

Wanted! A new vocabulary for learning

A recent edition of the *Journal of Curriculum Studies* opens with curriculum theorist, Bill Reid, discussing 'the end of curriculum'. Previously, *In Place of Schools* was the title of a book by John Adcock published in 1994, thus declaring the word 'school' redundant. It seems clear that we need a new vocabulary to take us into the next learning system.

But first, the old vocabulary has to go. The first casualty has to be '**school**'. As a word and concept it has degenerated. It used to mean a voluntary association of learners asking questions and seeking truth. In earlier times, when scholars (or 'schoolers') like Peter Abelard travelled from town to town, an informal 'school' of enquirers would assemble for a dialogue about his radical ideas. Somehow this idea of a voluntary gathering of learners has become debased. In his classic book, *Life in Classrooms*, Philip Jackson concluded that: "*for all the children some of the time, and for some other children all the time, the classroom resembles a cage from which there is no escape*".

We need to remember that when mass compulsory schooling was first adopted in the USA, children were escorted to the state establishments by armed soldiers against the will of the families concerned. Currently, in the UK it is hailed as an advance that police cars are used to round up any reluctant learners. The undesirable outcomes are that, somehow, schools have transformed learning from one of the most rewarding of all human activities into a dull, fear-laden, boring, fragmenting, mind-shrinking, soul-shrivelling and often painful experience.

Next, the word '**curriculum**' has to go. It has come to mean an imposed course study so dehumanised that all the key decisions about what to learn, when to learn, and how to learn, have been taken before any of the learners have been met and encountered as people. At one point in the National Curriculum deliberations it was suggested that we refer to 'curriculum study units' or CSUs rather than pupils, as a final dehumanisation. Even the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, with his conservative interpretation of 'education, education, education' being synonymous with 'schooling, schooling, schooling', has stated that, "*we will move away from a system that assumes every child of a particular age moves at the same pace in every subject, and develop a system directed to the particular talents and interests of every pupil*".

Another word that may have to go is '**education**'. Quite a few years ago, Bertrand Russell observed that we were faced with the paradoxical fact that education had become one of the chief obstacles to intelligence and to freedom of thought. In common usage, education has ceased to mean 'asking questions all the time, questioning answers all the time, and questioning the questions'. Instead it has become a paper-chase, a diploma disease. When you are asked about your education, you are expected to produce a list of set courses completed and certificates obtained.

Next, officialdom's favourite word may have to go. It is '**standards**'. The idea of standards in education is both ambiguous and subjective. For some it means remembering the information designated by adults in power positions as 'essential', even though there is little agreement on what is essential. Training students to be good at the shallow

learning of selected mechanical tasks enshrined in institutionally imposed syllabuses, does not produce the more important deep learning, the kind we already need, and will need more and more in the future. The first objection to shallow learning systems is that they tend to eradicate the potential to develop a deep learning, as the most recent brain activity research shows, on the principle of 'if you do not use it, you lose it'. With the habits of deep learning in your repertoire, you can do shallow learning more or less at will. The reverse, however, does not apply.

Another objection to the current definition of standards, is that most of the required shallow learning is 'junk knowledge'. I define junk knowledge as '*something you did not need or want to know yesterday, do not need or want to know today, and are unlikely to need or want to know tomorrow*.' If you do need or want to know it eventually, possessing the deeper knowledge of such things as questioning, researching, evaluating, self direction and self discipline, will enable you to learn it.

So, we need to un-learn the old vocabulary and learn a new one. The literature on the next learning system has several suggestions for a word to replace school. Some writers talk of open **learning centres**, or learning studios, or learning pavilions, or learning networks, or community learning sites, or learning cafés. Another option is to refer to centres for personalised education, or CPE's. Others want to retain the word school in revised formulations such as 'virtual-schools' or 'cyber-schools'.

The main candidate to replace the word curriculum, is the expression '**personal learning plan**' or 'personal learning programme'. Personally, I favour retaining the word curriculum as part of the expression, the catalogue curriculum. Such a term implies that learners are able to construct their own personal learning plan from a catalogue of ideas and possibilities, including ready-made courses, individualised courses, and support for groups of learners who want to work democratically and design their own courses.

To replace the word education, many writers now favour referring to 'learning', or 'lifelong learning'. So, the talk is about the next **learning system** rather than the next education system. Even the word 'system' is sometimes questioned on the grounds that it implies mechanical imposition. But if we actually, or mentally, prefix the word with flexible - a flexible learning system - it helps people see that what is being proposed is a not a free-for-all or laissez-faire. A system can also be monitored, although the purpose of that monitoring will be to provide high quality advice and information, so that learners can make informed decisions, rather than the imposition of uniformity and standardisation.

The word and idea of standards chosen and imposed from above, can be replaced by the idea of **profiles of achievement**, which have worked in other European countries, such as Denmark and Sweden, for decades. These can include generalised assessment tests.

A recent MORI poll, commissioned by the *Campaign for Learning*, found that 90% of adults were favourably inclined towards further learning for themselves. In the right environment, they were willing to undertake further learning. The bad news is that 75% said they were unhappy and alienated in the school environment, and that, therefore, they preferred to learn at home, in the local library, at their workplace - *anywhere* other than a school-type setting. The old vocabulary and thinking has to go if we are to achieve a learning culture, a learning society, and the habits necessary for genuine life-long learning

Roland Meighan

The Whistleblowers: Edmond Holmes

People do not come down from University these days and go straight into the Inspectorate, without ever confronting real children and the everyday drudgery of English schooling. A century ago English attitudes towards education were more simplistic, and assumed that educated men who had imbibed the classics knew more than enough to pass judgment on the inky children of labourers and factory hands as they conned their ABC.

Edmond Holmes, who became Chief Inspector of Schools at the end of the last century, may have begun his career as an inspector of elementary schools with that complacent and illiberal mind-set, but by the time he retired in 1910 he had come to a clear understanding that the entire system of education over which he presided was a corrosive, stultifying waste of time and money.

In his book, *What Is and What Might Be* he set out a determinedly counter-cultural view of education. He had watched thousands of teachers at work, and had concluded that their preoccupation with controlling the children, drilling them in lists of facts and mathematical tables, keeping their work uniform and in conformity with the fixed syllabus, was a *'Path of Mechanical Obedience'* which equated education with instruction and training, and had nothing to do with creating free adults who could confront a new century with confidence.

