessment

Assessment, then, becomes a central feature of an educational system. We believe that it is essential to depart from standardized testing. We also believe that standard pencil-and-paper short-answer tests sample only a small proportion of intellectual abilities and often reward a certain kind of decontextualized facility. The means of assessment we favor should ultimately search for genuine problem-solving or product-fashioning skills in individuals across a range of materials.

An important aspect of assessing intelligences must include the individual's ability to solve problems or create products using the materials of the intellectual medium. Equally important, however, is the determination of which intelligence is favored when an individual has a choice. One technique for getting at this proclivity is to expose the individual to a sufficiently complex situation that can stimulate several intelligences; or to provide a set of materials drawn from different intelligences and determine toward which one an individual gravitates and how deeply he or she explores it.

#### On using MI theory in schools

I cherish an educational setting in which discussions and applications of MI have catalyzed a more fundamental consideration of schooling - its overarching purposes, its conceptions of what a productive life will be like in the future, its pedagogical methods, and its educational outcomes, particularly in the context of the values of that specific community. Such examination generally leads to more thoughtful schooling.

The MI endeavour is a continuing and changing one. There have emerged over the years new thoughts about the theory, new understandings and misunderstandings, and new applications, some very inspired, some less so. Especially gratifying to me has been the demonstration that this process is dynamic and interactive: no one, not even its creator, has a monopoly on MI wisdom or foolishness. Practice is enriched by theory, even as theory is transformed in the light of the fruits and frustrations of practice. The burgeoning of a community that takes MI seriously is not only a source of pride to me but also the best guarantor that the theory will continue to live in the years ahead.

## Academic Schooling - the End Game

Nowadays, when I propose that mass schooling is obsolete, I find that there is less and less opposition. The response tends to be, "*we now realise that, but what do we put in its place?*" The insert in the last *Education Now News and Review No. 12* ('*The Next Learning System*') gave some answers to that question.

There is more shock, however, at the proposal that the **academic curriculum is also obsolete**. Many parents are busy stoking up the expectations of their children that pursuing grammar school type curriculum will get them jobs. They are misreading the signs. The sign is beginning to say, in Monopoly Board game style, 'Go straight to obsolescence, Do not pass Go, Do not collect a job.'

#### An Army of Clerks

The point of academic schooling has been to produce an army of clerks. Those who left at 16 with their GCE's and later, GCSE's would go to work as bank clerks - as I did myself for a few years. Alternatively, they would become insurance clerks, or building society clerks, or something similar.

Those who left after the sixth form with 'A' levels, would go on to slightly better paid jobs in accountancy, or local government, or the like. Those who went on further and obtained a degree became top paid clerks in the civil service, law and elsewhere.

These former safe paths into jobs are now treacherous. Every time a bank, building society or insurance company announces its annual profits, it also announces the dismissal of more clerks. Thus, banking has now less than half the workforce of clerks than it did a few years ago. Moreover, the 'new' clerks in direct banking by telephone are **not** recruited for their examination prowess, but for their personal confidence and verbal, telephone skills. Indeed, such success is often seen as a **negative** indicator that the prized independence and conversational skills may have withered.

Next, law firms are amongst the leading customers for voice recognition technology which enables them to dispense with the services of ... clerks. Case preparation software means that law firms can choose to manage with half the number of lawyers.

If further indication is needed, the recent survey by the St Mungo Association of the homeless, and mostly workless, adults in its hostels, shows that 50% have academic qualifications, and 10% have a degree.

#### The End of Work

For those who find enjoyment and satisfaction in the academic curriculum, it should, of course, be available as part of the catalogue curriculum. It is now becoming a lie, however, to claim that it will guarantee jobs. Indeed, the US economist and advisor to the US government, Jeremy Rifkin warns us in his book, *The End Of Work*, that it is likely that only a minority of the generation currently in the early stages of its school journey, can have **any** kind of job at any given time.

John Holt saw some of this coming. He noted the growing obsolescence in 1971 even before computers really got to work on wholesale clerk-job demolition:

*"The case for traditional education seems to me to be much weaker than it has been, and is getting ever weaker, and the case for an education which will give a child primarily not knowledge and certainty but resourcefulness, flexibility, curiosity, skill in learning, readiness to unlearn - the case grows ever stronger."* (The Underachieving School, p.31)

#### An obsolete methodology

The clerk mentality is produced most effectively by the whole class teaching approach. The method has a low efficiency rate as regards learning. All the studies I have read show that the



short-term recall of material taught this way is usually in the region of 5 to 10%. For long-term recall the figure is halved. By increasing the technical skill of the instructor, it is possible to get the figure for short-term recall up to 20%.

I refused to believe this as a young teacher and threw myself into getting better results than this. The pre-testing and post-testing showed that the research was correct and I could not refute it in my own practice.

The illusion that whole class teaching is more efficient than the evidence shows, is sustained by two factors. One is that the most effective way to learn material is to teach it. The teacher remembers as much as 90% of the lesson! Because the teacher remembers it so well, he or she can easily slip into the illusion that the students do too. They do not.

The second factor is that the method is **shored-up by homework**. The recent studies from the Pacific Rim countries extolling the virtues of whole class teaching also show that two hours homework before school and at least two more hours afterwards are common.

### **Lethal Side-effects**

Whole class teaching is not only inefficient, it has *lethal side effects*. It produces the gridlock mentality - dependent learners addicted to the right answers provided by authority. Those of us who have had to teach undergraduates and graduates from the Pacific Rim countries have often encountered the 'gridlocked' mind set, the clerk mentality, at its fiercest. The rigid mind-set of many British undergraduates, however, can be a close rival.

Russian educators have also expressed concern at this mentality. "*Soviet children normally demonstrate better results in mathematics and science...*" than their counterparts in UK and elsewhere, Froumin tells us in *Creating and Managing the Democratic School* (edited by Judith Chapman, Isak Froumin and David Aspin 1995, London: Falmer Press). Nevertheless, he and his fellow writers want to abandon the authoritarian school, curriculum, pedagogy and testing that is responsible for these results, because they deliver **the wrong kind of person**. They produce the servile, authority-dependent outlook, and people good at selected mental tricks, rather than the democratic, life-long learning and flexible mentality. Neither the Russian nor the Australian scholars writing in this book want to follow the British reforms of the last few years, for they see them as totally misguided and counter-productive.

Alice Miller sees this mind-set as the product of the '*poisonous pedagogy*' and tries to make us face up to its lethal side effects. Chris Shute in his book, *Alice Miller: The Unkind Society, Parenting and Schooling*, (1994, Educational Heretics Press) reminds us that she found that among all the leading figures of the Third Reich, she was not able to find a single one who did not have the schooling and the strict and rigid upbringing that produced the gridlocked, detached and ultimately inhumane mentality.

Carl Rogers added a further warning:

*"People who cannot think, are ripe for dictatorships"*

... as well as for obsolescence.

*Roland Meighan*