

Something significantly different ...

My thesis is that we are in the death-throes of secondary schools as we know them because we are attempting to educate the adolescents of the late 20th century within the style and structure of the late 19th century secondary school and its teachers' contractual conditions.

Banbury Municipal Grammar School for boys and girls was founded in 1893. Four years ago we celebrated our centenary and I came across the timetable for those early years of our school's existence. Other than Latin, which we now only offer as an extra curricular subject, all the other subject titles were just like those of the current national curriculum. Were my predecessor, Charles Beale to revisit the 1998 descendent of the school which he opened as Head in 1893, he would find much that would be very familiar to him, including the shape of the working day, week and year.

I believe we must eventually replace the traditional style and structure of school education with something significantly different. I shall explore this different style and structure and then proceed to the crucial matter of the consequential changes in the formation and on-going professional development of teachers.

The second great crossing

In his book *'The Work of Nations'* the American thinker Robert Reich writes of our having come to the *'Second Great Crossing'*. The *'First Great Crossing'* was the move from farm to factory. It did not require any significant training of the work force. In contrast, *this 'Second Great Crossing'* (the shift from industry's 'satanic mills' to Information Technology) requires a staggering programme of re-skilling - even the very nature of work itself is being reinvented. We must therefore be radical in our understanding of the manner in which learning for the young takes place. We must understand also that we are about life-long learning and what Professor David Robertson (author of *'Choosing to Change'*) calls *learner enablement* and *learning enrichment*. We must remember that, unlike in the 19th century, brains not brawn are the assets of communities and companies. Focused intelligence, the ability to research and to acquire and to apply knowledge is the source of the new millennium's wealth.

A different working year

The working year needs significantly to change so that teachers are not obliged to plan their courses and mark assignments on the dining table until midnight. Meetings with parents, curriculum planning, marking, reports, training, developmental work - should all take place during the working day as it does

for most employed people. We need to move to a 45 week working year, like most professional people. Indeed, until

teachers are perceived by society in general, as having so called 'normal holidays' - say 27 days plus bank holidays - we shall never be taken seriously by the average members of society.

Public examinations should be held in the period of late February to late March. The academic and financial years would start in April. The working day would be organised to allow teachers up to 3 hours for marking and preparation; they should never be taken out of class for courses or meetings - only to be replaced by an expensive 'baby-minder'. The teachers' working year would include 7 weeks divided into *blocks of time at work but not teaching* when long term planning, parents' meetings, training and curriculum development would take place within the working day. Teachers would work a 37 hour week. Their working day would be 8.15am - 5.15pm with a 30 minute break in the middle of the student session and a lunch break of 1 hour.

The students' taught working day would run 8.15am - 2.15pm with a break of 30 minutes. Gone must be the days when society sees schools as a cheap child-minding facility. Parents may wish their child to remain for further self-directed study in the Learning Centre until 6.00 pm or so. Here, learning support assistants would be employed - NOT the normal teaching staff. Extra-curriculum activities, games fixtures and coaching, plays, choirs and orchestras would be taken by specialist teachers, or others from the community.

Gone must be the days when a teacher alone manages the class group of 25-35 students, trying to handle the complex levels of differentiation required. Teachers will become confident as managers and facilitators of students' learning, not its fount and source - but they need to learn how to do this better. Students will work in small groups having access to learning, in part via the new generation Information Communications Technology (ICT) machines, individually prepared and followed through by the specialist teacher and her/his team of learning assistants. Students will soon have learning courses via ICT at home. The Learning Community's (formerly school) buildings will need to look more like huge modern libraries and information service centres with small meeting rooms for groups of pupils to work with specialist teachers and their assistant staff. The Learning Centre will be linked by satellite to other Learning

Communities in different parts of the world as well as to students' homes.

Because of the changing work patterns in society, adults will be naturally in and out of remunerated work throughout their lives. Consequently the Learning Centre will be open to people throughout the calendar year regardless of age. Facilities should be available for 12 hours each day during 50 weeks each year. At present, school plant and equipment gather dust for up to 70% of any calendar year and we 'whinge on' about lack of resources!

Formation and development of those enabling learning

My own observation of many teachers is that, for the most part, they have not acquired the capacity for understanding what they are doing. They have generally not acquired an understanding of the nature and process of how the young learn, of the major psychological aspects of child and adolescent development, of the sociological dimension of the learning context, nor of the economics of education. They almost never make the interdependent connection between the wealth creator and themselves, the 'citizen creator'. The approximately nine months of a PGCE course is a very fragile - indeed crazy - foundation upon which to build a career in teaching as a quality educationalist.

I dare to distinguish three different categories amongst the teaching staff: the pedagogical specialists; their teacher team members; and their qualified learning assistants. How should they all be trained?

I am of the view that university graduates in whatever disciplines, who wish to train for teaching, should initially spend one full academic year in a university department of Education Studies, following a post-graduate education diploma programme learning about the philosophy, psychology, sociology, history and economics of education. They should visit schools for a day here and there in order to place their studies in context. I believe universities should be where the study of and research into education takes place, not where the skills based training happens.

During the second and third years of training (when they would receive a salary) they would work in Learning Communities (formerly schools), in a manner similar to Housemen in hospitals. They would receive their licence to teach at the end of the third year after rigorous assessment and graduation.

During their second year as fully licensed teachers those who demonstrate particular talents and insights should spend an intensive year in a university education faculty, following a high quality academic master's programme concerned with the nature of learning. They would then lead teams of licensed teachers and learning assistants. These specialist-consultant teachers would have the right to submit themselves for membership of a Royal College of Pedagogy.

Senior teacher salary scales would be related to levels of demonstrable professional prowess, experience and competence and not to pay someone extra for organising absence cover, managing exams or the finances. We must professionalise the

task of enabling and facilitating learning, so that it has 'sui generis' status. This is an urgent need.

Accountability

The just rights of students to have proper access to appropriate learning opportunities is central to what Learning Communities exist for. All labourers, including me as Head, must be worthy of our hire. I have, on more than one occasion, been struck by the lack of any consideration of the rights of students and of stakeholders in the formal disciplinary procedures for teachers. Heads must not avoid this challenging aspect of their responsibilities. It must no longer be so complex to remove those who, for whatever reason, consistently deprive the young of their inalienable right to learn.

Whilst teachers allow themselves to develop in a quasi-amateur manner, standards will not universally rise. Given what we increasingly know about how young people learn, my question is, **what might be the optimum conditions for bringing this about?** Let us challenge the existing structures and propose a model for the coming millennium's first 50 years.

Anita Higham OBE, Principal, Banbury School

And I heard a voice from industry saying ...

"Thank you for your book *The Next Learning System*. It opened my eyes to what I had long suspected - the tragic waste of time, opportunity and natural ability inherent in our present educational system. Of course, that goes for most programmes of training and development in industry and commerce too.

My experience is that at every level in my own industry, the majority of people dislike learning anything to do with work. In fact, a significant proportion of them detest formal learning which involves assessment especially examination. ... Most of us are only too aware of the futility of learning definitions, formulae, methods and procedures that we will surely have forgotten within three or four weeks ...

Like a system of common law based on cases which do not apply, our schools and colleges perpetuate a fearful rigmarole which, it seems to me, are as irrelevant as clog dancing and felt hat making is to C&A's clothing store ...