He expressed his view of the schools he visited thus:

'In nine schools out of ten, on nine days out of ten, in nine lessons out of ten, the teacher is engaged in laying thin films of information on the surface of the child's mind, and then, after a brief interval, he is skimming these off in order to satisfy himself that they have been duly laid'

The reason for this was not far to seek, Holmes thought. It was the *'officials at Whitehall who framed the yearly syllabus, and the officials in the various districts who examined on it'*. By depriving teachers of any right to adapt their teaching to the interests of their pupils the system had created a class of slaves who had no responsibility beyond *'delivering'* whatever package of ideas their masters deemed to be *'essential'*.

'What the Department did to the teacher, it compelled him to do to the child ... The teacher who has been deprived by his superiors of freedom, initiative and responsibility cannot carry out his instructions except by depriving his pupils of the same vital qualities.'

We should remind ourselves that this is the considered opinion of the Chief Inspector of Schools nearly 100 years ago! Some, including Holmes himself, if he were still alive, would call it a disgrace that at the end of the most homicidal century in man's history his successor is still promoting the virtues of servility and conformism. Holmes saw clearly that progress in education must inevitably involve teachers allowing children to exercise their minds as individuals. The adults must stop trying to *'do the children's developing for them'*.

Holmes also saw that the education system was, as it still is, in the grip of what might be called *'reality management'*. So

great was the conviction that children were incapable of good judgment, and entirely blighted by *'Original Sin'*, that it was futile to consider whether the schooling they received was doing them any good. All their adverse reactions to it were nothing more than devilry, which needed to be firmly crushed.

He spoke out very strongly against the unreflective style of teaching, common at the time, which allowed teachers to give lessons about things which could not possibly interest ordinary children (he cites the example of a lesson he observed for 94 8-9 year-olds about *the Five Kinds of Prayer - Invocation, Deprecation, Obsecration, Inter-cession and Supplication!*). He would be sad to see that, although we believe that our lessons are *'relevant'* and *'interesting'* today, we still force them on our young without ever asking them whether they actually find them any more gripping than did Standard III in the early 1900s.

Educators always like to feel that they are discovering some new, radical principle of education which will transform the future for children. The pity of it is that the best ideas impress themselves upon the most sensitive and thoughtful minds in any age, and having enjoyed whatever measure of acceptance or notoriety they are able to arouse, slip into obscurity as the weight of cultural complacency and innate conservatism crushes them. Holmes saw, as many do today, that social ills are often the long-term result of state schooling. He expressed his fears in a somewhat mandarin way:

"With the best of intentions, the leading actors in it (hidebound schooling), the parents and teachers of each successive generation, so bear themselves as to entail never-ending calamities on the whole human race - not the sensational calamities which dramatists love to depict, but inward calamities which are deadlier for their very unobtrusiveness, for our being so familiar with them that we accept them as our appointed lot - such calamities as perverted ideals, debased standards, contracted horizons, externalised aims, self-centred activities, weakened will-power, lowered vitality, restricted and distorted growth, and (crowning and summarising the rest) a profound misconception of the meaning of life."

Our present Chief Inspector should read those words and think hard. Education makes the future. Bad education will make a bad future. Holmes knew that, and if he had been able to live through this century, I am convinced he would say the same things about education as it is today.

Chris Shute

Chris Shute is author of *Edmond Holmes and The Tragedy of Education*. His other books are: *Alice Miller: The Unkind Society, Parenting and Schooling* and *Compulsory Schooling Disease: How Children Absorb Fascist Values*. He is currently working on a book about the *Centres for Personalised Education* being set up by groups of home-based educators.

A century of cheating the children

I want to argue that schools cheat some of their pupils. A friend told me of an Italian book that revealed how schools steal from children. They first steal music, art and creativity. After quite a short time at school, children start to say "I can't sing", or "I can't draw". Of course they can sing and draw. Everyone with a voice-box and means of holding a pencil can. What children mean is, 'I can't sing/draw/tell stories/do maths/play sport according to some comparative yardsticks I learn at school'. Unless they are careful, schools steal whole areas of potential fulfilment or enjoyment from people. Yet they are never caught or fined for this theft. On the contrary, they are rewarded for maintaining 'standards'.

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Then there is the question of the productivity exchange. If the Office of Fair Trading looked at school interactions, they would raise serious questions about the nature of the exchange between the school and the children. Children exchange years of docility, obedience, politeness or keeping a low profile for teacher approval or, at least, lack of teacher disapprobation. It is an uneven and potentially limiting trade-off. Similarly, children spend hours doing 'work'. They exchange reams of it for knowledge and materials given by the teacher. Yet cost-benefit analysts and the 'equal-pay-for-work-of-equal-value' people would have a field day. One piece of research on the writing and note-taking that children had to produce in one subject for GCSE counted the pages to be equivalent to writing a medium-sized novel; but there was no assessment of the impact of such massive production on the eventual outcome, or whether this could be achieved in a more effective way. Information Technology will change the nature of this exchange, and improve one side of the bargain, but schools will still control productivity. Good schools, of course, have recognised the need for pay bargaining and worker participation, in the shape of School Councils and Circle Times, but many are still dubious about pupil involvement in decision-making - even if this is demanded by Article 12 of the European Convention on the Rights of the Child.

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Another issue would relate to Freedom of Information. Sometimes children have no idea what happens to their output. A fascinating piece of research in an infants' school asked children what happened to their various pieces of work during the day. They said "You put it on the pile" or "You put it on the teacher's desk". Few had any clear idea of what or whom it was all for. Things have improved with Records of Achievement, and children creating their own portfolios; access to personal files is now easier. Yet in terms of knowing what every lesson is for, how it fits in the great scheme of things, why and how certain things are timetabled, many children still have only a hazy idea. Secondary teachers fondly imagine that their subject is clearly distinguishable from others, but for some children, the day is all the same. Pupils look at lessons not by content, but by what it does to them, what the activity is. The oral explanation followed by written work, the death by worksheet, the question-answer routines, mean that all lessons blur together and Geography is indistinguishable from English, from History, from R.E. They are all places where failure is possible, or where boredom threatens. As my daughter once summed up her typical primary maths class: 'Here's a sum, here's how you do it, here's 50 more'.

We have had a century of differentiation in inappropriate ways: defining 'inability' too young, too permanently, in irrelevant areas;

strategy - such as a teacher explanation. A child with learning difficulties was recounting how he struggled with comprehending his lessons, struggled with the vocabulary of the teachers. "The words keep coming at you all the time. You get some of them, but a lot of them you miss - it's like trying to catch the rain".

The research on truancy has found that an awful lot is about children not being able to face yet another day of not understanding, not feeling able to admit this, not being able to 'produce' good work. We have known this for a large part of this century; the tragedy is that in this age of ICT, Learning Grids and Continuous Professional Development for teachers, it still happens. Schools and National Curriculum proponents have not caught up with the knowledge and information explosion, that is, with the acceptance that the only thing that schools can now reasonably teach is learning how to learn. My fear is that with the introduction of citizenship education in schools, this will become a 'subject', not an activity or entitlement; it will be one more thing that some children cannot do. Schools will steal citizenship from them, and they will remain stateless.

