Life-Long Learning:
a project of the Coalition of Self-learning (USA)

Life-Long Learning

In the past three decades, there has been a growing movement to reinvent the way citizens learn and how young people are introduced into society. Home-schooling, charter schools, cyberschools, unschooling, life-long learning, Waldorf schools, and Sudbury schools are just a few of the elements of this movement. The movement has been growing exponentially each decade since 1980. It has become a challenge to the traditional school/teach/educate system. Life-long learning has been promoted by management guru Peter Drucker in *Post Capitalist Society* on one end of the spectrum and, on the other end, by Elise Boulding in *Building Global Civic Culture*. The bottom line in this movement is to provide the freedom, opportunity and resources for self-learners of all ages, with their families and in community, to choose to learn what they want, when they want and how they want -- to self-learn.

Recognition

In spite of the rapid growth of this movement, it has drawn little positive attention from governments. Professional educators and their unions have shown concern that the proliferation of home-schooling will draw funds away from the public school system. A few public school systems have accepted the challenge and established special programmes to provide would-be home-schoolers and other self-learners more autonomy within the public school system. Some have established parent-teacher programmes that depend on parental involvement and give parents greater autonomy in the learning process. But, as parents are increasingly recognizing that personal liberty and private protection from control by majority rule applies to their children's learning, none of the existing systems have completely incorporated that concept. Nor do they fully meet the needs of our information society which requires a life-long learning system to provide for each individual's continual learning processes, as detailed in the work of writers and thinkers from John Holt and Alfie Kohn to Daniel Pink and Howard Gardner, among so many others. Foundations, likewise, have been slow to rise to the challenge and opportunity that is unfolding. The millions of dollars for public schools, coming from all levels of government, is followed by millions more coming from private foundations. But little, if any, of this private funding is available for the many non-public school experiments being undertaken. A search of the philanthropy databases with words like 'home-schooling' comes up with no programme in any foundation. Whereas a search under 'schools' or 'education' comes up with many thousands. Individual appeals to hundreds of foundations by 'home-school support groups', 'learning coops' and other forms of non-school learning communities are regularly returned with the words *"this proposal does not fit into our current programme of support".*

Motivation

Motivations for moving toward self-learning and abandonment of traditional public schooling are many. Perhaps the most prevalent is parental concern about the loss of control of the learning of young children. Many families want to take direct responsibility for their curriculum, approach to learning, and the principles and values upon which these are based. Some parents believe that the public school system instills values which run contrary to those of their family. Some are explicitly guided by their religious beliefs to direct the education of their children. Others have had disturbing experiences with schoolyard bullies, unfeeling teachers, or mis-directed bureaucracies. A few hold that government support is inherently controlling, and that their tax dollars are binding families to a failing system. Self-learners are also influenced by education critics, philosophers and religious leaders. Some, like Ivan Illich, believe our current life, including school, is based on the principle of work now for future rewards. They urge that schooling, and life, be convivial and vernacular. That is, that learning and work should be carried out in joyful collaboration with family, friends and neighbors. And that it should be embedded in the local culture, ecology, and friendships. With Paulo Friere, some see schools as perpetuating the socio-economic rich/poor status quo and preventing the natural social evolution that would occur if future citizens were given more freedom to self-learn in their own families, communities, and nature. Following John Holt and others, many believe that every brain, that is every student, is unique and no two are prepared to learn the same thing at the same time in the same way. They believe that schooling is not an efficient way to learn, nor for future citizens to be introduced into society. Most great philosophical traditions, including those embodied in Gandhi, Tagore, Aurobindo and Krishnamurti, recognize a spiritual component to learning, teaching that knowledge is more than a way to get a job or score well on a standardized test; that it is the purpose for living, it is being human. Tagore started his learning community, Antiniketan, to transform the human mindset from self-interest, competition and materialism to mutual aid, cooperation, and the love of learning. Growing out of a variety of personal, philosophical, educational, or religious motivations, the life-long self-learning movement continues to expand.

Proofs of effectiveness

It is impossible to measure the success of self-learning with tests, grades, and scores. Perhaps the most interesting successes are found among those learners who do not flourish in a traditional setting with standard measurements of success. These individuals are free to blossom in their own ways and do. Anecdotal evidence abounds about happy and successful learners who have traveled a nontraditional path to their own personal success. Self-learners are equally honored among our greatest leaders. Thomas Edison, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Abigail Adams, Benjamin Franklin, the Wright Brothers, Helen Keller, Albert Einstein, and Margaret Mead are only a

few of those who have learned without school. The newspapers are filled with stories of less well-known successes. Ryan Abradi, of Maine, showed an interest in numbers at an early age, so his parents let him stay home and self-learn; by age 10 he was working his way through second-year college calculus. Caitlin Stern of Haines, Alaska, stayed out of school and became a recognized expert by studying bald eagles in the wild. Jedediah Purdy, a self-learner from West Virginia, graduated *summa cum laude* from Harvard University; in 1996 he was selected as a Truman Scholar and as West Virginia's nominee for the Rhodes Scholarship. He then went on to Yale Law School and, in the meantime, wrote a best selling book. The growth rate of self-learning is a partial measure of its success. From a few scattered home-schoolers in 1980, perhaps 20,000, the number has grown, according to *Newsweek Magazine*, to over 200,000 in 1990, and into a broad integrated network of an estimated 2,000,000 today. Considerable research has shown that students learn much more easily when they self-learn. As long ago as 1930, the '8 Year Study' of 30 special schools demonstrated that*: "The most effective schools used a different approach to learning. Instead of organizing learning by subjects, they organized it around themes of significance to their students".* There seemed to be an inverse relationship between success in college and formalized education as opposed to student-selected learning. A recent Cornell University study confirmed this and showed that schooled children become 'peer dependent' while those who learned with their parents have more self-confidence, optimism, and courage to explore. A Moore Foundation study of children of parents who had been arrested for truancy found that their home-schooled children ranked 30 percent higher on standard tests than the average classroom child. Providing possible insight into the reasons behind these successes, a UCLA project showed that the average schooled student receives 7 minutes of personal attention a day but the self-learner receives from 100 to 300 minutes of attention daily. Following this, a Smithsonian Report on genius concluded that high achievement was a result of time with responsive parents, little time with peers, and considerable time for free exploration. Standardized tests reflect self-learner success as well. *Time Magazine* reported that *"the average home schooler's SAT score is 1100, 80 points higher than the average score for the general population".* Dr. Lawrence M. Rudner, conducted a study in 1998 that included 20,760 students in 11,930 families. He found that in every subject and at every grade level (K-12), home-school students scored significantly higher than their public and private school counterparts. Some 25 percent of all home-school students at that time were enrolled at a grade level or more beyond that indicated by their age. Next, the average eighth-grade home-schooler was performing four grade levels above the national average. The average ACT score was 21 out of a possible 36 for schooled children. It averaged 23 for self-learners, qualifying the college-bound self-learner for the most prestigious universities.