A largely redundant and wasteful system of education which operates at enormous cost, and very inefficiently, can be replaced with a modern alternative that can change the lives of countless millions. Reformed education can radically change the outlook of a new generation ..."

From a letter by Jeremy Delvarr, Halifax Heating Systems

Stop Press: Education Action Zones

At the North of England Conference, Michael Barber announced that Education Action Zones would be the "*centrepiece of our modernisation agenda*". Zones will be able to dispense with the national curriculum, scrap traditional timetables, develop new learning strategies and consider opening 'all hours'. Could this be the start of ... **something significantly different?**

The Freedom of the Press?

'Freedom of the Press' has come to be misunderstood as the right of newspapers to pick and choose what they want to report. This has, in practice, become 'power without responsibility', as the destructive activity of newspapers in wrecking the teaching profession in UK has shown.

But this is not the only, or the original, interpretation of the idea, which was the freedom to set up and run a small press and distribute new and alternative ideas in newsletters, pamphlets and books. *Education Now* and *Educational Heretics Press* stand in this great tradition of grassroots publishing and grassroots democracy.

Members of *Education Now* who have tried repeatedly to penetrate the screen of censorship of British newspapers have had only a little success, but there are small victories. Chris Shute had a short letter published in *The Times* a few weeks ago:

"Back to the bad old days?"

The current outbreak of enthusiasm for 'old-fashioned' teaching methods and rote-learning leaves me bemused. When I began teaching in the early Sixties we abandoned that way of working precisely because a great many conscientious teachers had come to the conclusion that it didn't work ... it was clear to educators in those days that the old methods, by concentrating on compendious memorisation, produced not creative thinkers, but efficient regurgitators ... we now have computers to do any regurgitation that may be necessary."

Chris is also appearing regularly on a **Cable TV** programme as an educational contributor.

In a *Guardian* competition for curriculum reform ideas, Roland Meighan was awarded a prize for the concept of the Catalogue Curriculum. No details of the idea were published, perhaps because they were too radical to mention in politically correct company, for the case opened with:

"Why do we have totalitarian-style schools in what is presumed to be a democracy? We could have democratic-type schools if we wanted. But the curriculum would then have to respect some of the key features of democracy - the rights of the learners to have a say, choice, and variety. Democracy in schooling requires 'no curriculum without representation'.

To get us started, I propose the idea of the Catalogue Curriculum ... "

News and Review readers know the rest of the argument.

There may be a breeze of change at the *Times Education Supplement*, following the appointment of a new editor. In truth TES has been for the most part, the *Times Schooling Supplement*. But recently, there have been a few cautious mentions of alternative ideas. Even the name of A.S.Neill was mentioned both in an editorial and in a report from the Pacific Rim, where some local educationalists want to know about his ideas in the hope of rescuing their regimental system from its fascist tendencies.

Indeed, a letter from Roland appeared in TES on the subject of the Pacific Rim myths:

"David Reynolds appears to have discovered that the mass schooling systems of the Pacific rim are obsolete too ... Training students to be good at the shallow learning of selected mechanical tricks of institutionally imposed syllabuses, does not produce the more important deep learning, the kind we need more and more in the future. Indeed shallow learning systems tend to eradicate the potential to develop deep learning, as the most recent brain activity research shows, on the 'if you do not use it, you lose it' principle.

The international tables are, in the end, comparing one kind of obsolete learning system with another. It is a bit like having a 'best typewriter' contest in the middle of a voice-driven word-processor and computer age. I propose we ignore all the obsolete systems and design and establish the next learning system instead, re-cycling such buildings, resources and staff as prove to be adaptable."

It was, however, good to see a member of *Education Now*, John Bastiani, given substantial space (including a full facial photograph!) to comment on the government White Paper in TES, 22/8/97. His piece 'Poor Relations' notes that parents are still seen as external props to education rather than an integral part of it.

Building Blocks for Global Learning

A conference focusing on the personal and social education of children aged 3-7

**The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick
6th-8th March 1998**

As this century draws to a close, people's lives all over the world are being linked together in ways that seemed unthinkable a few years ago. Young people, and those adults who participate in their education, need to adjust to this new world and the conceptual, ethical and practical challenges it creates.

The conference will consider the development of communication skills, self-esteem, empathy, co-operation and conflict resolution and the positive commitment to oppose prejudice and discrimination. It is concerned with the development of skills and attitudes that are not essential for successful learning but also serve as foundations for global awareness and the ability to participate actively in democratic citizenship.

Keynote Speakers

Lorna Farrington (Mediation UK)

Robin Richardson (formerly Runnymede Trust)

Plus lots of workshops

For info, please ring Helen Griffin or Ben Ballin
Derby Rainbow 01332 298185

Project: how do you do democracy?

The educational system must to a higher degree recognise that students are capable of participating in school democracy, and that students should have a voice in the running of the school they attend.

With this in mind, the Danish High School Student's National Organisation (GLO) has organised an international democracy project with the purpose of creating a more democratic school system, where pupils are not only taught vocational knowledge, but are educated for citizenship in a democratic society.

International conference

The project mainly aims at students at the age of 16-21. We find it fairly important that it is students' views that are illuminated, therefore an international conference for students is to be held the 16th-18th January 1998. Though the conference will be held in Denmark, the main language of the conference will be English.

At the conference the participating students will discuss different aspects of democracy in education and we will try to reach a conclusion on how to create a more democratic upper secondary school and which form/structure of school democracy this requires.

Pilot project

The form of school democracy, which the international conference found to be the ideal will be tested in a pilot project in Denmark and abroad. This is necessary in order to know if the democracy form works in reality. The pilot project will last for a year, during which it will be observed.

The outcome of the whole democracy project will be two reports about school democracy and the involvement of students. Both reports will be translated into English.

Binh Pham, aged 17, International Secretary, GLO, (Danish School Students' Union)

Education Now team to play away leg in S. Africa

Four members of *Education Now* travel to South Africa at the end of March to take part in a colloquium at the University of Natal in Durban. The purpose is to share experiences of democracy in education before going off to the big game (a safari!).

What's in a name?

Two years ago in edition 11 of *News and Review* we reported the arrival of a new monthly magazine for parents, *Mothers Know Best*. The magazine has enjoyed great success since that time, having maintained a high quality in its wide-ranging articles, reports and comment. One criticism remained, however, throughout this initial period – its title. The *News and Review* team felt, with many others, that the title was sexist and did not do justice to the content of the magazine. These views have been acknowledged by the editors, Bryan Hubbard and Lynne McTaggart and in November 1997, for

this, and other reasons, the magazine was relaunched under a new name – ***Natural Parent***.

The previous regular contributors are still to be found in ***Natural Parent*** but there are many changes also. One of these is a regular column by Roland (Meighan). Look out Roland, we shall keep an eye on your continuing 'heresy' in that setting. A review of the first editions of ***Natural Parent*** will be included in the next issue of *News and Review*. In the meantime, we wish Bryan Hubbard and Lynne McTaggart much success in the relaunch of this important magazine for parents.