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As we move full circle over the century from *Payment By Results* to *Performance Related Pay*, everyone rightly worries about how teachers get paid and rewarded. Yet this unfortunately sidelines the question of how children get rewarded under such ideologies, and whether anything has changed. The more the emphasis on 'standards', the more that children can be exploited for the status of others. SATs have just brought forward from GCSE the stresses on children to 'perform' at regular intervals. Have children gained anything in return? Do they feel better about themselves in the way that some teachers may?

We do have some good legislation in this country, and, if the Conventions on Human Rights become enshrined in law, it will be better still. But we do not apply all our legislation to schools, nor do we have good ways of protecting children from injustice in them. In her novel *A Source of Embarrassment*, Mary McCarthy tellingly described how, "No murderers or thieves applied, only ordinary people of ordinary B+ morality, people whose crimes, that is, had been confined to an intimate circle, and who had never injured anybody but a close friend, a relative, a wife, a husband, themselves". Similarly, schools with ordinary B+ OFSTED ratings can injure children in ways which appear way outside the law.

We do not need an OFSTED, we need an OFLEARN, or an OFJUSTICE. To go into the next century with an Office for Standards in Education is to continue with the abuse of children in the name of international competitiveness and market forces. Good schools and good teachers love, trust and value their learners. They do this collectively, as the creation of a safe and imaginative community. But a century of inspection and government control is still encouraging cheating and thieving on a grand scale. I'm not sure we have moved on.

Lynn Davies

Dr. Lynn Davies is Professor of Education, University of Birmingham, and author of *Beyond Authoritarian School Management*, published by *Education Now* at £9-95

Quotations for our time?

John Stuart Mill

"A general State Education is a mere contrivance for moulding people to be exactly like one another, and as the mould in which it casts them is that which pleases the dominant power in the government, whether this be a monarchy, an aristocracy, or a majority of the existing generation; in proportion as it is efficient and successful, it establishes a despotism over the mind, leading by a natural tendency to one over the body." (*On Liberty*)

Roger Scruton

"The purpose of schooling? To keep children off the streets."
(reported by Barry Hugill in *The Observer* 28 Nov 93)

Edward de Bono

"I have not done a full survey or review of education systems around the world so that the views I express are based on personal experience. I would say that all education systems I've had contact with are a disgrace and a disaster." (From his website)

Leo Tolstoy

"What is meant by non-interference of the school in learning? ... (It means) granting students the full freedom to avail themselves of teaching that answers what they need, and what they want, only to the extent that they need and want it; and it means not forcing them to learn what they do not need or want ... I doubt whether the kind of school I am discussing will become common for another century. It is not likely ... that schools based on students' freedom of choice will be established even a hundred years from now." (*Education and Culture*)

St Augustine

"I learnt most, not from those who taught me, but from those who talked with me." (Quoted by John Abbott, *Education 2000*, 1994)

Tony Blair

"... the revolution in business ... will, over time, take place in education, too. We will move away from a system that assumes every child of a particular age moves at the same pace in every subject, and develop a system directed to the particular talents and interests of every pupil."

(Quoted by Michael Barber in *The Guardian* 30/1/96)

One head teacher

"One head teacher told John's parents to make his home life less interesting so that he would not be so bored at school."

(*Times Educational Supplement* 20/9/96 Features, p.3)

John Holt

"There is much fine talk in schools about 'Teaching Democratic Values'. What the children really learn is 'Practical Slavery'."

John Dewey

Children are people; they grow into tomorrow only as they live today.

Seymour Papert,

"I believe that the computer presence will enable us to so modify the learning environment outside the classroom that much, if not all, the knowledge schools presently try to teach with such pain and expense and such limited success will be learned, as the child learns to walk, painlessly, successfully, and without organised instruction. This obviously implies that schools, as we know them today, will have no place in the future. But it is an open question whether they will adapt by transforming themselves into some-thing new or whither away and be replaced." (*Mindstorms*)

Mark Twain

"I never allowed schooling to interfere with my education"

Sir Christopher Ball

"I realised that I am among those who believe that Tomorrow's School will be a replacement for, not merely an adjustment of today's system of education."

('Commentary', *RSA Journal*, December 1995, p.6.)

Edward Fiske

"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." (*Smart Schools, Smart Kids*)

Professor Eugenia Potulicka

"The 1988 Education Act is a very dangerous development for it has politicised schooling in the direction of fascist thinking."

"The founding fathers in their wisdom decided that children were an unnatural strain on parents, so they provided jails called schools, equipped with tortures called education. School is where you go between when your parents can't take you and industry can't take you." **John Updike** (*Connect*, New York, October 1998)

Nat Needle

"... if the 21st century becomes the story of human beings around the world pitted against each other in a struggle for well-being, even survival, this will only be because we failed to imagine something better and insist on it for ourselves and our children. I don't care to motivate my children by telling them that they will have to be strong to survive the ruthless competition. I'd rather tell them that the world needs their wisdom, their talents, and their kindness, so much so that the possibilities for a life of service are without limits of any kind. I'd like to share with them the open secret that this is the path to receiving what one needs in a lifetime, and to becoming strong." (*AERO-Gramme*, No. 25, Fall 1998)

John Taylor Gatto

"It is the great triumph of compulsory government monopoly mass schooling that among even the best of my fellow teachers, and among even the best of my students' parents, only a small number can imagine a different way to do things." (*Dumbing Us Down.*)

George Bernard Shaw

"What we want to see is the child in pursuit of knowledge, and not knowledge in pursuit of the child."

Colin Ward

"Much of our expenditure on teachers and plant is wasted by attempting to teach people what they do not want to learn in a situation that they would rather not be involved in."

('Towards a poor school' *New Humanist* 93, 2 Sept 1977)

Bertrand Russell

"We are faced with the paradoxical fact that education has become one of the chief obstacles to intelligence and freedom of thought."

In conversation with ... James Hemming

mountains, at the poles, and, unexpectedly, in the depths of the oceans

Dr. James Hemming began his career as a teacher. Whilst he enjoyed teaching he disliked the system, finding it self-centred and competitive. He then trained as a psychologist and worked in various fields of applied psychology, maintaining his interest in education. He has lectured and written ten books on human development and relationships.

Janet: Have things improved in education since you wrote *The Betrayal of Youth* in 1980, James?

