

Have your head in the clouds and your feet on the ground

"Is it going to be possible to adjust traditional school education to satisfy the pupils - or should we think about replacing it with something altogether different?"

"The true learning society we all seek will require a new breed of teachers - more like guides than instructors, more part-time than full-time, more philosophers than pedagogues."

Sir Christopher Ball, Director of Learning, Royal Society of Arts, in RSA Journal, December 1995

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It might be that Sir Christopher Ball, Professor Roland Meighan, Don Glines, Philip Toogood, Edward Fiske and John Adcock (to name but a few) are right. It might be the case that schools will, inevitably, be replaced by a much more flexible set of learning arrangements.

The more who see this as desirable, the quicker the pace of change will be. Yet there are many who, for one reason or another, resist the idea. Some are opposed in principle, others feel overwhelmed by the enormity of the task. Some find it impossible to imagine that such an established institution as 'the school' could ever be dismantled, others are nervous that they personally will not be able to operate in the new mode.

In my own view, the dynamics of change are such that the vision of educational reconstruction which appears to be gaining ground in influential circles will not become a reality for some time. Considerable numbers of people with both the commitment *and* the power will be needed. However, the revolutionising impact of information technology and the pressing demands of emergent living and working patterns will, I'm sure, force the issue in the end.

For the time being we will have to make the best of things. To this end it is encouraging to see some schools thinking creatively, even radically, about ways of raising achievement. The Ferrers School in Northamptonshire is one. Others are revising their view of teacher-student relationships - the Harwich School for example. Some schools are currently keen to broaden their repertoire of teaching styles. The Blue School in Somerset is a case in point. Others, such as Birmingham's Catholic Primary Schools, are exploring non-punitive behaviour strategies.

The developments in these schools (with which I am currently involved) are in the direction of what I call student-centred practice. Such thinking, rooted in humanistic psychology, accommodates learners' preferred learning styles and dominant forms of intelligence. The practice seeks to enhance self-esteem and to share as much responsibility with learners as developing awareness and skills will allow.

A commitment to these ideas is already to be found in many nursery schools, yet is seldom built on in later years. At junior and secondary stages student-centred work can begin in individual classrooms, but sooner or later whole-school implications have to be addressed (as the Radclyffe School in Oldham has been attempting). Beyond this, changes to 'the system' are demanded.

Student-centred thinking, taken to its conclusion, leads to the vision of educational reconstruction now offered by Sir Christopher Ball, the vision upheld by Education Now. In the interim there is much to be done to bridge the gap between such vision and perceived day-to-day reality. Fortunately, there are increasing numbers of teachers and head teachers who are wanting to do just that, to take achievable steps in the 'right' direction. Education Now is happy to support them.

Living with the shifting balance (at times, the shifting tension) between future ideas and present constraints is the art of change. As an old preacher friend of mine used to say, "*live with your head in the clouds and your feet are on the ground*". This uncomfortable posture is, of course, preferable to keeping your head in the sand.

Paul Ginnis

The next Education Now gathering:

A Learning Exchange Day

is on Saturday 16th March 1996, 10-30 a.m. to 4-00 p.m.
at the East Midlands Flexi College, Monk Street, Tutbury,
North Staffordshire

Cost £5-00 (bring packed lunch or use local pubs)

Details available from the Education Now office

News Flash:

Danger: democracy still catching on

"Democracy is not what we have. It's what we do."

(From *Doing Democracy* Winter 1995)

"Traditionally, we have assumed that democracy is what we have and information is what we need. In fact, information is what we have - it is everywhere - and democracy is what we need."

(Jay Rosen in *Doing Democracy* Winter 1995)

"Overall, achievement increased by almost 20% for high ability students, and by 4% for average ability students. High achievers benefited from providing explanations to their partners ..."