Vision

This movement is not only addressing the why, how, when and what all citizens learn, but is also rebuilding the foundation for the society in which we all live. How we learn determines the kind of society we build. Authoritarian, hierarchical, undemocratic schools prepare future citizens for an authoritarian, hierarchical, undemocratic society. A life-long learning system based in family, community, society and nature could be the foundation for new democracies of freedom, equity and justice. The movement continues to promote the concepts of life-long self-learning, in all its complexities, to a wider audience, to address critics on the issues of accountability and credibility, and to raise funds to help those working to bring its ideals to fruition.

Schools, what are they good for?
- an update

It shocks me to realise that I'm old enough to remember Edwin Starr's 1970 hit single 'War'. The great American soul singer, who sadly died a few months ago, belted out: *"War, what is it good for? Absolutely nothing!"* There are those of us who would argue that Iraq has proven the point, yet again. And there are also those who would say that we could apply the same refrain to schools: what are they good for? And give exactly the same reply.

But look at it another way. John West-Burnham, until recently Professor of Educational Leadership at the London Institute of Education, is a well-received international commentator on transforming education. He argues that in the UK *"Over the past ten years there has been a cautious but profound revolution taking place in schools and in broader debates about education. At the centre of this change are the fundamental questions about the nature of learning"*. If John is right, more than fifteen years on from the Tories' Education Reform Act, perhaps we should allow ourselves a little room for optimism.

During the nineties, the systematic unfolding of the national curriculum and its associated paraphenalia collided with remarkable developments in our understanding of the learning process. Right-wing dogma came up against 'brain-based learning' and began to give way. Whereas in the 60s and 70s teaching technique was based on various combinations of philosophy, sociology, quasi-scientific psychology and ideology (easy targets for hard-nosed, business-driven politicians), it is now arising from scientific *knowledge* which is much more difficult to dismiss. The neuroscientists have unknowingly challenged the assumptions of the Dark Ages through which we have just passed and in so doing have slowly shifted the ground of debate. The discussion within the profession, and within certain political circles, is no longer about ideology; it is about the facts and certainties of the learning process **and their implications for the way in which education might best be conducted.**

Much of our new neuroscientific understanding of learning came out of America via popular educationalists such as Eric Jensen (www.jlcbrain.com) and was developed in this country by the likes of Colin Rose and further researched and repackaged by Alistair Smith (www.alistairsmith.co.uk) under the banner of *Accelerated Learning*. From the mid-90s scores, possibly hundreds, of titles on both sides of the Atlantic have become available on approaches to teaching that are relatively optimistic, holistic, fresh and broad. Just look at the current educational catalogue of the Anglo-American Book Company for instance (www.anglo-american.co.uk).

Schools in the UK are increasingly open to these ideas. Courses and school training days are often given over to them; headteachers' conferences feature these themes. Many Local Education Authorities have regional projects underway. Advanced Skills Teachers are coaching their colleagues in new methodologies and many schools now have senior posts responsible for developing the best of this modern practice. Key aspects of this new-wave thinking have found their way into the Government's high-profile Key Stage 3 Strategy; there is a thinking skills section of the Department for Education and

Skills Standards Website; the *Times Educational Supplement* has led a national campaign for the regeneration of creativity; SATs are disappearing (in Jersey and Wales for example); recent Government papers speak of enjoyment as well as excellence (*A Strategy for Primary Schools*, May 2003); and learning styles now feature in the new Ofsted inspection framework. Even the Government's much publicised national literacy strategy is being used by the best practitioners to reintroduce old ideas about interactivity, drama and oracy. Where new schools are being built, the architecture is much more open and friendly than the factory-like structures of the past. Professor David Hopkins, Head of the Standards and Effectiveness Unit, recently brought together key players to debate the future of formal education. Remarkably, their behind-the-scenes discussions considered scenarios from meltdown (the result of leaving things as they are) to total transformation (doing away with schools altogether)! When indicators such as these are strung together like this, it is tempting to imagine that the tide has already turned.

It is particularly exciting to see how some of the ideas at the heart of this new-wave thinking are beginning to tackle the fundamental pre-suppositions upon which schools currently operate. For example, Professor Howard Gardner's (Harvard) Multiple Intelligence Theory challenges the established idea of ability which has led to such segregation and disadvantage. Daniel Goleman's work on emotional intelligence insists on humane and supportive learning environments and gives centrality to personal and social skills. What has been revealed about the brain's biological potential, together with Professor David Perkins' (also of Harvard) insistence that intelligence is learnable, are lifting teachers' perceptions of **all** children. The research into learning styles is slowly getting schools to see, and provide for, pupils as individuals rather than cohorts. These new ideas are seeping into the mind-set of teachers, school leaders and administrators, and are beginning to create a new paradigm. However, it is early days and the developments are still vulnerable. Naturally, they will not be able to flourish until, and if, there are major shifts in legislation that do away with SATs and league tables primarily (for these are undoubtedly the most constraining factors) and the grip of the national curriculum secondarily.

Let me make it clear that I am not constructing an argument in favour of schools. I have worked in 650 of them over the last fifteen years and they continually generate frustration and anger in me. However, they look as though they are here to stay; you only have to visit the national education shows to appreciate the huge infrastructure that supports them, and the vast range of industries and vested interests that schools serve. The roots of schooling run deep into the fabric of our economic life and will not easily be pulled up. Rather, I am suggesting that a new sense of purpose is beginning to build. Transforming schools (rather than replacing them) does now seem to be a genuine medium-term possibility whereas ten years, even three years, ago I would not have believed it.

This new purpose seems to pivot around learning-to-learn. The idea that students should, above all else, leave school as skilled and motivated learners appeals to just about everybody. Industrialists want it; information technology experts want it (IT provides all the information and skills people could ever want, they just need to know how to use it); the life-long learning people want it; post-16 and post-18 lecturers want it; enlightened politicians want it (though their voices are muted);

free-thinking parents want it; international commentators such as Professor Roland Meighan and John Abbott want it. What is more, independent learning is a natural instinct according to the neuroscientists.