Janet Meighan, Early Years Consultant

Book Review

Parenting without God: experiences of a Humanist mother

by Jane Wynne Willson, price £7-95

Educational Heretics Press, 1997, ISBN 1-900219-11-5

Jane Wynne Willson is an accomplished member of the national and international Humanist movement and her three previous publications covering rites of passage ceremonies have proved to be very useful texts for Humanists. On the subject of being a Humanist, Jane has been heard to say '*well, it really is the only thing to be*' - this book draws the same conclusions about Humanist parenting.

It is a thought-provoking book. As one would expect from a Humanist text it doesn't pretend that there are simple straightforward answers to the 'big' questions raised by parenting; it attempts to suggest guidelines, or in some cases it just tries to make sure the questions are raised. Although short, it is comprehensive in its coverage from starting a family through to adolescence.

The first chapter, '*Starting a family*' is really only of great use to those who haven't yet taken the plunge into parenthood. Why do humans procreate? It appears to be a basic human instinct, and if there is an opportunity it is probably wise for two adults to spend some time discussing the issues that are laid out here – however it's doubtful whether many people approach the subject so rationally!

It was interesting to see the key articles from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, particularly when juxtaposed with the informal style of the rest of the text. As with any written rules, they can be interpreted incorrectly and misused and they perhaps border on the utopian in places. However they offer a useful starting point and a reminder of what we should all be aiming for in bringing up our children.

Was there anything obvious missing? Well, it would have been nice to see more mention of fostering, adoption and fertility treatment as important backgrounds to parenthood in a modern society. Also there might have been more mention of drug use (by teenage children, not by the parents!). However, there were no other gaps. We were pleased to find included: the myth of Father Christmas; how to cope with death; gender roles and teenage rebellion as well as the expected sections on religious, moral and sex education.

In conclusion, this is a useful book for all agnostic or atheist parents, whether Humanist or not, although those who are new to Humanism should turn first to the short but useful description

of Humanism at the back. If you're expecting a Humanist Dr Spock or Penelope Leach style parenting book you'll quite rightly be disappointed; if you're expecting a readable, thought provoking account of the dilemmas facing atheist parents you won't be.

Nigel and Sara Melly, Humanist parents, with three children, who live and work in Nottingham.

Philip Toogood: loan ranger

Flexi College, founded by Philip Toogood, is embarking on a new venture. The *Midlands Small Press Centre*, opening in Burton-on-Trent, will provide a range of support services to subscribing small presses. *Education Now*, essentially a small press itself, is pleased to be providing consultancy and to be supporting the project financially.

In conversation with ... Donna Brandes

Before I was introduced to Donna I confess to being a little nervous as I knew she had a reputation for being a formidable lady who was inclined to straight talk and pulling no punches where personal responsibility was concerned. I was tempted to read her books on *Student-Centred Learning* again as revision! As soon as we met, though, my mind was put at ease for Donna did not test me on the principles of humanistic psychology; she wanted to know what kind of movies I liked! I found a kindred spirit who was trained in drama and who loves fiction, films and fun. Maybe this is a tale of an iron fist in a velvet glove, I leave you to judge for yourselves as you respond to her vision of education.

Certainly I have understood from Donna that student-centred teaching is the toughest option open to teachers. Structure and discipline are essential for success and they are created and maintained by the learners with support from a teacher. Self-discipline and rigorous attention to personal responsibility are the key elements that make the approach unique and challenging.

I knew Donna's work was influenced by her own education so we began the interview discussing the remarkable school she attended when she was five years old.

Sharon Tell me about your experience of school when you were a small child.

Donna I went to a school founded by John Dewey before the turn of the last century - the University of Chicago Laboratory School which still exists today. It is totally student-centred and experiential. When I was five my two elder brothers bought me books about school so I would know what to expect. I had ideas about what it would be like; I imagined a colourful classroom full of books and toys with things to work with and play with like the places I had read about. So it was quite a shock when I actually got there. When they let us into our classroom there was absolutely nothing in it and I thought I must be in the wrong place. The room was empty, no tables, no chairs, no books or toys of any kind - it was just empty. We sat down on the floor with the teacher and she said "*I suppose you're wondering why there is nothing in this room. The reason is, I didn't know what you wanted*".

So, the very first message I ever had about education was that I was in charge and that it was all up to me and the other children to make decisions about what and how we learned.

We eventually agreed that we would have a 'mainstreet'. So we went out and watched and copied ... and, by begging and borrowing, built all kinds of shops in the classroom. We got our teacher to write out words for us to copy and use as labels and signs. We had a bank where we exchanged money, a bakery where we made cookies, a pet shop with real paraquetes, fish and turtles, a drugstore with bandages, toothbrushes and the like. We bought and sold.

We made *all* the decisions and were constantly evaluating and improving. It was a *completely* democratic, co-operative and

collaborative experience. There were never any remarks about ability, we were all treated exactly the same.

Learning the basics of reading and writing happened incidentally. As we needed to know, so we learned. Words, numbers and skills became familiar through constant use. There was no hint of failure, just an attitude of "*let's try this and if it doesn't work we'll decide what to do to make it better*". This was the late 1930s.

Sharon Many teachers these days are concerned about differentiating the curriculum. Does student-centred learning work for children with different abilities ?

Donna Yes. A key principle is that children are not differentiated by so-called ability and are encouraged to learn at their own pace in the way that suits them best, competing with no one but themselves for personal satisfaction in their achievements.

Sharon For student-centred learning to work does the whole school have to be committed?

Donna No. In fact I haven't been in any other completely student-centred schools although I have been in very progressive ones. Actually, much of my teaching experience has been in schools in America and England where I was the only student-centred teacher. Of course, if there *were* a whole-school philosophy it would create a unity - students self-learning skills and attitudes would be continually reinforced and teachers would not have to go over things such as classroom ground rules time and time again.

I have read Holt, Illich and all the others and I don't believe that de-schooling is the answer. I feel that so much good *can*

happen in schools and often doesn't. Schools need to be designed much differently than they are today.

Sharon Is student-centred learning really only suitable for articulate and academically inclined children?

Donna No. For example, when I taught in California the school district I worked for had seven schools with a predominantly Mexican intake. I was assigned a fifth grade class, 9 and 10-year-olds. Many parents were migrant farm workers so there was a lot of coming and going with families moving on to find work. We had a number of children from Asian families and some white Americans. A large percentage of the school population were from homes that were economically poor.

Although I didn't start teaching with an empty classroom, I met my students with an open mind. The class soon learned to work together so, for example, when I was told to teach the children about Mexico I explained to my class what we were required to do. I asked them to think what we might need to find out about and they told me they would need to know about climate, food, costume, geography and customs. Then I asked them for ideas about how we could study these topics. The children had lots of ideas, including watching films, writing reports, drama and role play. I helped them to discuss ideas and plan the work they were doing. This essentially is the approach that I take with students of any background, any age, with any topic. I've worked extensively in secondary schools and with adult learners as well as younger children.

Sharon You present a picture of student-centred teaching and learning as a natural and comfortable way of working and yet I know that some sophisticated interpersonal skills are required to ensure success. Would you describe them?

Donna First, I want to say that I hold a deep belief that every single person has the right and the in-built desire to make the best of themselves and reach for their ever-expanding potential, and this leads to a life long learning process. This is the basis of democracy in education. Science is now proving that intelligence is not limited, a belief I have held since well before research on the brain proved my instinct to be right. So it follows that there is no need for streaming and setting and other ways of labelling kids, in fact such practices simply depress self-esteem and limit intellectual growth.