(From 'The Effects of Co-operative Learning and Learner Control on High and Average Ability Students' in *Educational Technology: Research and Development* Vol. 41, No.2, pp. 5-18)

Diary Date: November 1996 Conference

Following the success of our two outstanding November Conferences last year, we shall be meeting at the same venue, The International Co-operative College, Stanford Hall, north of Loughborough, on Saturday November 9th for a day conference on learner-managed learning and creativity. We are inviting keynote speakers Paul Ginnis and Anna Craft, and planning workshops on such themes as dyslexia, creative mathematics, co-operative learning, and home-educating for flexibility and imagination. Cost as before £40 (£35 to Education Now Support Group Members)

Esperanto

UNESCO has passed resolutions advocating that Esperanto be taught as the international second language in 1954, 1986, and 1993. An EEC Committee last year came a similar conclusion for the EEC countries because the translation bill is now a huge item on the community's budget and increasing with every new member. The new millennium is likely to see Esperanto officially established at last. It is estimated that you can learn Esperanto five times more easily than other languages, and controlled experiments showed that children who learn it, learn other languages much more easily. A Japanese visitor confirmed this and said that despite spending many more hours learning English, he felt much more at ease speaking Esperanto.

Education Now has its own resource in Bryn Purdy who used to run the British Centre for Esperanto at Belper.

Episode 1 - The animals and the birds

The animals and birds decided to create a school. The subjects would be climbing, flying, running, swimming and digging. They could not agree on which was most important, so they said: "Everyone must do everything".

The **rabbits** were expert at running, but some nearly drowned in the swimming class. The experience shook their confidence and they could no longer run as well as before.

The **eagles** were terrific at flying, but very poor at digging and were assigned to a digging remediation class. This took up more and more time, and some forgot how to fly well. And so on, and so on, with the other animals and birds. The birds and animals no longer had the opportunity to shine in their best areas because they were all forced to do things that did not respect their individual natures.

Is this what we are doing with our children? Shouldn't we let eagles get on with flying?

(adapted from a story reported in the book by Thomas Armstrong (1987) *In Their Own Way* New York/Putman)

The Catalogue Curriculum: Letter from America

Don Glines (featured on page 7) writes about the Catalogue Curriculum item in our last News and Review and his experience of using such an approach in his US High School:

*"We found the 'window shopping and shopper's guide' notions helpful in the first year and for new students, but once the programme was rolling, the students just developed all their own studies and planned their own self-directed curriculum experiences ... even the 'low achievers' really take off when they finally learn that you **are** telling the truth - that they **can** create their own learning based upon interests and success "*

Advance notice:

International Conference May 1997

***'Democratic Discipline, Democratic Lives :
educating citizens for a changing world'***

Mon, Tues, Wed 12, 13 and 14 May 1997

International Co-operative College, Stanford Hall, Loughborough

Organised by: Institute for Democracy in Education with
Co-operative College and Education Now

Cost : between £150 and £200 per person for three day
residential, day tickets at £40 per day

Themes for keynotes or workshops:

The Skills and habits of democratic behaviour

What kind of citizenship?

The levels of democracy - shallow to deep

The dimensions of democracy

Creating democratic education

Democratic institutional management

Story-time

Book Review

Educating the Whole Child: Cross-curricular Skills, Themes and Dimensions, eds. John and Iram Siraj-Blatchford (1995) Buckingham: Open University Press £10-99

This collection of 10 papers packed into 165 pages provides a challenging agenda for primary schools. The editors and contributors have provided both a theoretical and very practical guide for what has been a wasteland of misunderstood, fragmented, barely implemented issues marginalised beyond the basic curriculum. Let's be honest - if most teachers were asked to do a SAT in cross curricular elements, they would fail miserably just trying to name them! A special thanks to John and Iram Siraj-Blatchford for pulling these together and the introductory clarification.