Consequently, learning to learn is at the heart of the Royal Society for the Art's national *Campaign for Learning* (www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk) and the major schools' project that has arisen out of it: the L2L Through Schools Project. The more recent RSA project *Opening Minds* (which reported last June) has gone further and experimented with structural innovations based on an impressive competence-based curriculum; it is now in its second phase (a CD Rom of the project materials can be purchased from the RSA: www.rsa.org.uk/projects/publications.asp). Likewise, in *Building Learning Power* (www.buildinglearningpower.co.uk) Professor Guy Claxton (Bristol) has defined the 4 Rs: Resilience; Resourcefulness; Reflectiveness and Reciprocity – the capabilities and dispositions that people urgently require as our society moves deeper into the 21st century. His work is well received and is currently influencing a number of development projects around the country. Added to this we have the *Critical Skills Programme* from America, a practical in-service training package that shows primary and secondary school teachers how to teach the fixed curriculum in ways that also promote students' essential personal, social and study skills. Almost all of Jersey's teachers, for example, will soon have been through the programme. An increasing number of schools, Simon Balle School in Hertford and Wyvern School in Weston-super-Mare are among them, teach learning-to-learn as a discrete subject; it has its own slot on the timetable. A final example: Villiers High School in Southall is collaborating with Hammersmith Further Education College to create a fully-functional web-based virtual school and, given the early signs, they are hopeful of Government funding. Developments such as these are springing up around the country. It is worthy of note that a good deal of this innovation is being supported by Government through the creation of Networked Learning Communities and the use of Leadership Incentive Grants.

So, the question is not what **are** schools good for, but what **might** they be good for? The trends that I am reporting will be an encouragement to readers of *News and Review*. *Education Now* has served the nation well since its creation just prior to the disastrous Education Reform Act of 1988 and it has been my privilege to be part of the network for most of that time. During the last 16 years it has stuck to and disseminated ideas that have, admittedly, reached only a tiny audience, but it has kept a candle alight. Now mainstream practitioners and thinkers are beginning to turn and face a new direction. It is as if we are, at last, getting back to the starting point and can begin to make some progress once more. Like Professor Roland Meighan, I am waiting for an apology for the national curriculum and its associated measures that have taken us, like the Israelites under Moses, on a long detour through the desert. Also, like Professor Meighan, I would prefer a completely new learning system. But for now I am pleased to see that what we have got, and are likely to have to live with for a while, is getting better.

Paul Ginnis

Paul is author of several books including the best-selling:

Teacher's Toolkit

published by Crown Publishing Ltd.

www.crownhouse,co.uk

Flotsam and Jetsam

Bullying by government watch 1
"Parents booking family holidays are being warned they face penalty fines of up to £100 if they take their children out of school in term time without permission.

"Even first-time offenders could be ordered to pay the spot fines which are being introduced in early spring under the Anti-social Behaviour Act in the wake of a largely unsuccessful £650m campaign to cut truanting. …The former education secretary David Blunkett pledged to cut truancy by a third by 2002, but the target has been scaled down to a 10% reduction by 2004."
in the *Guardian*, 27th December 2003

Bullying by government watch 2
"The modern trend of having a more rigid curriculum and more frequent testing has reduced teachers' ability to meet their classes half way and spend at least part of the time doing things the children want to do. The result is almost constant harassment and hectoring to make the children do well in tests that can have no meaning for them and which are relevant only to the adults who set them.

"Given that coercion and resentment run through almost every aspect of school life, it should not be surprising that they sometimes break out in the form of the pitiless persecution of one child by another. When this happens, it is naïve and unthinking of us to blame the children rather the system in which we have placed them."
in the *Daily Telegraph,* 3rd December 2003

Do not adjust reality, the fault is in your mind …
*"There's an epidemic of drug taking among British schoolchildren. I don't mean ecstasy and cannabis, not even nicotine and alcohol. This is much more serious. I am talking about legally prescribed drugs that affect mind and brain. They are being given by doctors to children as young as two or three years old … Ritalin is an amphetamine-like drug made by the Swiss pharmaceuticals firm Novartis. Presciptions for it, which amounted to no more than a couple of thousand a year in the early 1990s, have soared to more than 120,000 a year today. It is prescribed for a condition known as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) … Just as with depression, there is no biochemical or physiological test for detecting ADHD. The diagnostic signs are for a child to be inattentive or disruptive in class, beyond parental control and generally disorderly. **It is a strange disease, as it often seems to remit in school holidays and at weekends …**

"We are approaching a psycho-civilised society in which social tranquility will be achieved not by changing the world but by tailoring the mind."
Steven Rose in *Red Pepper*, December 2003

Curriculum indigestion?
"The diet of other people's ideas that is fed to so many children is called a curriculum"
　　　　　Life Learning Sept/Oct 2003, p.8.

Bullying by headteacher
"A bullied teacher was this week awarded almost £90,000 in damages in a landmark court case. Judge Brian Knight found Barnet council guilty of failing to perfom a duty of care towards Ms Menzies. He said her treatment by Valerie Hughes, headteacher, amounted to bullying, harassment and an unacceptable way of disccharging her professionsl duties."
　　in *Times Educational Supplement*, 21st Nov. 2003

Government blames TV for bullying
"Education secretary Charles Clarke launched a tough attack on television aimed at children, saying much of it was overly violent, led to bullying in schools and did little to improve Britain's social and educational good."
　　　　in *The Observer*, 28th December 2003

Bullying by government watch 3: paper suffocation
"Like leaves falling from the trees, an avalanche of more than 30 million sheets of paper has been unleashed on schools this term … Is this payback for the long summer holidays? Or a simple exercise in sadism?"
　　in *Times Educational Supplement*, 14th Nov. 2003

Waiting for the crumble
The head of languges at an independent school wrote in the Guardian:
'Schools are now beginning to fail on a breathtaking scale: they produce indifference to learning, fear of knowledge, unhealthy stress and cheating, and dysfunctional relationships in peer groups and across generations.

"Yet we have a remarkable ability to keep going, even when existence is dire and the game is up. Industrial education will crumble as all bad ideas do, because it doesn't fit the way our brain has evolved in its learning patterns."
　in *Schoolhouse Home Education News*, Autumn 2003

Explosive thinking
At a meeting on 8th November 2003, Worcester Parent Partnership group considered ideas for the learning system of the future. The first suggestion offered was *"dynamite all schools"*.
　　　　　　contributed by Iris Harrison

Thirst for beer versus thirst for knowledge?
A study by Amazon co. uk found that students will use 43% of the planned money for books to fund drinking sessions and other extra curriculuar activities.
　　　　　in the *Guardian*, 1st October 2003

A little bit of toast …

"Toast, jam and a bowl of cereal is a more effective truancy deterrent than on-the-spot fines, according to the Welsh Assembly"
　in *Times Educational Supplement*, 24th Oct. 2003

Educational Beachcomber

Book review
Escaping the Circle of Hate
by James Whitehead
Educational Heretics Press, 2003, **84pp**

It is difficult to write a review of a book which is so complimentary about your own work. It would be particularly difficult if it was not a good book. However, this is both a good book and one that tackles a crucial question – how can education contribute to more peaceful societies? The book quotes Dr.Jonathan Sachs : *"Armies win wars but it takes education to make peace".* James Whitehead notes that his background in both education and the military offers him an opportunity to contribute from a unique perspective. As somebody who works in the field of education for democracy peace and whose only brother is a senior military officer, I can only agree that this provides an advantageous combination that is used to good effect.