The first skills that student-centred teachers need are all interpersonal ones. They need to develop personal awareness so that they can remain in control of their feelings and thoughts. They need to know, for example, what kinds of behaviours trigger an angry or defensive or controlling response in them. Student-centred teachers know that they can *choose* their response to any situation.

Student-centred teachers are skilled in the use of assertive language and are committed to avoiding of all forms of put-down. In particular, they are listeners and teach their students to listen - actively. They sustain an attitude of *unconditional positive regard*, as Carl Rogers, my greatest mentor, described it. These practices arise from humanistic psychology (as opposed to psycho-analytical or behaviourist or cognitive-developmental) and teachers intending to become student-centred would do well to gain experience of Transactional Analysis, Client-Centred Counselling and Gestalt Therapy so that their understanding of personal responsibility becomes deep-rooted. I have practised as a counsellor and therapist for many years and still lead training in these fields internationally. Learning and personal growth are essentially the same process

and require the same kind of facilitation. Student-centred learning is concerned first and foremost with the *nature* of the facilitating relationship between teacher and learner and for this substantial training is required.

Many other skills are needed - thinking skills, resourcefulness, promoting intrinsic motivation and so on - but they'll have to wait for another conversation. Finally, all teachers should know how to have fun and enjoy life, so they remain well-rounded.

Sharon Which is where we came in. Thank you, Donna. Now which movie shall we go and see?

Sharon Ginnis, Manager, Professional Support Centre, Bilston Community College

The pleasure's all mine

It gives me special pleasure to include this *Conversation with Donna Brandes* in my final issue as editor of *News and Review*. I first met Donna in 1983 when, as a young Head of Department in an inner Birmingham secondary school, I was painfully aware that my energetic, visually aided, well-disciplined and well-planned teaching (of the kind that Ofsted prizes) was not doing the business for more than a handful of learners. We quickly formed a partnership and friendship which has had the most profound effect on my professional and personal life. Donna's bold ideas and their transformative impact on ordinary classrooms set me on a course of experimentation which led, through the books we wrote together and the teaching and training we shared, to my present position as an independent trainer.

I have worked in over 200 schools in the UK; I've worked in Australia, Germany and America, been involved in numerous projects and run countless courses. My conclusion, after all this reading, writing, speaking and listening, is that Donna was and still is (she works from Australia these days), essentially right.

The good news is that if Anita Higham (front page), and Janet and Roland Meighan (supplement) are to be believed, then schools will soon become places in which Donna's vision of student-centred learning will thrive, enhanced by technologies which were unimaginable in her formative years. How ironic that our profession has left it to economy and technology to press this change. It will not be enough, however, to reconstitute school structures, technologies and resources. The facilitative skills defined by Donna will need to be their lifeblood. Surely, these are the "*particular pedagogic talents and insights*" required of Anita Higham's "*specialist-consultant teachers*".

In the world of teaching and learning in which I move, propelled by the national concern to raise achievement, there has been a recent paradigm shift - from psychology to biology. Brain science research is now the latest thing, giving exactly the same kind of message about teaching and learning from an empirical base, that humanistic educators such as Donna gave years ago! At least it's believable now.

Perhaps student-centred learning has not had its day in Britain, as many feared (or wished) under Tory rule. According to Bob Dylan - like Donna, a long term survivor: "*They say the darkest hour is right before the dawn*". It seems to be getting brighter already.

Paul Ginnis, Independent Trainer

why it should be that so few adults have hobbies or interests that bear any relation to what they learned from their national curriculum at school?

Children, he believes, must have time, and lots of it, just to sit back and think, freed from over-exposure whether it comes from television or teachers. He believes that children of different ages must be free to mix and to learn from and with each other. Children should be free to choose the adults with whom they wish to learn - at SVS this is taken to the logical conclusion that

staff have no security of tenure but only full or part-time contracts that are reviewed annually by secret ballot of the School Meeting where the students are in the overwhelming majority. Thus at SVS there are not only no compulsory classes, but no classes at all except for those requested by

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The Trailblazers ... *part nine* ... Daniel Greenberg

Dan Greenberg has been a central figure in the development of Sudbury Valley School since its foundation in 1968. As a full-time and then freelance teacher of the History of Science at Columbia University in the 1960s he, together with his biologist wife Hanna, became determined not to put the creativity and curiosity of their own young children at risk by sending them to conventional schools.

With an initial major financial commitment by the Greenbergs, Sudbury Valley School opened in 1968 in an old convent building of archetypal New England beauty on the outskirts of the town of Framingham, Massachusetts. For twenty years the school was a lone pioneer, but the 1990s have seen a rash of 'SVS type' schools opening across the USA, Canada, and Australia, while Sudbury Valley itself has become over-subscribed and is planning to expand from its current 200 students aged from 4-19. The school has no Principal or Head as day to day governance is in the hands of the School Meeting. Dan Greenberg has been a member of staff (not usually referred to as 'teachers') throughout.

He has a deep commitment to democracy and it is surely no accident that SVS began in New England where many towns, including Framingham (which has over 50,000 inhabitants) choose to preserve the direct democracy of the Town Meeting rather than be ruled by a representative body. He regards conventional schools as analogous to prisons, products of the fundamentally anti-democratic tendencies of the industrial revolution, which required its machine-minders to have been instructed in the basic levels of the '3R's'. True to the zeitgeist these could readily be standardised, measured and tested in schools where freedom of movement was curtailed and obedience to regimentation of behaviour and thought was required. None of which, in Greenberg's view, has very much to do with 'learning'.

While accepting that this phase was probably historically inevitable, he believes that to continue to model schools in this way is grotesquely inappropriate. With machines capable of running themselves we now need people who are self-motivated, responsible, intelligent, creative and imaginative. This requires learning how to make constructive use of freedom which is in fundamental contradiction to the incessant coercive instruction of most conventional schooling. Tellingly, he asks

students, though only one student is required to create a class.

For someone who has spent a 'career' in the institutionalised absurdities of state schools, albeit as a dedicated advocate of pupil participation in decision making, a conversation with Dan Greenberg is like taking a cold shower. His capacity to uncover and challenge one's assumptions is 'shocking' in the most beneficial sense of the word. He does not claim to have fully resolved the mystery of HOW children learn but surely he is right in insisting that it is the responsibility of adults to provide an environment that is most likely to enable it to happen. He would claim to having some understanding of what this environment is like and that SVS is well on the way to constituting it. Longitudinal studies of the life stories of its ex-students suggest that he may well be right, though for the writer, it is an open question as to whether SVS students are representative of American young people as a whole, or whether they are a self-selected group most able and likely to benefit from the SVS approach.

Returning from visits to schools like Sudbury Valley, Sands or Hadera with their confident students, one is depressed to face again the world of the over-prescriptive, subject fragmented national curriculum, adult coercion over dress and behaviour, bells and 50 minute lessons, no choice over teachers or classes, standardised testing, and ever-present pressure and fear of failure. The world desperately needs its Danny Greenbergs - its just a pity that it takes so little notice of them!

"It takes forever for people to grasp that the future is already here and that they have been living in the past."

"The public (state) schools remain one of the last bastions of autocratic rule in our society...There is in fact no rule of law."