Part of the problem of addressing cross curricular themes has been the pre-occupation with the 'basic curriculum', the pressures of OFSTED and the inadequate and confusing guidance offered. The book cogently argues that cross curriculum elements are integral to the holistic curriculum. The papers illustrate that they can be used to explore and accommodate the children's learning patterns arising from social factors, including those influenced by economic, gendered and racialised experiences. That they are **not** generally used in this way is one problematic posed throughout the volume.

All of the contributors are committed to a perspective of 'delivering' cross curricular elements *"emphasising the culture of primary schools and the social worlds of children"*. What a breath of fresh air! It is not often these days that we talk about starting from the understandings and experiences of the children.

The issues that surface again and again are equality, injustice, racism, sexism, gender, power, authority, political literacy, democracy, to name but a few. These are some of the most contentious elements of the curriculum which cause the public, governments, policy writers, schools and teachers alike to break into a sweat. Fears that they might fuel critical thinking and subversive activity are groundless. Nothing could be safer in the hands of such a largely conservative and uncritical profession. Most teachers steer well clear of controversy. This partly reflects their own personal uncertainties, limited awareness and skills, partly the lack of space for such reflection, and partly the overwhelming unquestioning rationale at the heart of the guidance for the cross-curricular elements.

The contents of the book include:

John Siraj-Blatchford who develops citizenship in 'Little citizens: helping children to help each other.'

Ann Sinclair Taylor and Deborah Costley look at 'Effective schooling for all: special needs dimension.'

Iram Siraj-Blatchford on 'Racial equality education: identity, curriculum and pedagogy.'

Debbie Epstein on 'Girls don't do bricks: gender and sexuality in the primary classroom.'

Alistair Ross on 'Children in an economic world: young children learning in a consumerist and post-industrial society.'

Val Millman on 'Catching them young: careers education in the primary school.'

John Siraj-Blatchford and Lina Patel on 'Understanding environmental education.'

John Bennett, Balbir Kaur Sohal and Janice Wale on 'Health education in the primary school: back to basics.'

Peter Lang on 'The place of Personal and Social Education (PSE) in the primary school.'

A whole range of questions surfaced after reading this book. Perhaps the most troubling concern the necessity for staff to re-assess what education is really aiming to achieve. It is very easy these days to be seduced by the national curriculum and confine reflection to how to deliver it. Where are the teachers who will engage in such thinking? How does initial training prepare teachers for such practice? How do the teachers become more skilled with the active learning and participatory approaches to pedagogy given a national context which stresses large classes, whole class didactic practice?

These are the substance of a wider social debate where we need to be clear that the resolution of injustice and inequality, the development of critical discrimination and consciousness, the building of an active, participatory democratic citizenry can and does begin in early life. It is built on psychological well-being, on people with high self-esteem, who can debate, who are positive, rise to challenges and resolve differences peaceably. It requires the skills of listening, communicating, empathising and affirming. There are chinks of light as the initiatives described in the book illustrate. In the materials from groups like the Development Education Centre and in the growth of practices like circle time.

The complexity of the issues will mean a re-orientation of pedagogy. If children and the social world of school are acknowledged in the process of teaching and learning then more emphasis, not less, will need to be placed on discursive activities allowing the learner to confront feelings, attitudes, experiences and issues. The sheer efficiency of such methods outstrips the dependencies on decontextualised materials and lengthy recorded tasks. However, there are massive implications for developing necessary teaching, management and organisation skills.

As a primary head, I realise just how much work there is to do and the enormity of the task. As many of the contributors point out the cross curriculum elements cannot be left to chance, they need to be prioritised, planned, monitored and evaluated. They should not be bolted on but be embedded in the whole curriculum. In this way, they can actually provoke a more critical understanding of the basic curriculum.

The role of support from the LEAs may be crucial in the effective introduction of the cross-curriculum elements. The influence of Coventry cited by Val Millman shows how they can act 'as a buffer for schools against the pressures of national priorities.' What a pity current government policy is set on removing such LEA influence altogether.

I am heartened that this one volume will enable me to begin this journey of incorporating cross curricular elements with more clarity, a critical questioning approach and with some idea of where I need to get to.