However, as the author points out, before education can help to break the circle of hate, it has got to actually stop actively contributing to it. The book cites a number of examples of how education systems can do this and is to be commended for this. I have today been to yet another speech by a politician where education (schooling) was treated unproblematically as a 'good thing'. Yet education can be used for good or evil purposes and can do great harm as a glance at the recent history of education in Bosnia, South Africa, Cyprus and Rwanda will tell you. Education *per se* is a tool and its use depends on the goals of those who control it. Whitehead argues that education must set itself the goal of sustainable peace, a goal of education taken nowhere seriously enough globally at the moment.

Chapters two and three provide an interesting overview of various theories of international relations and relates them to congruent theories of education. The author concludes that only critical theory and progressive education, as exemplified by the work of Paulo Freire, can help to break the circle of hate via a threefold strategy in schools of peacekeeping, peacemaking and peacebuilding.

Chapter Four is entitled *This Side of the Grave : Britain – a pre-conflict Case Study*. In this chapter he examines the introduction of 'citizenship' into the curriculum in England as an almost fearful response to perceived alienation and cynicism among young people. As he points out, while citizenship education is a welcome recognition that education should be more than just a tool

of the economy, it singularly fails to explicitly promote a culture of peace and non-violence. This is an important omission, it is argued, as a proclivity to violence is not biologically determined but is a result of social learning and a resulting sense of personal identity and the identity of others. Conversely, skills of peaceful conflict resolution are also learnt through experience and there is too little emphasis on them both in England and elsewhere.

Chapter Five *The Far Side of Revenge : Northern Ireland a Post-Conflict Case Study* is another reminder that the UK is not immune from violent conflict. The chapter opens with a song from the musical *South Pacific* by Rogers and Hammerstein which I was not aware of but is so appropriate that I thought it worth repeating here in full,

You've got to be taught to hate and fear
You've got to be taught from year to year
Its got to be drummed in your dear little ear
You've got to be carefully taught

You've got to be taught to be afraid
Of people whose eyes are oddly made
And people whose skin is a different shade
You've got to be carefully taught

You've got to be taught before its too late
Before you are six or seven or eight
To hate all the people your relatives hate
You've got to be carefully taught
You've got to be carefully taught

There follows an interesting discussion of the role of formal education in perpetuating and deepening the conflict in Northern Ireland. One figure from the 2001 census – 68% of 18-25 year-olds in Northern Ireland have never had a meaningful discussion with anyone from the other community. The chapter provides a useful introduction to the history of the divide and also discusses positive initiatives that have taken place in education – integrated education and education for mutual understanding. The book ends with good summary discussions of the following points:

- The nature of conflict and its resolution is multi-faceted
- Identity can be both positive and negative
- Education can be both good and bad
- People's attitudes can change for the better
- There are things that education can do to improve conflict situations

Overall, this is a realistic and thoughtful book that asks fundamental questions about the role of education in global society and faces up to some unpalatable truths as well as making good suggestions about more positive ways forward. It is the sort of book that all initial teacher education students ought to read and discuss before they

embark on their career because it raises many important, basic questions. That this is actually unlikely raises even more questions about control of initial teacher education and the nature of teaching in many countries and contexts.

Clive Harber

Learning Exchange – 4th April *'Learning and Teaching Without Schools'*

The next *Learning Exchange* will take place on Sunday 4th April 2004 at **Burleigh Community College, Loughborough.** Its focus will be a consideration of what education could be like in 2020. The idea of learning and teaching without schools carries many vital ideas, which deserve closer critical examination. We invite you to participate in this debate and to consider its relevance for education planning and finance.

John Adcock's book, *Teaching Tomorrow*, provides one context for the debate, and in it John draws attention to the current lack of a genuine professional role for teachers who are presently no more than members of a 'Qualifying Association':

"During the 1870s and 1880s industrialising countries developed systems of elementary education that would ensure functional literacy and numeracy. This call for entire populations to be competent in the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic came, in the main, from five areas of 19th century life.

- *First was that of industry and commerce: the whole world of work.*
- *Second was the slow but steady progression of democracy.*
- *Third, the churches - long to the fore in the elementary education of working-class children - sought a literate population able to read the Bible and understand its teachings.*
- *Fourth, a widening band of social reformers saw the acquisition of literacy and numeracy by lower social groups as a precursor to further education and to greater equality of opportunity in later life*
- *Fifth, many of those who appreciated the value of literature in their own lives wanted all young people to enjoy not only the masterpieces of the past but the novels, poems and plays emanating from the growing number of able, perceptive, free-thinking contemporary writers.*

"Thus for a variety of reasons, the late 19th century saw the first of a series of education acts passed by various governments. These paved the way for compulsory, school-based education for all children between the approximate ages of five and twelve. From the time of these early education acts and until the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 in Britain and the

Commonwealth and 1917 in the USA this basic provision was establishing itself in all industrialized states. The school-based system was secured.

*"This system legalized the daily removal of children from their homes so that they could be taught for scheduled periods of time in specially-constructed and publicly-maintained buildings known as 'schools'. In these places a standardised curriculum was followed and the soundness of its inculcation was externally assessed. The teachers responsible for the work were not chosen by parents, children were allocated to schools and classes by educational administrators many of whom lived and worked at a considerable distance from the schools. The teachers were not members of the child's family and often knew little of the family's intimate background. **The teacher's principal role was that of paid instructor. As such, it could not be regarded as a professional one and its relatively low status was set for many decades ahead."***   (Edited extracts from *Teaching Tomorrow*)

Drinks will be available from **11am** and the *Learning Exchange* will begin at **11.30** with a break for lunch about **12.45**. Members and friends of *Education Now* are invited to this event, which is **free of charge.** (A voluntary collection will offset cost of drinks) Members and friends are asked to bring their own lunches, although drinks will be provided.

(If you would like to attend contact Janet at 113 Arundel Drive, Bramcote, Nottingham NG9 3FQ   Telephone 0115 925 7261)

One member's campaigning continues

A second public consultation exercise is in progress in Scotland to do with school inspection. Maurice Frank has been active in preparing a submission on the issue of participation by children in decision-making and on the theme of enforced, uninvited homework. He writes that school inspection has to identify both errors of action, such as enforced homework, and inaction, such as failing to have appropriate participation procedures. One preventative measure is to include children in decisions over their own lives, with their own say between options. Another is to entitle them to raise concerns with all levels of monitoring in schools and be entitled to have a response to them included in inspections.