"Our view was always that everybody in the school, aged four and up, should have an equal access to power. Many years ago, we reached that state."

"This school has a strong tradition that there exist rights belonging to every individual member of the school community, and that these have to be protected in every way possible."

Daniel Greenberg

FURTHER READING

Announcing a New School (1973) - a personal account of the early days of Sudbury Valley School by Dan Greenberg
Legacy of Trust (1992) - a study of the life stories of ex-SVS students

The Sudbury Valley School Experience (1992) - a very readable collection of essays and anecdotes

The Kingdom of Childhood (1994) - a fascinating collection of interview transcripts, recollections and reminiscences of thirty-one ex-SVS students.

All the above are in print and available from Sudbury Valley School Press, 2 Winch Street, Framingham, MA 01701, USA.

Also 'OK - You're certified' in *Education Now News and Review No.11* for my own personal account of a visit to SVS.

See also Gray, P. and Chanoff, D.(1986) 'Democratic Schooling: What happens to young people who have charge of their own education?' *American Journal of Education*, Feb 1986, pp 182-213. Any internet search will unearth a mass of material if requested to search for Sudbury Valley School including extensive philosophical statements by Dan Greenberg.

Derry Hannam

Book Review

Primary Schools and the Future

by Patrick Whitaker, price £13-99

OUP, 1997, ISBN 0 335 19423 0.

It is abundantly clear throughout this book that Patrick Whitaker knows and values all that is best in Primary Schools. He offers a timely, authoritative re-appraisal of the work and life within them. This is a much welcomed celebration of a much demeaned profession. Yet it goes further than this in examining the changing world and the challenges that face teachers, learners and curriculum.

With reference to Handy, Peters and others, Whitaker charts the new post-modernist world with all its discontinuous change, chaos, paradox, ambiguity and confusion. He argues that primary educators have been "*instinctive post modernists for over half a century*" (p47). They have been remarkably successful in achieving this with concepts of wholeness and integration in the post-1988-modernist educational world characterized by reductionism and fragmentation.

Whitaker believes that society has underestimated the role of primary schools and marginalized its pre-adult, female dominated world. He reminds us that although not perfect, the very attributes most needed in our developing society are most likely to be found in these schools - in the work of teachers, managers and in the natural learning enthusiasms of the children themselves. Indeed, he asserts that the 'hard' world of business and commerce would do well to learn from the management skills and learning found in primary schools.

The author, however, does not suggest that primary schools have nothing to do. In fact, to create real learning organizations they need to engage in future-focussed thinking. They must rise to the challenges:

- of not underestimating capacity;

- of not overestimating the need for information;
- of avoiding excessive control;
- of avoiding curriculum as content;
- of valuing children's own experiences.

Whitaker believes that in order to address the character of the new paradigm, attention should be directed towards learner and process rather than curriculum. He regards the teacher as supporting the learner in a journey to "*break through the boundaries of self - limitation*" (p52).

Whitaker examines a framework for '*Life Focussed Learning*' valuing "*experience, imagination, creativity and intuition as we do thinking, remembering and reasoning*". He also views Gardner's multiple intelligence's and Toffler's skills for learners.

Whitaker promotes the notion that it will be the primary child who needs management skills to direct learning and life. This means moving away from teacher direction toward increasing learner responsibility and choice.

The developing nature of primary schools must be based on strong shared vision with loose/tight characteristics. '*Functional staffing*' is required, organically managed with everyone becoming '*co-managers*' working flexibly in small working teams which grow and dissolve as work dictates.

Of course embracing such a shift in management also requires a reconception of the idea of leadership. The movement towards life-enhancing leadership, in which leadership is a function of a group rather than an individual, involves adopting "*... an approach which recognizes that the potential and power to work effectively lies within the person rather than in the leader*" (p129).

Whitaker notes that some primary schools are already on their way towards such '*transformative leadership*' and that this is an important model for pupils.

The author believes that the agenda will need to confront many issues, amongst them the way we approach change, error, letting go, '*ad hoc*cracy', time and of course the curriculum.

While he does not think it wise to dump the national curriculum before a new manageable framework emerges, he recognizes that teaching and learning and the future uses of knowledge and skills need to be considered. The curriculum needs to aid children's preparation for the future.

Whitaker acknowledges that with the development of information technology the very role of schools will be questioned. He suggests a reduction of full-time attendance. Part-time contracts and the pressures of market forces will feature in the first decade of the twenty first century. He asserts

that the profession needs to re-examine itself so that it is capable of addressing the future.

The Trailblazers ... *part ten* ... Ivan Illich

The messages are clearly future-orientated and there is a need for those with vision, the new utopians, transformative people, pathfinders who have the qualities to shape the future in the new paradigm. There is wide reference to these qualities from a number of thinkers all of which give us direction for our own personal development.

I agree with one of Whitaker's final statements:

"A second great wave of primary innovation is needed to move schooling out of the tight and confined corner it has been forced into, a wave of change that will once again provide for the youngest children in our schooling system. ... If we are to help the pupils we work with to feel a full sense of their own awesome potential for growth, we need to be as authentic as we can in our communications with them. We have inherited shameful beliefs in the propriety of misleading children, of deflecting their questions and inhibiting their curiosity." (p167)

There are no radical solutions or prescriptions here for the future of education, but perhaps the strength of this book is that Whitaker has helped to clarify an agenda which meshes primary schooling with the emerging paradigm. Those of us operating within primary schools have a choice - whether we follow or resist.

*Peter Humphreys
Head Teacher, Mere Green Combined School*

Ivan Illich reached the pinnacle of his popularity and influence in the 1970s with his books on deschooling society. Then, teachers, school administrators, and parents were continually quoting his writings even though he was one of most virulent detractors of formal schooling and public education in recent times. In a highly controversial book, *Deschooling Society*, published in 1971 in the USA, Illich postulated the notion that all nations, not just advanced industrial societies, should abolish their school systems.

Roland Meighan comments in *The Freethinkers' Pocket Directory to the Educational Universe* (Educational Heretics Press, 1995) about Illich's ideas: *"It was part of Illich's general analysis of the detrimental effects on humans of the major institutions they had created, such as those for health, law, and mass communication. Schools hold a crucial place because they coerce people when young and gullible to accept the need for dependence on institutions to do things for them. After that they are deprived of the urge to grow up as independent, self-reliant, self-directing individuals." (p.30)*

In *Deschooling Society*, Illich proposes four 'networks' to support students *"in the kinds of things and the types of people that learners might want to be in contact with"* in order to learn and to achieve their own learner-defined goals. As the reader peruses these four major 'networks' remember that Illich is writing in the 70s before the 'computer revolution' and the possibilities of surfing the World-wide Web! The four networks are:

1. Reference services to educational objects - which facilitate access to things or processes used for formal learning. Some of these things can be reserved for this purpose, stored in libraries, rental agencies, laboratories, and show rooms like museums and

theatres; others can be in daily use in factories, airports, or on farms, but made available to students as apprentices.

2. **Skill exchanges** - which permit persons to list their skills, the conditions under which they are willing to serve as models for others who want to learn these skills and the addresses at which they can be reached.

3. **Peer-matching** - a communications network which permits persons to describe the learning activity in which they wish to engage, in the hope of finding a partner for the inquiry.