James: Things certainly have advanced in some areas owing to a broadening of perspectives. Emotional and social education are now given more attention than formerly but the curriculum is still excessively concentrated on intellectual attainment by itself. In some primary schools things are going backwards. Release from the 11+ gave primary schools the chance to set out to educate the whole person rather than putting all the emphasis on formal skills. But now the surge of advance is being impeded by pursuing league tables as the measure of success. The reality is that all children are different so that attempts at standardization go against nature. Children, teachers and parents are all disturbed by the concentration on comparing child with child and school with school.

Janet: What concerns you about the schooling system in the UK at the end of the present century?

James: A major weakness is that secondary education is still too competitive. This is not only damaging to the development of the school as a community, it also results in leaving the failures, or less successful pupils, with feelings of inferiority and rejection. Secondary education should be primarily about developing personal qualities and a general understanding of our human situation and the responsibilities that arise from it. Examinations are necessary when a young person's future depends upon the acquisition of particular skills; they should not be the be-all and end-all of secondary education.

The secondary school itself should set out to be a community in which young people are discovering themselves learning about the world they are in and finding out how they can contribute to the future. All young people can be drawn into this perspective. When young people leave school feeling they are second rate we have betrayed them.

Janet: What gaps in education are obstructing preparation for the future?

James: The situation around young people is changing rapidly. There are some big changes ahead. The older ones of the community can get by 'living in the past'. Not so for young people. They need to keep abreast of things. Schools should seek to be 'up to the minute' in the outlook on life that they offer. One piece of old-thinking that will probably have to go soon is the idea that there is only one inhabited planet in the Cosmos - our own. We know that life is not the rarity it was once supposed to be. It has been found in the heights of

where the water pressure is so great that it was once supposed that no life could exist there. That leads on to the supposition that there may well be a number of planets sustaining life in the

Cosmos. It could well be intelligent life. Planetary systems have now been discovered around twenty stars (suns) and there are doubtless many more 'out there'. If there are planets of approximately Earth-size in those systems, and they are of a temperature to have water in a liquid state on their surface, then the probability that life has emerged there are high. 'So what?' some people say, but there can be no doubt that, when the evidence of life elsewhere is finally confirmed, it will have a wide effect on world thinking. The young will be especially affected. They will see themselves as responsible for the quality of life on their own planet. It will give the young the excitement and extended vision that they are longing for. Educationally, we should now be giving the young not only a global, but a cosmic perspective.

Janet: You have written extensively about sex education. What is the importance of this in future education?

James: Happy, fulfilled, enduring marriages are the aim; chaos and confusion are becoming the reality. We have to understand that marriage is a testing relationship that requires appropriate preparation. Whilst young men are approaching full sexual virility in the mid-teens, often all the sex education that they receive is the biology of reproduction, plus warnings about HIV and pregnancy. Research has shown that this squeamish approach is more likely to lead to unwanted births than a more open attitude to adolescent sexuality. Of course, adolescent girls too need sensitive and understanding help about valuing relationships and avoiding pregnancy.

Education should obviously be directed towards the attainment of responsible, caring love relationships. That means that sexual activity in the mid to late teens should be accepted as normal so long as it is honest and caring. The educational aim should be to help young people towards enduring partnerships. Reciprocity between the partners is the foundation for happy marriage, not sexual deprivation, leading to impaired selection. The educational system has not yet accepted these realities. We are paying a sad price for this in illegitimacy, and early marriage breakdown.

Janet: What are your hopes for future learning systems?

James: **The society surrounding the young, now a global society, should be seen as the context for education.** At present, education is often too boxed away from the real world. The young experience it as something added, not as an expansion of their personal awareness. One mismatch is the imposition of homework onto their private worlds. Homework should be abolished in the education pattern of the future except when an examination is in the offing and extra private study is accepted as sensible. Instead of the imposition of homework the school day should end with a period of private study, leaving the evening free for personal and social interests. This would require that every locality had interest centres where young people, in the evenings, could test themselves out in a variety of ways while sharing their experiences socially and cooperating in the programmes of developing skills and interests.

Book Review

Those Unschooled Minds: home-educated children grow up

by Julie Webb, Educational Heretics Press, 1999 at £9-95

ISBN 1-900219-15-8

In her introduction to this book, Julie Webb writes that it's more than twenty years since the 'groundbreaking support group' *Education Otherwise* was founded. She could have added that it is just ten years since her own groundbreaking book, *Children Learning at Home* was published. This new book is another first. It is the first book, certainly in this country, which looks at how home-educated children turn out as adults. They also reflect on their own experience of home education.

The 20 people who participated in the study, almost all contacted through *Education Otherwise* (five of whom featured in her first book) have all had ample time to reflect on their experiences and how these may have influenced their outlook on life as young adults. Her work directly addresses the second question people ask about home education - whether children can possibly grow up normally if they haven't been to school. The first question people ask, whether parents are actually capable of educating their children at home, she dealt with in her first book.

First of all, Julie Webb asked her respondents to look back over their education at home. What comes over very strongly is that they view their education in a fundamentally different light from those of us who went to school. There is a refreshing sense of having initiated and actively participated in deciding what to learn rather than simply reacting to what teachers want to teach them. In consequence, their attitude to learning as adults is highly positive. Home education imbued in them a constructive and confident attitude to learning for its own sake, not just as a means to an end.

The content of the education these people experienced at home ranged from highly structured to completely informal. I do have a qualm here because there is an implicit assumption that informal and autonomous learning are somehow better. Indeed, she describes a family using a high degree of structure as "*having employed a certain amount of authoritarianism*". While it is true that nearly all her respondents were educated relatively informally, there are many other home educating families who use quite formal methods. The great advantage of home education is that each family can work out its own approach and adapt as they go along.

So what were these people doing as adults. As Julie Webb says: "*not one of the interviewees could in any sense be*

described as unemployed". They were doing a wide variety of things: running a business, embarking on a PhD, salesperson, caring profession, media ... They had also experienced a wide range of jobs, including labourer and ice cream seller. As they might have said, they were brought up in the real world and now have no problem whatsoever in living in it as adults. So who needs the rough and tumble of school as a preparation for the world of work?

When they look back on their education at home it is clear they have not in any way been indoctrinated - they have highly independent minds. They are not even ideologically anti-school. As one realistically put it: "*...we haven't had enough experience of the mainstream system to have really direct comparison*". This reassuring absence of ideology extends to when they consider whether they will educate their own children at home, eg. "*I would consider it. It was a good experience for me ... but if I knew they were enjoying school and they weren't having any problems, yes, I'd keep them in*". The women in particular were concerned that their own career aspirations would be affected - it is nearly always the woman who has day-to-day responsibility for education at home.

All in all, this is a confident and independent bunch of (nearly all) young adults who are already making a significant contribution to the community they live in. They are not committed to home education but simply regard it as a viable alternative to school. It will be interesting to see what they think about home education when they have children of their own of school age. The next book, Julie?