Homework is an offence against humanity, Maurice writes. (Debates in Parliament in the early part of the 20th century came to the same conclusion. Later Parliaments, however, voted to copy the methods of Prussian-type schooling.) He writes from personal experience: *"The most seriously life-damaging loss caused by irrational homework, was loss of my chance to make it as a child author."* He proposes that a generation of child authors may have been lost as a result. No school practices should prevent children from having enough time under their own control to develop as child authors, or whatever.

If you ask teachers why they do what they do they often reply that they want to give youngsters a chance to do well in the future - to succeed in fulfilling more of their potential and having a happy, productive life. So did I, and the generation of teachers who started with me. It did not take long for us to find that something else was happening as well. Certainly, some of our pupils were learning more or less enthusiastically, the scraps of knowledge we pushed their way, and since I started my career teaching in a grammar school, we seemed to be making solid progress. Any resistance I met from the pupils I put down to immaturity and natural naughtiness. Yet even then I noticed that as the boys grew older they also became less curious, less sociable and more hostile to learning. If education was supposed to expand intellectual horizons, it did not seem to be delivering the goods.

I remember reading Everett Reimer's book in the sixties, when I was laying the foundations of a career in teaching, and being struck by the good common sense it contained. He pointed out that schools had become, in practice, the only way to impart knowledge to young learners. Even developing nations, which might have been expected to look to their own traditions for a pattern of education, have adopted the western, European model lock, stock and barrel. It is almost as if schooling were a sacred ritual, only questioned by heretics whose souls were damned. Yet the effect of schooling was to perpetuate social divisions, to divide society into the worthy and the unworthy, the academic and the more or less 'dim'. The latter group could look forward to lives and careers which most people, including themselves, would see as representing failure. Schools taught what teachers thought needed teaching. Because they were teacher-centred they had no place in them for children's insights and points of view. They were, and remain, Society's guarantee that new ideas, initiatives with unforeseeable consequences, counter-cultural enthusiasms and that great source of peril to good order, the natural spontaneity of youth, would be stifled. They would not show themselves when the next generation received its birthright of adult status and such influence as might be theirs when they got the vote.

Reimer's analysis of schooling (1971) might be taxed with the brand of sixties revolutionary thought which many assume has since been discredited. I would disagree. Although he sees schools as a natural prop for privilege, he observes that they persist in states where privilege has, nominally at least, been overthrown. Cuba still has them, though it has set itself to extend humane care throughout its borders, to the very poorest as well as the relatively well off. It is, of course, the authoritarian nature of old-fashioned Marxist revolutionaries that makes schooling so attractive, as well as the simple fact that if you have as your task to 'process' large numbers of people, standardised procedures and mass, compulsory groupings are the least expensive and easiest to account for. Since all

modern states have to have some sort of policy for their young, it is not difficult to understand why few of them, if

any, have turned their back on the economically seductive methods of school-based education.

Nevertheless, Reimer insists, schooling is mortally dangerous to the most fundamental health of society. It segregates, divides, and embitters Society. We cannot hope to have a community in which everyone cooperates harmoniously as long as practically everyone involved in it has gone through a competitive pursuit of knowledge, not because of the interest it might have for them individually, but for the status its possession confers, and the implicit right of those who have it to lord it over those who do not.

We shall find survival difficult, Reimer insists, if we do not radically reform education, not only in the developed Western states, but all over the world. We need to create people who have control over their own education, and who see no need to stratify society according to narrow academic criteria. Given absolute power over education, he would begin by diversifying educational resources and the contexts in which learning is allowed to take place. That would necessitate giving everyone equal access to everything in the world of learning. Individual learning accounts could be created which would be refinanced at various stages in a person's life, so that no-one would have to feel that their days of learning were over.

"Some true educational experiences are bound to occur in schools. They occur, however, despite and not because of school." Everett Reimer

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It would be necessary to dethrone the traditional standards by which school-work has always been judged. It would no longer be possible to heap praise upon people who were able to succeed in certain kinds of book-learning, while decrying the ones who could not grasp the finer points of academic work, but who might, if given the chance, become really good at something for which the traditional school has no place in its curriculum. We must strive, Reimer maintains, for a world in which everyone is valued equally, and given equal opportunities to find and develop his or her own set of interests.

Such a world would be dangerous for governors. People who are used to thinking for themselves are difficult to bamboozle, and are not over-receptive to demagogues or spin-doctors. Yet it is clear to me, as it was to him long before the infamous massacre of 9/11, that traditional schools produce embittered zealots and purblind martyrs as often as they do wise men and great scholars. We may need the latter, but the former are a frightful blight on our world. Anything which tends to engender them deserves to be cast aside as quickly and effectively as possible.

Chris Shute

The Whistleblowers: Max van Manen

I first came across Max van Manen's inspiring work when researching the issue of subtlety in teaching and in the learning experience more generally. Early in the previous century, the educationalist Rudolf Steiner had a lot of what were, then, quite new insights into the key place of subtlety in learning; and in van Manen's work we find perhaps the only concerted modern attempt to give this question the attention it deserves,.

Max van Manen is a professor in the Department of Secondary Education at the University of Alberta in Edmonton. Prior to undertaking an academic career, he received his teacher preparation in the Netherlands and taught for a number of years in the Canadian public school system. On his website, his research interests are listed as including: the epistemology of professional practice, the pedagogy of recognition, childhood's secrets, teacher education, the phenomenology of the body in illness and health, curriculum theory and pedagogical studies, and human science research methodology. He teaches courses in qualitative research, pedagogy, and curriculum studies, regularly conducting workshops and presentations.

Van Manen has written a number of deeply insightful books on what I call '*pedagogical subtlety*' – the kind of subtleties which are notably absent, or at best neglected, in mainstream educational thinking and practice with its crass positivism and utilitarianism. He is the founding editor of the journal *Phenomenological Pedagogy*. His two major studies, *The Tone of Teaching* (1986) and *The Tact of Teaching* (1991) are goldmines of wisdom and insight on the 'soul-subtleties' of teaching as practice and experience.

Van Manen's main theoretical influences were Hans-Georg Gadamer, Jürgen Habermas, and the Utrecht School of pedagogy and Martinus J. Langeveld. In defining 'pedagogy', van Manen immediately distinguishes himself from the empiricist objectivist conception of teaching with its naïve and delusionary certainty of tightly bound and stable categories. If we are open and undefended we *necessaril*y begin to question and, in a very real sense, for him pedagogy *is* this questioning and self-doubting.