4. **Reference services to educators-at-large** - who are listed in a directory giving the addresses and self-descriptions of professionals, paraprofessionals, and free-lancers, along with conditions of access to their services. Such educators could be chosen by polling or consulting their former clients. (Illich, 1971, pp.112-3)

This champion of deschooling attempted to unmask the hidden curriculum in schools which he labelled as the tacit teaching of

in institutional terms - death means funeral directors, ill-health means doctors and hospitals, defending your rights mean lawyers, further learning means universities. The reason for school was that: *"School is necessary to produce the habits and expectations of the managed consumer society."*

Illich draws a distinction between **manipulative** and **convivial** institutions. If we could devise a learner-friendly, voluntary school instead of the manipulative one of compulsion and imposition, it would be acceptable within the definition of a convivial institution. Conviviality was seen as the freedom-based association of individuals in groups for comradeship and co-operation, infused with the joy of being alive.

As the educational issues that Ivan Illich espoused now seem familiar at the close of the 20th century, teachers and parents can find strength and renewed support from his writings in their advocacy of the democratic school and alternative educational futures.

Edith King,

Trailblazers in Action

superficial social norms, values and dispositions that produced a massive consumer mentality. Illich wrote:

Professor of Education, University of Denver

"The hidden curriculum teaches all children that economically valuable knowledge is the result of professional teaching and that social entitlements depend on the rank achieved in a bureaucratic process. The hidden curriculum transforms the explicit curriculum into a commodity and makes its acquisition the securest form of wealth. Knowledge certificates - unlike property rights, corporate stock, or family inheritance - are free from challenge. They withstand sudden changes of fortune ... Everywhere the hidden curriculum of schooling initiates the citizen to the myth that bureaucracies guided by scientific knowledge are efficient and benevolent. Everywhere this same curriculum instils in the pupil the myth that increased production will provide a better life.

(Illich, 1971, p.106)

In his assertions of why *"we must disestablish school"*, Illich draws on global perspectives, the one world viewpoint, and the urgency of the world-wide dangers to the environment, by stating:

"Obligatory schooling inevitably polarises a society; it also grades the nations of the world according to an international caste system. Countries are rated like castes whose educational dignity is determined by the average years of schooling of its citizens, a rating which is closely related to per capita gross national product, and much more painful. The paradox of the schools is evident: increased expenditure escalates their destructiveness at home and abroad. This paradox must be made a public issue. It is now generally accepted that the physical environment will soon be destroyed by biochemical pollution unless we reverse current trends in the production of physical goods. It should also be recognised that social and personal life is threatened by world-wide pollution. (p.13 - 14)

The institutionalisation of society means that personal initiative, unless it is sanctioned by an institution, becomes regarded with suspicion. Ask any home-based educator and they will tell you the truth of this! Future actions are presented overwhelmingly

The Otherwise Club (TOC)

The Otherwise Club (TOC) will be five years old in February 1998. We have changed and grown in the last five years but still maintain our original ideals. TOC provides a venue for families who are thinking of, or have begun, home-based education. Here, they can discuss their worries and problems with others who are more experienced. The whole family can make friends with other home-based educators and gain support.

The club meets two days a week, providing space for workshops and activities for families. On Thursday it is open to all those with at least one child of school-age out of school. What actually happens at TOC is chosen by those attending. Aside from three regular workshops, drama, pottery and a science group for the younger children, we run a number of other activities. Past workshops have included country dancing, visits from police dogs and their handlers and talks by various experts on maths, home education and health. Recent workshops have included African Drumming, 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' workshop and trip to the play, and making a video with the older young people. Some of these older ones have made two rock climbing trips to the Peak District.

TOC has a small cafe which serves a homemade lunch as well as tea, coffee, cake and crisps. This provides small funds for TOC and serves as a focal point for the community. TOC also keeps a small lending library about alternative education and a lot of information on activities and exhibitions in London.

For a small fee members can borrow any item from the TOC resource library which includes items that are too expensive for members to buy, such as a microscope, aqua scope, camping equipment and large detailed maps of Europe and the world.

We will soon have a bread making workshop and a portrait drawing class, whilst the science group are entering a project run by a Trust to help save endangered species. We plan to go on our usual trip to an organic farm twice this year, as well as visits to the Tower of London and Cadbury World.

On Wednesdays TOC runs a group for the 8 to 14-year-olds studying a topic chosen by consensus for that year. In 1997 we studied the Thames, finishing the year with a four day trip to Windsor. This group was formed to enable older home-educated young people to meet, work and socialise together on a regular basis. With this in mind one of our members is training as a Duke of Edinburgh Award leader. Some are now working for the Award and younger ones are beginning the Adventure Challenge Scheme.

Fund-raising is a constant worry. We charge £100 a year per family and some of the workshops must be paid for separately. In the long-term TOC is searching for a building which it can purchase with the help of private investors. We can then expand our activities to include weekend meetings for those wanting to know more about home-based education, more workshops for all ages, a toddler group, and develop a larger cafe, library and resource centre.

*If you would like more information about TOC or about becoming a Friend of the Otherwise Club please contact:
Lestlie Barson, 1 Croxley Road, London W9 3HH.
Telephone:0181-969-0893.*

WYNOT Home Education

West Yorkshire's News Of Their Home Education

Members of the public frequently admit to having a picture of home educating families as 'house-bound' in their educational programmes. This newsletter, produced by the West Yorkshire *Education Otherwise* group, totally explodes that myth.

It gives news of the regular meetings of home educators in Bradford, Hebden Bridge, Huddersfield, Leeds and Shipley,

Within the Balsall Heath area of inner-city Birmingham discussion and research is ongoing into ways of developing partnerships between school and home educating families using open learning systems.

The school associated with this is St. Paul's Community School, a small school in Balsall Heath, which for many years has worked with pupils who found they could not succeed in large mainstream schools. It was formerly an independent charitable school but in September 1997 it became Grant Maintained, and with a budget from the government, it has the chance to put some resources into discovering how opportunities for learning can be extended to more pupils.

Within the same area as St. Paul's School are families who have decided to educate their children at home rather than select mainstream schools. Their reasons for doing this are varied but some of them would value having access to open learning systems as part of their education programme. Flexibility is seen as a key characteristic of access to accommodate the varied needs of the learners, and so open learning systems which offer evening, weekend, holiday, distance and other alternative opportunities are needed.

Home educators in the Birmingham area, who are members of *Education Otherwise*, and St Paul's Community School began to work together to share resources in 1996.

In November 1997 Jerry Mintz from AERO (*Alternative*

2020 vision

information on activities such as a 'Readers and Writers Club', planned outings galore, sessions in museums, Children's Poetry Readings, and a Portrait Exhibition plus practical work. These present a picture of active, co-operative and innovative families joining in a wide range of educational and social experiences.

There is much more in the newsletter – features on parts of the area (which may stimulate some to visit), research reports, articles written by both adults and children, even a digestible section on English Grammar! Newcomers to home education are offered both support and insights into learning opportunities that exist when freed from the limitations of classrooms.

Small schools, home-based education and open learning systems

Education Resource Organisation) in the U.S.A. addressed a seminar at St Paul's School on the work of AERO in linking Charter Schools and home educators using open learning systems. His contribution stimulated valuable discussion on ways of developing such partnerships in this country.