Alan Thomas

Congratulations!

One of our stalwart members is Dr. Iram Siraj-Blatchford who has written two books for *Education Now* to date, and lectures at the University of London Institute of Education. Her talents have been recognised in the awarding of the title of Professor of Education.

A date for your diary

The next meeting for members of *Education Now* will be on **Sunday 7th May 2000**. This will include the half-yearly business meeting and a Learning Exchange on a theme to be decided. Expected venue: Burton-on-Trent.

New books available next year

From the *Education Now* stable:

Teaching Tomorrow by John Adcock

This is the follow-up to John's radical text *In Place of Schools*. The new book analyses the exciting role for the new teachers in the next learning system, where crowd-control, crowd-instruction and the 'talking-book' roles of current teachers become a thing of the past.

Getting Started in Home-based Education

by Mary Rose and Paul Stanbrook

This will be a 200 page handbook aimed at the growing numbers of families opting for home-based education. It is published in partnership with *Herald* which offers its home-based educating members 'a structured yet flexible framework as a basis for study'.

From the *Educational Heretics Press* stable:

Doing it their way by Jan Fortune-Wood

Autonomous education allows people, young and old, to develop the life-long habits of learner-managed learning. This is a process that looks remarkably unlike anything we expect from our schools, not least because it requires a non-coercive learning environment. This book shows how home-based education, when it operates with an autonomous style, points the way.

Book Review

Voices for Democracy: a North-South dialogue on education for sustainable democracy

Edited by Clive Harber, Education Now in association with The British Council, 1998 price £11-95
ISBN1-871526-39-6

Voices for Democracy is an eclectic and fascinating collection of twelve papers presented at a colloquium held at the University of Natal, Durban, South Africa, in April 1998. The range of the contributions is wide, spanning policies and practices at a macro socio-political level and micro-institutional level in four countries, South Africa, Britain, Namibia, and Botswana. Introducing the book's content, a courageous Clive Harber struggling to identify a common theme, that of the relationship between education and democracy, restates Dewey's view that, as well as needing democratic institutions, sustainable democracy requires habits of democratic thought and action.

The sheer range and diversity of the articles is both the book's strength and its weakness. The book is less of a north-south dialogue about democracy than a set of cogent articles on national educational policies, micro-democratic practice in particular schools, curriculum development for racial justice, human rights, peace and conflict resolution, methods of educating teachers, gender relations in schools, and the importance of civil society for sustaining democracy.

Taking Namibia as his example, Roger Avenstrup writes succinctly on the various interpretations of democracy in education policy in post-apartheid democracy, providing examples of democratic educational reform and changes to the curriculum and examinations, and concluding with the question of what sort of democracy is possible within the economic constraints of a society whose economy is in the grips of globalisation.

While the book as a whole does not explore the issues of multinational corporate development and the new authoritarianism of economic control and world banking requirements, it provides

numerous examples, albeit unself-consciously, of the contradictions present in the polarised economies of southern Africa, and the contrast between noble intention expressed in political rhetoric, policy and constitutional reform, on the one hand, and continuing impoverished practice, political inertia and grossly inadequate outcome, on the other. Nevertheless, one can only agree with Harber that, while '*implementation will be far from easy or simple ... the general direction is to be supported, not least because the alternatives are all much worse*'.

In relation to the theme of democratic practice in school, Bernard Trafford's chapter on democratising a grammar school in Britain illustrates the difficulty of assuming the referents of democracy have universal application when, to be understood in any operational sense, they require specific contextualisation, particularly in relation to institutional location, size, level, boundary and inclusivity. After all, the Ancient Athenians practised democracy, but excluded the majority of the Athenian population. A democratically-run grammar school, it is claimed, improves the effectiveness of the school, socially and academically, at no extra cost. Does the process of democratisation have no cost implication? What an interesting assertion, particularly when recontextualised for South Africa, with its historically racially-divided system of education!

Anne Welgemoed, writing on the parallel topic of democratising a girls' school in South Africa, mentions the fundamental flaws of apartheid and the educational deprivation of black schools. Grosvenor Girls' High School, her case study, was an all-white school until opening its doors in 1991 to children of all races. The integration of the school was accompanied by a triple process of 'restructuring, renewal and reconciliation', involving a massive exercise by staff, parents and students in democratic stakeholder participation.

Audrey Osler describes human rights education and education for racial justice in Britain, arguing the case for renewed emphasis on their promotion in schools. Devarakshanam Betty Govinden makes the case for developing peace education in South Africa, against a background of the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, while Glenda Caine and Iole Matthews deal with the role that education might play in conflict resolution in KwaZulu Natal.

On methods of educating teachers, Changu Mannathoko discusses democratic teacher education in Botswana, arguing that a democratic approach is essential to achieving political wisdom. Relebohile Moletsane draws attention to the many ways staff and students interpret democracy and the importance of transforming teaching and learning processes.

The next two chapters deal with gender relations in schools. Lynn Davies explores the relationship between democracy and gender relations in educational contexts in developing countries, while Robert Morrell investigates the effect that democratic changes in South African schools have had on the concept of masculinity. Lastly, Janet and Roland Meighan use the Education Now Publishing Co-operative as a case study of the valuable role that voluntary associations play as 'mediating structures' between the people and the state.

While it is clear that all fourteen writers value democracy, democratic institutions and democratic approaches to education, and believe strongly in the importance of education in sustaining democracy, there is little systematic or original exploration of the complex relationship between the ideology and practice of democracy at the macro-level, vested economic interests, and the diverse processes and institutions of education and cultural transmission. In a southern Africa, undergoing radical political and institutional transformation, such an exercise would have been tantalising.

Frank Reeves

Spinning away ...

Education Now has been 'on the web' for some time as part of the Educational Heretics Press site at:

www.gn.apc.org/edheretics

but is now has its own web site, under development, at:

www.gn.apc.org/educationnow

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"I agree with you that it is essential to create a society of lifelong learners, but how does the *21st Century Learning Initiative's* policy address the government's narrow view of education which ultimately puts the interest of the marketplace above those of its people?" (page 6)

"You cannot simply tinker at the edges of the present system and expect to succeed. This is a time to be bold." (page 11)

"Learning is essentially a reflective activity - it is about making sense. Learning involves taking fresh ideas and linking these to prior understanding in ways which increase our knowledge and sense of mastery. Learning is both a problem-solving and collaborative activity ..." (page 13)

21st Century Learning Initiative

Education 2000 was established in 1982. The trustees were concerned that the present structures and methods of education were not adequately responding to the current and future rates of cultural, social, industrial and technological change.