Van Manen's phenomenological approach is also of a quintessentially 'new paradigm' nature, being a fully participative and child-centred experience. This pedagogical approach supports and assists the child in exploring the rich meanings and possible ways-of-being in the world. Thus, rather than setting out manipulatively to control the world (as in technocratic objectivism), the sensitive phenomenologist offers the possibility of in-touch contact with, and full participation

in, the 'life-world'. In short, this approach stresses sensitivity and openness to existential experience.

Van Manen is in agreement with, for example, Steiner and Donald Winnicott on the dangers of adult-centric over-intrusion (or impingement) into the child's internal world: as he has written so incisively (with Levering), "*complete supervision and control over the child's (inner and outer) space is not only undesirable but even impossible… If we constantly must know what preoccupies the inner life of the child, this could frustrate the growth of a unique self*".

Van Manen's book *The Tone of Teaching* is full of wisdom about an attuned pedagogy's intangible subtleties – which Steiner himself referred to as its 'imponderables'. Some adults seem to be able quite naturally to strike the correct tone in their relating with children – as he writes, "*Thoughtfulness, tactfulness, is a peculiar quality that has as much to do with what we are as with what we do. It is a knowledge that issues from the heart as well as from the head… And unfortunately (or fortunately) there are no rules that will ensure the right kind of thoughtfulness and tact. Pedagogic thoughtfulness is sustained by a certain kind of seeing, of listening, of responding.*"

"*The theoretical language of child 'science' so easily makes us look past each child's uniqueness toward common characteristics that allow us to group, sort, sift, measure, manage and respond to children in preconceived ways.*"

For van Manen, becoming a truly authentic teacher entails a profound process of humanistic personal growth, education and the development of thoughtfulness: for him, "'*Pedagogic thoughtfulness and tact are not simply a set of external skills to be acquired in a workshop*". In sum, teaching is seen as being far more than the dutiful execution of technical acts: it involves an improvisational thoughtfulness involving "*the corporeal being of the person; an active sensitivity toward the subjectivity of the other*". Certainly, it is difficult to overestimate the importance of these rich ideas for *a living art of teaching* – an art that is being systematically deadened by the soulless technocratic forces which have colonised mainstream education in recent years.

Quotations

- Questions are impossibly curious (precocious) when they hurry the child too hastily into a premature grasping of phenomena for which a child is simply not ready.
- True pedagogy requires an attentive attunement of one's whole being to the child's experience of the world… One cannot adequately observe children without reflecting on the way one looks at them… Real seeing… uses more than eye… I see the child with my body…
- The importance of the experience of privacy for the development of personal identity or inner self makes the need for privacy, in our culture, a pedagogical requirement…The inner secret of any child… is testimony to the child's personhood, the child's unique self.
- Methods … of teaching cannot be adequately described by external knowledge… Teacher competency has more to do with pedagogical tactfulness, having a sensitivity to what is best for each child …
- The 'administrative' and 'technological' have so penetrated the very lifeblood of our existence that parents and

- teachers are in danger of forgetting a certain other type of understanding…
- The way we understand our children is a telltale of the way we understand ourselves. We truly open ourselves to a child's way of being when we are able to experience openness ourselves. The child needs that openness… As teachers we need that openness to be what we are…

Richard House

Education Now Education, conflict and the search for peace

The formal system of education, i.e. schooling, through which most people pass, is a powerful socialising force transmitting the values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours of society from one generation to the next. It is by no means the only agent of socialisation, but alongside the family, peer groups, and in some cases religion, it has a powerful impact.

The depressing reality of course is that its influence is not always benign; schooling is merely a tool and its application depends upon those who control it in a particular environment. It is no coincidence that in countries which experience conflict or war, the educational establishment is often one of the first targets for destruction. In Rwanda UN agencies and aid workers described how, during the genocide, schools, colleges and universities, were among the first to be attacked.

Totalitarian systems provide the most obvious example of the malign influence of education. In Hitler's view, education was about rearing healthy bodies and developing 'war-worthy qualities of character': loyalty, courage, endurance, obedience and willing self-sacrifice. The educational system became entirely subordinate to Nazi ideology and helped reinforce its repugnant values. It should, therefore, come as no surprise that in the aftermath of the recent war in Iraq the US Agency for International Development (USAid) has made clear its intention to purge Saddam from the Iraqi education system.

> Totalitarian systems provide the most obvious example of the malign influence of education.

The capacity of formal education to destabilise a regime has been particularly prominent since the terrorist attacks of September 11th, with a growing recognition of the threat posed by a radical minority of Islamic schools. In a report earlier this year the Singaporean authorities blamed the spread of radical Islam on militant Arab foundations that run schools and mosques in the city-state.

In neighbouring Indonesia the majority of the best-known Muslim militants are known to have studied overseas, attending Islamic boarding schools in Pakistan or the Middle East. Upon returning to South-East Asia some of these militants set up their own

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schools with similar agendas. Several of the suspects in the Bali bombing went to such a school in Malaysia, where they acquired their radical ideas and possibly their terrorist directives.

In the Middle East the Israelis have also expressed concerns about education as they make the first tentative moves along the 'Road-Map' toward peace with the Palestinians. Alongside insistence that the Palestinian Authority disarm the radicals is a stipulation that they curb anti-Jewish incitement in the Palestinian media, mosques and schools.

Yet paradoxically, the fact that education has been used successfully to legitimise authoritarian regimes and fuel violent conflict should give us hope that it can also be used for more positive ends; UNESCO certainly believe so. In its 1998 Handbook, co-published with the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), it stated that *"education is at the heart of any strategy for the construction of a culture of peace. It is through formal education that the broadest possible introduction can be provided to the values, skills and knowledge which form the basis of respect for peace, human rights and democratic principles".* The question, of course, is whether this optimistic belief is justified. Conflict is part of the human condition, but is it possible to educate people in such a way that they will resolve their disputes peacefully without recourse to violence?

Nature or nurture?

Identifying the root cause of violence is a subject of considerable controversy, but essentially it is a question of nature or nurture. For supporters of a cultural determinant reducing violence to genetic inheritance raises two unsavoury implications: that people cannot help being violent and that certain ethnic groups may be more predisposed towards violence than others. The damning corollary is that social programmes, such as education, designed to address the external causes of violent behaviour, such as poverty, inequality, ignorance and discrimination, are largely irrelevant. In short, violence cannot be eradicated and we must instead do our best to contain it with punitive measures of deterrence.

The modern debate can be traced back to the opposing theories of human nature propounded by Hobbes and Rousseau. By the period immediately following the Second World War the hypothesis that violence is taught behaviour, the product of culture and endemic to certain environments, had gained the upper hand. Statements by UNESCO, anthropologists and scientists supported a widespread belief that violence is learned from sources such as war-toys, violence in the media, childhood abuse and cultural beliefs about masculinity. Yet from the 1950s onwards, scientific advances in the study of the mind began to challenge these assumptions.