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Twenty educationalists met at the University of Nottingham one Saturday in October 1997 and a month later on a Saturday in November. The educationalists were from a wide variety of backgrounds and they had agreed to be involved in an exchange of ideas on the theme of **Education in the Year 2020**, organised by the *Tomorrow Project* in consultation with *Education Now*.

Some common ideas emerged from the discussions in small groups and also in plenary sessions about education in the year 2020, when, it was agreed, the climate of uncertainty due to continuous change, would not have gone away. 'Continuous adaptation' was here to stay. The common ideas included:

1. Learning would be undertaken in much more flexible institutions than at present. Not least amongst the reasons was the escalating effects of modern computer and communications technology which freed us from any specific location for learning. 'Everywhere and anywhere' learning would have become a reality, and flexi-time learning commonplace.

2. Open learning centres would replace present-day schools. Some saw these as being open from 8:00 in the morning until 8:00 at night and open every day of the year. Others even thought there might be 24 hour opening. Such centres would support a non-ageist provision without excluding opportunities for some age or gender-based activity. Thus early childhood centres with a focus on young children and their families, would be available. The general model would be that of the public library, not the custodial model of our present schools.

3. The central concern of such open learning centres would be learning not teaching, although some formal teaching would be available on request. Such centres would help create a culture of learning which would include everyone and build learner-confidence and self-esteem

4. The role of the teacher would change to that of learning coach, learning consultant, or learning 'travel agent'. The teacher as access-agent to scarce information is already redundant and the logic of this would have become irresistible. Present teacher training was, therefore, largely a preparation for obsolescence.

5. Interactive learning systems such as CD-ROM programmes, opportunities for purposive conversation, self-programming groups and tele-conferencing would have replaced a great deal of classroom teaching. The danger of excessive individualisation would be offset by opportunities to learn in democratic groups and develop 'team-player' co-operative skills.

6. Life-long learning expectations would place a premium on the development of computer skills in adults. Voice-

driven computers would have become generally important here as well as for some specific needs such as those of dyslexic adults and children.

7. Courses to develop experts would still be needed, but the Open University model would have dislodged the obsolete 'three-year course for young adults' model of current universities. This is based on a preceding, and also obsolete, 'Grand National Race' concept of schooling. Young people are required to fall at each hurdle, losing self-esteem in the process, and often being turned-off learning, so that 'winners' can be identified.

8. Financing would have become much more diversified. Some funding out of taxation would be used to support particular requirements for experts, or particular innovative social concerns such as parenting skills, democratic skills, personal health skills, and even 'green' living if environmental survival, (the 'doomsday' scenario,) continues to grow as a issue. Industry would support activities particular to the needs of commerce. Individuals and families would provide some finance. LETS schemes would provide another element for personal learning exchanges. There would also be some voluntary learning exchange elements. The net result would be better results for less money than at present. (Home-based educators have already shown that their route to a university place can cost half as much as a conventional school route.) The current technology of swipe cards can incorporate all the above elements of finance, and record and monitor it.

9. Democratic control and democratic value-systems would have replaced present authoritarian control. The open learning centres would be run by elected representatives of the partners in learning - learners (parents and children), staff (paid and voluntary), and other interested parties such as local industry and local community. Real choice according to the needs of learners would be a key feature of the next learning system. This freedom would be subject to the democratic values of human rights and responsibilities.

10. One group's summary was that (a) 'time-lock' learning ideas such as key stages would have disappeared in favour of the flexible, irregular patterns of personal learning plans, (b) 'school' would have given way to flexible learning arrangements, (c) 'prescribed curriculum' would have given way to a catalogue curriculum with learner-driven elements, state-targeted elements, and industry targeted elements, (d) the precedence of a 'content' of shallow subject-based learning would have given way to the precedence of the deep learning of a questions-based, problem-solving approach. The home-based educators present proposed that their practice already involved many of the above features so that they were something of a test bed for the success of these approaches.

11. The fear of diversity based on an expectation of disorder would have given way to an awareness that all solutions are temporary in a constantly changing environment. Thus adaptability, creativity, flexibility and re-learning are key skills.

12. The multiple purposes of education would have been recognised in contrast to the one right way tendencies of present times e.g. education for 'saving' the country's economy.

13. The movement away from nationalistic concern to European and global ones would have led to the replacement of the calls for learning competitive attitudes and replaced them with calls for co-operative behaviour.

14. A new language would have developed to define the next learning system e.g. Open Learning Centres, not schools; the Catalogue Curriculum International, not a national curriculum; Personal Learning Plans, not teaching schemes and key stages.

Report by Janet and Roland Meighan (Education Now) and Michael Moynagh (Tomorrow Project)

Briefing notes for the Tomorrow Project Consultations: some possible 'end-games' in education

'End games' is an idea used by a variety of future studies, including war games, and computer simulations of economics and social change, and refers to those features that may be coming to the end of their time, by force of change, development, or regression. Thus the end of the town crier was signalled in the development of radio, and the end of the waterwheel in the development of engines driven by other forms of power than water.

The notes that follow are derived from *The Next Learning System* by Roland Meighan. They outline possible 'end-games' to simulate participants into nominating their own end-games in education, as well as debating the three that follow. From the exchanges we hope to build some common ideas about future possibilities and probabilities.

End game one : mass schooling

(These notes on mass schooling were published in an expanded form in the Winter 1996 Feature Supplement of *Education Now News and Review*.)

In an article written by Don Glines of the Educational Futures Project, USA, he asked whether mass schooling could survive for long into the 21st century. He thought not. A new synthesis was inevitable due to new information and new technologies.

(a) We now know of thirty different learning styles in humans.

(b) We now know of at least seven types of intelligence.

(c) It is now clear that in a complex modern society, all three behaviour patterns and forms of discipline - authoritarian, autonomous and democratic - are needed.

Effectively educated people need the flexibility to turn to each of the three major forms of behaviour and discipline. Rigid forms of schooling produce rigid people, flexible forms are needed to produce flexible people. Rigid university experiences build further rigidity of mind and behaviour on this foundation. As John Abbott points out in *Education 2000 News*, June 1996:

"... we continue to get graduates who think narrowly, are teacher-dependent, and have too little ability to tackle challenges or embrace change. The situation makes us wonder whether the traditional classroom is right for the task - the need may be less for 'reform' than for fundamental redesign of the system."

(d) Adaptability has priority in a rapidly changing society

There is now widespread recognition that with rapidly changing technologies, economies and life-styles, there is a chronic need for adaptability and flexibility in learning and in behaviour. A system based on uniformity is, therefore, counter-productive.

(e) The recognition of the need for life-long learning

The idea that essential learning is best concentrated between the ages of five and sixteen, and for some up to twenty-one, has increasingly given way to a recognition of the necessity for life-long learning.

(f) The arrival of the information-rich society

When mass schooling was established, people lived in an information-poor environment. Assembling large numbers of children together in one place called a school, with teachers who had been exposed to the scarce information then available, made a kind of sense. Since then, radio, television, the explosion of specialist magazines, computers, videos and the like, have all provided the means of making most of the products of the knowledge explosion readily available to anyone who wants it.