All countries were seen to be facing a stark choice. Either schooling becomes ever more extended, prescriptive, all-encompassing of young peoples lives, inevitably, more expensive. Or, countries learn how to devise new educational arrangements.

In 1995, Education 2000 went on to play a key role in establishing the 21st Century Learning Initiative as a trans-national assembly of some 60 leading researchers, policymakers and educational innovators from 13 countries. The initiative believes that fresh thinking about learning is desperately needed, unconstrained by conventional assumptions and institutional priorities.

From: 21st Century Learning Initiative Journal, May 1999:

"... schools are in danger of being sidelined and becoming irrelevant as a result of the new information science is gleaning about the brain." (page 4)

"Now we have a new head teacher who is swinging the school back to a read, cram, test and vomiting mode ... The head calls this 'having standards'." (page 6)

"In a meeting at Downing Street a spokesman for the British Prime Minister stated in 1996, 'your (Education 2000) ideas are interesting but they require very good teachers. We are not convinced that there are enough of these so we have emphasised a 'teacher-proof' curriculum'." (page 13)

From: 21st Century Learning Initiative Journal, Jan 1999:

"The scale of the brain is mind-blowing. With each have more neurons - the on/of switches in the brain - than all the trees in all the forests of both North and South America combined. That's not even the most significant fact. We each have more synapses - potential neural connections - than all the leaves in all the forests right across the world!" (page 2)

"The brain is very economic however. Those phonemes not needed are 'pruned' as early as the age of four, and this pruning is completed by the age of six or 7." (page 6)

"... I entitled to my speech 'battery hens or free range chickens?' Cleverness will never be enough - our country desperately needs creativity, and the ability to think holistically, and ethically." (P. 4)

"I love the excitement of learning. I delight in the company of

active young minds working things out for themselves, but for years I was frustrated by the institutional hurdles that get in the way of powerful learning. I was so uncomfortable as a head teacher that in 1995 my conscience wouldn't let me continue to preside over a system that I didn't believe in any of more." (p. 4)

"By default we will end up in the world of the battery hens. Such hens hardly know how to stand on their own feet when their wire cages are removed." (page 10)

"I know my dad loves me, but I hardly know him. I know he works very hard to support us, but we hardly ever talk. It makes me feel as if I am incomplete. Hold onto that word 'incomplete,' when you think of adolescents. Adolescence is a problem largely of our own making." (page 7)

"I, like many others, have tired myself out by trying to capitalise on many of the new findings about learning by placing these within the present system. They just don't fit; they collide head-on. Not only is the system upside down, but in its failure to recognise the significance of informal learning within the community, it is inside out as well." (page 9)

"Just as we are undoubtedly on the brink of new understandings about learning, so too are we on the brink of radical developments in technology which are so fundamental that they hold the power to alter, not merely our education system, but also our work and our culture. At its roots ... this technological revolution puts learning and conventional education systems on a collision course." (p. 9)

From: 21st Century Learning Initiative Journal, Sept 1998:

"Learning was assumed, until 15 or so years ago, to be largely and individual activity and a consequence of formal instruction ... Whereas we now understand learning to be a collaborative problem solving activity that involves far more than instruction alone." (page 10)

From: 21st Century Learning Initiative Journal, June 1998:

"In a world of continuous change, the ability of individuals to plan and implement their own learning without external direction is the key to success." (page 2)

"The glory of human learning is that it is essentially a complex, messy, non-linear process." (page 4)

"The brain is a biological system, not a machine. Currently with putting children with biologically shaped brains into machine oriented schools. The two just don't mix." (page 4)

"... A highly directive, prescriptive curriculum which 'goes against the grain of the brain' and will inevitably inhibit creativity and enterprise." (page 4)

Most of the above quotations are attributable to 21st Century Learning Initiative director, John Abbott

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Where did it all

Tel. 01462 481107 www.21learn.org

We are about to witness an astonishing event. We shall enter the next century with the same basic model of learning with which we entered this one. It is like basing today's transport policy on the horse-drawn carriage. *The Guardian*, in September, devoted three articles to assessing the sad state of schools in England and Wales. Where did it all go wrong?

Learning democracy and democratic learning
Professor Bengu, Nelson Mandela's choice for Minister of Education, noted that: '*Democracy means the absence of domination*'. Whilst our model of schooling is riddled with domination, we are clearly on the wrong track, assuming, that is, that we actually believe in democracy.

Ignoring the Community College idea
Many positive ideas have been ignored or discarded. In Tony Jeff's book on Henry Morris, the Community College idea was outlined and the Cambridgeshire attempts to establish it in practice. If we had followed the Morris vision, we would by now have a learning culture capable of responding to modern communications technology.

Being deaf to research findings

It is many years now since Howard Gardner established the existence of multiple intelligences – seven, eight and possibly nine of them. The schooling system continues to focus mostly on one, sometimes two, thus preventing the development of an assortment of achievements in the learning population.

We have known about thirty or more learning styles in humans, but one is allowed to dominate the school and university scene. This ensures that many learners are forced into positions of weakness rather than developing and using their strengths.

Modern brain research has been exposing many of the assumptions of mass schooling as false. The brain is a pattern-making organ rather than a pattern-receiving entity. We see this in action when young children learn their mother tongue, not by formal instruction but by interaction with the people and the world around them. The brain generates one set of chemicals when in a passive mode that makes it cautious and defensive. In an active, decision-making mode it generates other chemicals which stimulate speedy and creative learning. Then, if the brain's co-operative disposition is not encouraged, it gets replaced e.g. by selfish competition.

Ignoring the lessons of information technology

In a now famous observation, Seymour Papert indicated the potential of computers for learning.

“I believe that the computer presence will enable us to so modify the learning environment outside the classroom that much, if not all, the knowledge schools presently try to teach with such pain and expense and such limited success will be learned, as the child learns to walk, painlessly, successfully, and without organised instruction.”

He speculated as to whether current schools, will have any place in the future. They might transform themselves into something new or whither away and be replaced.

Dismissing the idea of flexischooling

In *Flexischooling*, one such transformation was proposed. Home-based educators often comment that, although their approach to learning works better than school, even better learning could be achieved if a flexi-time programme could be negotiated between homes and schools. In California, 65,000 families are reported to have taken the opportunity to have an ISP or Individual Study Programme of this kind. This idea can be amplified into that of developing a much more flexible model of schooling altogether. This has come to be known as *'All-year Round, All Age, Open All Hours, Learning Centres'*. Henry Morris had the same in mind for Community Colleges.