> Conflict is part of the human condition, but is it possible to educate people in such a way that they will resolve their disputes peacefully without recourse to violence?

Cognitive science demonstrated that information processing within the brain is a physical process and that something must be innate within the brain, even if it is only the mechanism that enables us to learn. Neuroscience showed us that mental activity is physiological and therefore not infinitely malleable. Behavioural genetics established that thinking, feeling and learning lies buried in our genes. Finally, evolutionary psychology recognized that our emotions, like the mechanical development of flight, are a product of evolution; they have emerged in particular circumstances and are supported by a range of cognitive and emotional faculties.

Further evidence that suggests we have evolved mechanisms for violence can be found in deliberate 'chimpicide' in our chimpanzee cousins; the ubiquity of violence in human societies throughout history and pre-history; muscular bodies designed for aggression; rough and tumble play amongst children; and the fact that toddlers behave violently toward one another well before they are subjected to the supposedly malign influence of war toys and aggressive media stereotypes. None of this, however, should lead us to believe that it is a zero-sum game. A belief in inborn differences need not foster racism nor should it weaken support for social programmes. Not one of these scientific disciplines is suggesting that culture and environment are irrelevant. Instead, innate strategies for violence appear to be contingent. People are prepared for violence but only act upon those inclinations in particular circumstances. The question, therefore, should not be why does violence occur or how do children learn to be aggressive, but why is violence avoided and how do children learn not to be aggressive? The answer appears to be two-fold: on the one hand punitive deterrence, which holds our genetic impulse for violence in check, and on the other, support for our complementary impulse to cooperate.

Peter Singer, author of *The Expanding Circle*, shows how human nature is compatible with social and moral progress. Singer argues that people have steadily expanded the mental dotted line that embraces the entities considered worthy of consideration. The circle has been driven outward from the family and village to the clan, the tribe, the nation, the race and most recently, however tenuously, to all of humanity in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In evolutionary terms this can be explained by three factors: the development of the cognitive capacity to figure out how the world works, which yields knowledge worth sharing and consequently an incentive to trade; the development of language, which allows knowledge and technology to be shared, bargains to be struck and agreements to be enforced;

and finally, the development of an emotional repertoire – sympathy, trust, anger, guilt - that allows us to maintain relationships and safeguard against possible exploitation. Thus our mental circle of respect-worthy persons expands alongside our physical circle of allies and trading partners.

However, while evolution may be the ultimate cause of the expanding circle, sympathy and trust can be further enhanced by new kinds of information, for instance that other people are similar to one's self. Knowledge of the historical record can warn against self-defeating cycles of vendetta and a cosmopolitan awareness may increase empathy. In other words, evolution has endowed all human beings, with the exception of psychopaths, with a moral sense and the circle of its application has expanded over the course of history through reason (grasping the logical inter-changeability of our interests and others), knowledge (learning the advantages of cooperation over the long term) and sympathy (having experiences that allow us to feel other people's pain). What is required are mechanisms to generate these positive processes.

Educational mechanisms

In the post-Cold War era the international community has increasingly recognised the need to address issues of peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance. UN Resolution 46/182 created guidelines for an international mandate that would provide *"a continuum of action from early warning prevention and preparedness to humanitarian relief and the transition to rehabilitation and relief"*. While at first no clear reference was made to the role of education in this continuum, UNESCO, UNICEF and UNHCR have since become strong advocates of the belief that emergency humanitarian assistance cannot be reduced to merely the supply of food, medicine and blankets and that it must involve a local education component that will contribute toward long-term development.

The foundation for this rapid re-establishment of basic education is two-fold: the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which stipulates the right to universal free and compulsory education, and the growing conviction that the incorporation of educational programmes into emergency relief efforts will help stabilise the long-term development of societies in crisis situations. Education has been identified as one of the most immediate ways of helping children, affected by conflict, to regain parts of their lost childhood and to facilitate the experiences that support healthy social, emotional and intellectual growth and development. Education in this context can also be seen as a long-term strategy for conflict prevention, especially if concepts and practices of education for peace form the bases of new curricula, textbooks and teacher development.

UNESCO's strategy, in conjunction with UNICEF and UNHCR, endeavours to provide temporary educational structures in emergency situations, particularly for displaced persons and refugees. Although such intervention is still in its infancy a broad framework of three phases has been

developed, which were described in UNHCR guidelines in 1995:

- First phase: recreational/preparatory
- Second phase: non-formal schooling
- Third phase: re-introduction of the curriculum

The first phase is concerned with encouraging children to play. The importance of play for the development of children is widely recognised and is of even greater importance during stressful periods, because it allows children to relate to events around them and to express their feelings about these events. One of the earliest signs of emotional disturbance in a child is the inability to mix and play with contemporaries. The aim therefore is to encourage self-expression through different activities, thereby assisting children to recover their psycho-social well-being. The second phase is designed to provide children with basic literacy, numeracy and life-skills education pending the restoration of normal schooling. The involvement of humanitarian agencies in this phase is important since it discourages the dissemination of political messages to children and young adults through education. A vital component of this stage is training teachers to convey skills of cooperation, conflict resolution and reconciliation.

The final phase involves the re-introduction of the curriculum. It refers to a normalised classroom environment, where schools try to operate a regular timetable, incorporating most school subjects and using textbooks. Ideally, in refugee situations, the curriculum and language instruction should be that of the refugees' country or area of origin.

This basic core of responses is then supplemented with 'emergency themes', which aim to offer a 'basic safety net of knowledge and understanding', including mine-awareness education, health education, environmental awareness and education for peace and reconciliation.

> The difficulty with specific schemes for peace and reconciliation is that there is no common understanding as to what constitutes peace education and therefore its content varies depending upon the culture and the context.

These 'themes', as well as being extremely important in their own right, can also generate a desire for peace and reconciliation from the active realisation of the perils left by the conflict, such as land mines, cholera, famine, HIV/AIDS etc. In other words they link peoples' experience of the humanitarian crisis with its causes and offer peace and reconciliation as a way out.

The difficulty with specific schemes for peace and reconciliation is that there is no common understanding as to what constitutes peace education and therefore its content varies depending upon the culture and the context. Equally, there is no common strategy for implementing it. Nonetheless, by focusing upon the overall aim and then breaking the process of reconciliation into a series of stages it is possible to discern a broad framework.