(g) Democratic schooling has become an international concern

After the demise of State Communism in the former USSR and Eastern Europe, new governments looked to schools in USA, UK and elsewhere hoping to find democratic models of schooling in operation, but only encountered the familiar model of authoritarian schools. These turn out to be not just non-democratic, but anti-democratic. Carl Rogers in *Freedom to Learn in the 80s* noted that democracy and its values are actually scorned and despised:

"Students do not participate in choosing the goals, the curriculum, or the manner of working. These things are chosen for the students. Students have no part in the choice of teaching personnel, nor any voice in educational policy. Likewise the teachers often have no choice in choosing their administrative officers ... All this is in striking contrast to all the teaching about the virtues of democracy, the importance of the 'free world,' and the like. The political practices of the school stand in the most striking contrast to what is taught. While being taught that freedom and responsibility are the glorious features of our democracy, students are experiencing powerlessness, and as having almost no opportunity to exercise choice or carry responsibility."

It seems obvious that communist and fascist regimes will organise schools on an authoritarian or a totalitarian model. But it does not seem clear why a supposedly democratic regime organises on the very same model, rather than adopting a democratic one.

(h) We now know much more about how the brain actually works

The new technologies allow us to watch a living brain at work. As a result, most of the assumptions of behavioural and cognitive psychology are in question. As John Abbott explains in *Education 2000 News*, June 1996:

"Studies in neurology challenge the common metaphor that the brain is like a linear computer, waiting to be

programmed ... the metaphors of choice are increasingly biological - that is, the brain as a flexible, self-adjusting organism that grows and reshapes itself in response to challenge, with elements that wither away through lack of use."

(i) The success of home-based education in posing questions about the axioms of the current system

Home-schoolers are often reluctant heretics but find, often to their surprise, that they outperform schools with relative ease.

In summary, the new synthesis derived from the effects of these ideas, means a new learning system with more flexible patterns. The new situation demands 'alternatives for everybody all the time'. People trying to persist with the domination of the inflexible authoritarian approach of mass schooling are consigning our children to the obsolescence of a rigid mind-set.

End game two : the academic curriculum

Nowadays, the idea that compulsory mass schooling is obsolete, meets less and less opposition. There is more shock, if not actual horror, 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 sign. The sign is beginning to say, in Monopoly board game style, 'Go straight to obsolescence, Do not pass Go, Do not collect a job.'

(a) An army of clerks

The point of academic schooling, whatever the rhetoric proclaims, has been to produce an army of clerks. Those who left at 16 with their examination certificates 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, examination success is often seen as a **negative** indicator that the prized independence and conversational skills may have withered or been sacrificed in the 'tell them and test them' machinery of school and university.

Another development is voice recognition technology which is now fully operational. 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 manage with half the number of lawyers, if they so choose. What applies to law firms applies to many others.

If further indication is needed about the decline of the academic pathway, the recent survey (1996) 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. In a recent lecture I gave the illustration that undergraduates struggling to get through university by working

part-time at McDonalds, sometimes find that graduate unemployment forces them to go on to work full-time at McDonalds on graduation - not quite what they had been led to expect. A voice from the audience said, "*Tesco's - in my case it was Tesco's.*"

(b) 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 we may move into a situation where 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)

(c) 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. 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%, and for long-term recall, 10%.

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 the approach is more efficient than this 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.

(d) Lethal side-effects

Whole class teaching and the 'tell them and test them' approach in general, 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, imposed curriculum, whole class teaching pedagogy (shored up by heavy doses of homework) and the 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.

Alice Miller sees this mind-set as the product of the *'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*, reminds us that Alice Miller 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 mentality. Carl Rogers added a further warning:

"People who cannot think, are ripe for dictatorships"

End game three : the end of the domination of print literacy

The arrival of voice recognition technology is likely to move us gently and inevitably into a new oracy age. This technology breaks the domination of print literacy. Of course, books and other reading material will still be useful and will not disappear, but their domination is gone. Machines can read and write for us occasionally, or most of the time, or all of the time as we choose, and according to the situation. The arrival of voice recognition technology is already transforming the world for many dyslexics and others with print literacy problems.

To some extent the decline of the use of print for information and entertainment has already started and has been replaced by TV and radio, for more and more adults and children. And as John Holt noted in *Freedom and Beyond* (p. 229)

"From the fuss we make about reading, one might think that this was a country of readers, that reading was nearly everyone's favourite or near-favourite pastime. Who are we kidding? A publisher told me not long ago that outside of three hundred or so college bookstores, there are less than one hundred true bookstores in all the United States."

The development of advanced telephone technology, including the arrival of mobile telephones, has already had the effect of moving activities away from the print literacy skills into more use of oral skills. An obvious example is telephone banking. Then, the arrival of book-reading technology for blind people is equally usable by the sighted with reading difficulties. There are more developments to come, such as the use of virtual reality and the next generation of wallet-size computers.

Thus, the move from an era of the domination of print-based literacy into a new era where oral literacy will be more central, is already under way, even if its significance has not yet been widely recognised.

*Roland Meighan, Special Professor of Education,
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NEWS REPORT

International financier loses patience with obsolete traditional education systems

Arthur Andersen, head of the US based international financial consulting firm of the same name, says *"the traditional education system is obsolete. The existing education system is a monument to its own time and place (of a century ago) but a woeful an anachronism in ours."* The solution he

proposed is a move from the industrial age to the information age. Rather than preach about his ideas to the unconvinced, he set about putting up the £1 million (1.5 million dollars) needed to design and built a kind of new learning facility.

The company has financed a new open plan Community Learning Centre at Alameda, near San Francisco, California, in cooperation with the local school district. The **Arthur Anderson Community Learning Centre** looks more like the inside of a high-tech office building than any traditional school. It has 'pods' of computer workstations, editing booths, a multimedia theatre and animation equipment. There are no desks aligned in rows, or timetables of subjects, or set textbooks, or walls between classrooms.

About 100 young people aged between 12 and 16 years, learn together under the encouragement of their five facilitators. There are no formal class periods and the different ages mix and work together. Teamwork is encouraged and rewarded, whilst performance is measured through reports the students present to their classmates, the staff, and to their parents. Some learners are designing, building and marketing a prototype electric car. Textbooks are consulted only when facts, formulas and references are needed.

The school, which took seven years to plan, has won Arthur Andersen the company of the year award from the US National Alliance of Business. The director of the project, Mort Egol, says, *"businesses have the kind of skills to adapt to change, to do development work, to manage technology. These are skills that schools do not have, and there is a systematic bias against fundamental change."*

The school district superintendent, Denis Chaconas, is impressed by the results, and says that the tests show that students are doing twice as well in the Learning Centre when compared with the nearby traditional high school.

(Abstracted from *'One-room schoolhouse keys into the future'* by Jon Marcus, in *Times Educational Supplement*, 31st Oct 97)

Royal Society of Arts Millenium Consultations

Janet and Roland Meighan attended a consultation morning in London about the education section of the millenium dome project. About 500 Fellows of the RSA had been asked to be prepared to answer the question, *"What do we want education to be in the 21st century?"*

For two hours we heard the *'Education Now script'* recited to us by Fellow after Fellow, headteachers, researchers, university dons, parents, and industrialists. There were just a few voices of dissent, who thought we were already on the right track, including a plea to continue at all costs with compulsory Shakespeare. But in general, there appeared to be a great danger that we are losing our rebel status!