Failing to learn the lessons from home-based education

We have a few successful models of learning. One is the remarkable success of home-based education. Families have direct access to the information-rich society in which we now find ourselves. They tend to encourage learner-managed learning. They use a catalogue-curriculum approach rather than a rigid, imposed curriculum. This leads to the personal learning plan, the interactive curriculum, interacting between the achievements and motives of the learner and the structured world of knowledge, favoured by John Dewey and Charlotte Mason. They use the powerful learning method of *purposive conversation* in place of obsessive formal instruction. They tend to recognise and service different learning styles and multiple intelligences without necessarily knowing the theory on which their methods are based. (A school using the conventional model just cannot compete with a family working this way, not even in the social skills developed. An 'unconventional' school adopting democratic approaches or even flexi-schooling, can do better.)

Ignoring the 'whistleblowers'

Some whistleblowers have been mentioned above. Others are Charles Handy, Daniel Greenberg, Alfie Kohn, Alice Miller, Bertrand Russell, Edward de Bono, Ivan Illich, Paulo Freire, Don Glines and John Gatto. Then there was John Holt and the wisdom of his ten remarkable books. There are plenty of others, but a list has to end somewhere.

Refusing to learn from Edmond Holmes

The Chief Inspector for Schools, Edmond Holmes declared, **in 1911**, that thirty years of trying to make the first National Curriculum work had shown him that the result was *The Tragedy of Education*. Several long-running small tragedies made up the final large tragedy:

"For, with the best of intentions, the leading actors in it, the parents and teachers of each successive generation, so bear themselves as to entail never-ending calamities on the whole human race - not the sensational calamities which dramatists love to depict, but inward calamities which are the deadlier for their very unobtrusiveness, for our being so familiar with them that we accept them at last as our appointed lot - such calamities as perverted ideals, debased standards, contracted horizons, externalised aims, self-centred activities, weakened will-power, lowered vitality, restricted and distorted growth, and (crowning and summarising the rest) a profound misconception of the meaning of life."

The Editors

The *Other* Ruskin Speech

as written by Nigel Wright

On October 22nd 1976, Prime Minister Callaghan made a speech at Ruskin College, Oxford, which marked a decisive turning point in schooling: the end of the post-war 'progressive consensus'. The Prime Minister was seen to throw his weight behind the 'back to the basics' lobby and cut the ground from under the feet of the radicals of the left.

In this admittedly improbable fantasy, Nigel Wright imagines what Callaghan might have said if he had decided to jump the other way.

"I was very glad to accept your invitation to lay the foundation stone for a further extension of Ruskin College. Ruskin College has a special place in the affections of the Labour movement as an institution of learning because its students are mature men and women who, for a number of reasons, did not develop their full potential at an earlier age. Ruskin has justified its existence over and over again. Your students form a proud gallery and I am glad to see here this afternoon some of your former students who now play important parts in the academic world, in politics, in the trade union movement and in industry. Among adult colleges, Ruskin has a long and honourable history of close association with the trade union movement, and I hope that this partnership will continue to flourish and prosper.

"There have been one or two ripples of interest in the educational world in anticipation of this visit. I hope the publicity will do Ruskin some good and I don't think it will do the world of education any harm. I must thank all those who have inundated me with advice: some helpful and others telling me, less politely, to keep off the grass, to watch my language, and that they will be examining my speech with the care usually given by Hong Kong watchers to the China scene. It is almost as though some people would wish that the subject matter and purpose of education should not have public attention focused on it; nor that profane hands should be allowed to touch it.

"I cannot believe that this is a considered reaction. The Labour movement has always cherished education: free education, comprehensive education, adult education, education for life. There is nothing wrong with non-educationalists, even a Prime Minister, talking about it again. Everyone is allowed to put their oar in on how to overcome our economic problems, how to put the

balance of payments right, and so on. Very important too. But, I venture to say, not as important in the long run as the care and education of children. It may not be inappropriate at Ruskin College to quote the words of William Morris: '*Children have as much need for a revolution as the proletariat have.*' And if that's the case, it's the business of every one of us.

"Why have men and women succeeded at Ruskin who had not succeeded at school? If people are unsuccessful at school but go on to be successful later - not only academically, but in all walks of life - then clearly there is no deficiency in their make up. For a long time it was thought that if children did not do well at school, it was because they did not have the ability to do so. The Labour movement has now set its face against this view. It no longer has the scientific or moral credibility it had 50 years ago.

"The major educational issue of our time is our failure to achieve an education which is equally available to all the children of our nation. Deeply engrained in our thinking is that to be 'educated' is somehow to be above the masses. It is remarkable that after more than a century of universal schooling in Britain the majority of the population can in this sense be seen as 'poorly educated' or 'uneducated'

"When I was a boy, to win a place at grammar school was an honour. But very often it was the first step on a road which took young men and women away from the communities in which they had grown up. The grammar schools were socially divisive, and that is why the government is committed to a fully comprehensive system of secondary schooling. We now have a duty to make sure that our comprehensive schools do not, in less obvious ways, continue to create divisions between our people. We must stop thinking of education as a competition which some win and some lose. Our firm aim must be to make sure that there are no losers in education.

"Let me say, so that there should be no misunderstanding, that I have been impressed in the schools I have visited by the enthusiasm and dedication of the teaching profession. Clearly, life at school is far more full and creative than it was many years ago. I recognise that teachers occupy a special place in our discussions because of their real sense of vocation about their work. But I am concerned that over the past decade or so major criticisms of schools have been voiced which need to be attended to. These are proper subjects for discussion and debate. And it should be a rational debate based on the facts. The criticisms to which I refer have nothing to do with Black Paper prejudices. We all know those who claim to defend standards but who in reality are simply seeking to defend old privileges and

inequalities. The division is not between those who want standards to improve and those who do not: everyone wants raised standards. For all the talk of falling standards in our schools, there is very little evidence that such a fall has taken place. I do not intend, therefore, to jump on the 'standards' bandwagon. To focus on standards in the way they have been defined by the Black Papers is to divert our attention from much deeper problems of education.

"During my travels around the country in recent months I have had many discussions which show concern about the relationship between schools and the needs of industry. For many years the accent was simply on fitting a supposedly inferior group of children with just enough learning to earn their living in the factory. There is now a widespread recognition of the need to cater for a child's personality, to let it flower in the fullest possible way. It is right that schools - in their structures, in their methods, and in their curriculum - should enable this to happen. At the same time, children must be equipped for a lively, constructive place in society. But there is a limit to how far society and industry, as they are presently organised, should be allowed to dictate the nature of schooling. The Labour movement has always stood for fundamental reforms in industry and society. The faster we are able to push ahead with those reforms, the easier it will become for schools to meet their social responsibilities without having to constrain or divert the fullest development of each child's potential. It is difficult for children to look forward to a lively and constructive part in society if they see much to despise in that society, and it is the responsibility of adults to reconstruct society in ways which will make children long to become fully involved in it as adults.