In *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies,* John Paul Lederach focuses upon the continuing relationship between the parties in a conflict, based upon the observation that *"there will always be conflicts that arise within a relationship; the important thing is the way in which the parties respond to the conflicts when they do arise. The goal of peacemaking and reconciliation efforts... must be to transform a polarised, acrimonious relationship into a more collaborative one in which dialogue and mutual acknowledgement are present."*

In a paper for Bradford University's Department of Peace Studies Laura Stovel suggested three stages to this process, which can be described in terms of the relationship existing at the time and educational activities that may therefore be suitable. The purpose of the educational programmes at each stage is to help the process of transformation, by preparing people for the next stage. They are as follows:
- Stage 1 – Divided/no dialogue
- Stage 2 – Dialogue
- Stage 3 – Truth-telling

In stage one, where there is a lack of inter-communal dialogue, the aim is to prepare people for such dialogue by addressing the thinking and trauma that led to the breakdown in dialogue. This involves intra-communal efforts to deal with trauma, efforts to address bigotry and de-humanisation, and the first tentative meetings between people from the conflicting sides, the hope being that as they share their experiences of loss and pain that they will begin to see each other as fellow human beings once more. The second stage aims at specifically educating about prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination. This should help participants to critically examine their own roles and take responsibility for them. The final stage works at three levels: it helps people to solve problems collaboratively; it supports information-sharing mech-anisms and promotes a shared view of the history of the war; and finally it encourages understanding of 'common sense' or hegemonic ways of thinking that lead to the construction of negative attitudes toward the 'other'. The point is that by opening up these accepted views to questioning it renders them visible. It is important to note that while efforts in stages 2 and 3 would be fruitless or even counterproductive in the initial stage, elements of the first stage, such as trauma healing may continue to be important throughout the process.

Education to avoid conflict

It would of course be far better to avoid violent conflict in the first place. Efforts to prevent or defuse tension prior to the eruption of hostilities would cost far less in both human and material terms. The British government's response to worrying signs of political alienation and cynicism among young people in Britain is instructive in this regard. Concerned that young people are becoming disengaged from public life, and that this has led at the very least to political apathy if not general lawlessness and violence, the government has adopted a wide range of measures. Of particular

interest are the introduction of police into some school grounds and citizenship education into the school curriculum. Referring back to the nature verses nurture debate it can be seen that these two policies are two sides of the same coin. The former seeks to address violence through punitive deterrence, while the latter hopes to appeal to young people's inclination to cooperate and feel compassion. However, while it is clear that citizenship education seeks to promote democracy, human rights, sustainable development, equality, understanding, tolerance, and participatory commun-ication, there is a crucial omission, namely the explicit promotion of non-violent conflict resolution.

If it is to be successful the principles and practices of non-violence should be integrated into every aspect of the curriculum, pedagogy and activities, including the organisational and decision-making structure of the educational institution. For example, in the history curriculum the effective use of non-violence is largely ignored. History is taught as the history of wars, with each war in European history being distinguished by a specific label: the Napoleonic War, the First World War, and the Gulf War. Yet peace, with the odd exception, is given only one name. Peace is only likely to become more important to us when we describe it in as much detail as we do war. That is not to denigrate the self-sacrifice of the men and women who have suffered and died in war, but the present focus appears to deny that other traditions are possible. It is not enough however, just to tell children that there is an alternative to violent conflict and furnish them with historical examples; non-violent conflict resolution is learned as much by experience as by hearing or reading about it. The success of peace education can perhaps be judged more by the way pupils behave towards one another in the schoolyard than by the amount of learning they are able to reproduce in the classroom.

> Peace is only likely to become more important to us when we describe it in as much detail as we do war.

Though not yet adopted by the Government, elements of this practical approach can be observed in an increasing number of schools in Britain and internationally. In Britain 'Peer Support Schemes' encourage pupils of various ages volunteer to be trained to give educational and emotional support and friendship to their fellows. The help ranges from one-to-one aid for bullies and the bullied, assertiveness training, a break-time drop-in centre for those on their own, playground befriending, and buddying for new pupils, to paired reading and a homework clubs. Not only does this scheme offer support to those children in need, but it also helps build the confidence and life-skills of those who offer their help. Significantly, in schools that have adopted this idea, the number of angry conflicts in the playground has reduced dramatically.

Internationally an increasing number of schools are implementing peer mediation schemes to help resolve conflict. The challenge is to teach children how to deal constructively with conflict and hopefully in a way that will transform the participants and teach them something not only about the other person's perspective but also about their own.

The role of the mediator, who is described as an impartial third party, provides a context in which conflicting parties have an opportunity to speak and be heard. He or she may offer suggestions for a possible outcome, but will leave the final resolution entirely in the hands of the conflicting parties themselves. The actual process of mediation varies depending upon the setting, but the aim is to engage the parties in a constructive dialogue where the conflict is viewed as a common problem whose resolution will be of benefit to both parties.

The process is designed to increase empathy between the parties and lead them to understand both sides of the problem: to see that many problems are not based so much on 'truth' as on 'perceptions', and that an appreciation of those perceptions may lead the parties to a greater chance of resolution.

Summary

No one is suggesting that formal education is a universal panacea. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that even if it were possible to solve the structural, economic, political and social causes of war the hatred and fear generated before and during hostilities would remain. Since its inception UNESCO has recognised that education is a vital tool in our efforts to promote peace, yet agreement on this proposition has been far from universal. There are those who see no hope for education at all. They believe that our aggressive and competitive nature is genetically determined and consequently dominates our impulses. In truth, it appears more likely that while violence remains an important factor determining human behaviour, it is by no means the only aspect. We are as much creatures of compassion and empathy as we are creatures of violence and aggression.

However, while acknowledging that education can play a part in building peace, we must also recognise that education is merely a tool, one that can also be used to promote the darker side of human nature. Nazi Germany was a prime example: a state that used education to reinforce its militaristic, racist and nationalistic values.

> We are as much creatures of compassion and empathy as we are creatures of violence and aggression.

At the other end of the spectrum, education can be hijacked by extreme elements within a society in their efforts to destabilise a state for their own ends. A positive interpretation of this latter process may be that education is being used to expose inequities and injustice within the state, but however noble the cause violent conflict may be

inevitable. Whatever the rights and wrongs, the power of education in these circumstances should give us hope that it can equally encourage non-violent conflict resolution.

By identifying and promoting education as a key component of emergency humanitarian assistance, UNESCO has expanded the range of positive educational initiatives to the point where it is possible to envisage educational intervention both during and after conflict. Furthermore, taking examples from within British schools, it is clear that much can be done to avoid violent conflict in the first place. In sum, the relationship between education and conflict is richer and more complex than previously imagined, and, alongside other measures, it can be seen to have an important role to play in preventing and resolving violent conflict.

James Whitehead

Details of Major James Whitehead's book,
Escaping the Circle of Hate: the role of education in building sustainable peace
were circulated with *News and Review 42*.

Copies cost £10-00 (p.& p. included) from: Educational Heretics Press, 113 Arundel Drive, Bramcote Hills, Nottingham NG9 3FQ telephone 0115 925 7261