"If we are to claim that our society is democratic, then democracy must be seen in the structures of our schools. We are expecting the Taylor Committee Report shortly on the government and management of schools that could bring together local authority, parents and pupils, teachers and the community more closely. We must then look at how this development can be carried into the daily life of the school, and into the classroom, so that parents, children and teachers can become involved in school decision-making, in the determination of the school's policies and practices.

"Lately, educationalists have been pointing out how schools, perhaps inadvertently, reproduce old attitudes which hinder the further development of our society towards the goals of fuller democracy and the elimination of social classes. This is not only a matter of reviewing the curriculum, but also what has been called the 'hidden curriculum'. Schools must continue to search for an ethos which not only values the good things in our society but equally values the culture and experience which the children bring to school with them. Our schools must not transmit a fossilised culture. They must be part of that process which involves all of us - the

constant re-assessment and regeneration of a living, developing culture. This does not mean a rejection of tradition; but it does not mean a bowing down before tradition either.

"In recent years we have heard many criticisms of the school curriculum. It has been said that the curriculum lacks relevance; that it lacks a proper connection with the interests of children and young people; that it overstresses the academic at the expense of the useful; that it enshrines forms of knowledge which are inaccessible to many children. There have been criticisms of the rigid barriers between school subjects. There have been arguments for a core curriculum and arguments against it. It is not my intention to become enmeshed in these questions. What I am saying is that where there is legitimate public concern it will be to the advantage of all involved in the education field if these concerns are aired and shortcomings righted or fears put to rest.

"And we have heard equally strong criticisms of the way our schools arrange the process of learning. **If schooling is to be effective, it must be based on an understanding of how children learn. This understanding may lead teachers to re-think their role in the classroom; it may lead schools to build a new relationship between teacher and learner, to move away from the teacher authoritarianism which we remember from our own school days; and it may lead to the abandonment of old methods which have been found to hinder the fuller development of the child.**

"To the critics I would say that we must carry the teaching profession with us. They are the ones who have to do the job. To the teachers I would say that you must satisfy children, parents and society that what you are doing meets their requirements and the needs of our children. For if the public is not convinced then the profession will be laying up trouble for itself in the future.

"We need to look, too, at the relationship between the school and the world outside it. Schooling should not go on behind closed doors. We need to open up schools, and classrooms, so that children are constantly learning in, and from, the community around them, and so that the community too comes into the school - both to make use of its resources and courses, and to enrich the children's lives in school.

"On my journeys I have heard much of the problem of discipline. For some people this is a simple matter - a matter of obedience. I venture to suggest that it is more difficult than that. Of course there is a need for good order in schools, but this must be an order which arises from the shared commitment to a common purpose. It is when this commitment is lacking that we have to fall back on the use of coercion. But we must be wary of coercion in a democratic society; and education does not flourish in an atmosphere of coercion. If amongst our young people there is a lack of commitment to a common purpose, the fault lies with us politicians - and all of those in a position to influence the direction of society - not with our children.

"When we politicians talk about education, voices are always raised saying 'keep politics out of education'. This is a little like saying 'keep soil out of gardens'. I am afraid that politics has never been kept out of education, and it probably never will be. What we can do is bring the politics out into the open, so that everyone can see what is going on. We must not use our schools to persuade children that this political viewpoint or that political viewpoint is the right one - though that happened often enough in the past, as those of us who remember the celebration of Empire Day will know. I am saying that the process of education can not be value free, and that the direction it takes is bound up with the political direction of society. Politics is about values, and education is about those same values.

"Another controversial area is the examination system. It has been remarked for many years that our secondary schools are dominated by examinations, and that the influence of examinations permeates even into our primary schools. It is a case of the tail wagging the dog. If there is to be a place for examinations, it must be subordinate to the purposes and methods of education which we as a society have chosen. Our examination system is designed to divide people up into categories of supposed merit. This is the purpose of a class-divided society, something to which the Labour movement does not subscribe. We will be looking again at the examination system and in due course propose a programme of reform.

"Let me answer the question 'what do we want from the education of our children and young people?' John Dewey's reply was 'what the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all of its children'. This is a good start. Since 1944, the key phrase in educational policy-making has been 'equality of opportunity'. Every parent wants their child to have every opportunity, and no-one can gainsay that. But the objective of 'equality of opportunity' has a sting in the tail. Like a lucky dip at the fairground, it can be the opportunity for some to try and win; but for others, it can be an opportunity to try and fail. But no wise parent wants their child to fail, and no wise community wants an education system which deems large numbers of children to have been unsuccessful. What we must aim for is equality of satisfaction: a schooling system which enables every person who has passed through it to say: that was a valuable and enjoyable experience for me; I learned a lot, I learned what I wanted to learn, and it has provided me with the equipment I need for the next phase of my life. And - and it is an important and - a schooling which also satisfies society. For our ultimate aim must surely be to create the conditions under which there need be no conflict between the needs of the individual and the needs of society.

"Equality of satisfaction is, after all, what clients of the National Health Service expect from it, and I do not see why it should be any different for the education service.

Of course, the Health Service has failings; there are diseases we cannot treat, and even when we can treat them, mistakes are sometimes made or the treatment is unsuccessful. No doubt our education system will go on having its failings. That is inevitable, but it is a far cry from the mass institutionalised lack of satisfaction which our education service at present creates. It is time for a change.

"I have outlined concerns and asked questions about them today. The debate that I was seeking has got off to a flying start even before I was able to say anything. Now I ask all those who are concerned to respond positively and not defensively. It will be an advantage to the teaching profession to have a wide public understanding and support for what they are doing. And there is room for greater understanding among those not directly concerned of the nature of the job that is being done already and the reasons why fundamental changes are now being contemplated.

"The traditional concern of the whole Labour movement is for the education of our children and young people on whom the future of the country must depend. At Ruskin it is appropriate that I should be proud to re-affirm that concern. It would be a betrayal of that concern if I did not draw problems to your attention and put to you specifically some of the challenges which we have to face and some of the responses that will be needed from our schools. I am as confident that we shall do so as I am sure that the new building which will rise here will house and protect the ideals and vision of the founders of Ruskin College so that your future will be as distinguished as your past and your present."

Dr. Nigel Wright wrote *Assessing Radical Education* which was published by Open University Press in 1989. *The Other Ruskin Speech* was written in 1986, the 10th anniversary of the original, but no newspaper or journal approached would publish it. His comment on 'Where did it all go wrong' is that the current system is based on the regressive prescriptions of the *Black Papers* of 1975.