This is a timely book and it should be welcomed into every primary school.

Peter Humphreys

The Trailblazers ... part three ... Alice Miller

Many radical educators have asked themselves the question: 'Why is it that child-centred educational ideas are so generally unattractive, not only to politicians (who might be expected to frown on practices which make future adults less responsive to mass propaganda) but also to parents, adults in general, and even school pupils?'

Alice Miller, a German psychoanalyst, has made discoveries which effectively answer this question.

An art therapist enabled her to revive and fully experience a time during her childhood when she had been forced to submit to parental cruelty. She realised that children who suffer abuse do not necessarily remember what has happened to them.

Children who express their feelings wholeheartedly often find they have broken an unwritten law. This is the draconian edict which states that, while adults may insist on their rights, complain, shout, storm out of the room or call the police when something hurts or offends them, if children do any of these things in front of their parents they can expect to be in serious trouble.

As a result, those children learn to mask their feelings under a carapace which protects them from the fearsome physical and 'moral' superiority of their parents, enabling them to be seen as 'good' children. 'Good' children are usually safer than 'bad' ones.

Forbidden to express their strong, indignant feelings, these children grow up into adults who have forgotten what it feels like to be a child. Therefore, in their turn, they adopt the brusque, dismissive approach to children from which they suffered so acutely during their own early years. Since they deny respect and consideration to their children, child-centred education and democratic learning look to them like the nadir of criminal folly. So the cycle rolls on like the car of Jaganath.

Educators need Alice Miller's work. She charts a path towards a society which no longer recognises the traditional imperatives of child-rearing: to crush spontaneity, thwart children's honest emotions, and coerce them into blind obedience, as necessary. Although she writes from the professional standpoint of a psychotherapist, her message is accessible to anyone who works with children and needs to understand them better.

By uncovering the roots of tyranny she puts into our hands a tool with which to make a better, kinder, world.

Chris Shute

Chris Shute has written about Alice Miller's ideas in two books Alice Miller: The Unkind Society, Parenting and Schooling and Compulsory Schooling Disease (both published by Educational Heretics Press).

The following extract is from Alice Miller's The Drama of Being a Child (Virago 1987).

The poisonous pedagogy

Parents often have such success with the numerous methods they use to subdue their children that they don't encounter any problems until the children reach puberty ... The parents cannot understand the sudden change; they are left helpless and uncomprehending by an adolescent who seems to be rejecting all norms, and whose self-destructive behaviour cannot be modified by logical arguments or by the subtle devices of 'poisonous pedagogy'.

On the basis of the pedagogy that was practised on us, the exerting of unlimited power by the adult over the child is still taken for granted. Most people know nothing else. It is only from a child who was never injured that we can learn entirely new, honest and truly humane behaviour. Such a child does not accept without question the pedagogic reasoning to which we are susceptible. He feels he is entitled to ask questions, to demand explanations, to stand up for himself and to articulate his needs.

For their development, children need the respect and protection of adults who take them seriously, love them and honestly help them to become orientated in the world.

When these vital needs are frustrated and children are instead abused for the sake of adults' needs by being exploited, beaten, punished, taken advantage of, manipulated, neglected or deceived without the intervention of any witness, then their integrity will be lastingly impaired.

The normal reactions to such injury should be anger and pain; since children are forbidden to express their anger and since it would be unbearable to experience their pain all alone, they are compelled to suppress their feelings, repress all memory of the trauma, and idealise those guilty of the abuse. Later they will have **no memory of what was done to them.**

Dissociated from the original cause, their feelings of anger, helplessness, despair, longing, anxiety and pain will find expression in destructive acts against others (criminal behaviour, mass murder) or against themselves (drug addiction, alcoholism, prostitution, psychic disorders, suicide).

If these people become parents, they will often direct acts of vengeance for their mistreatment in childhood, against their own children, whom they use as scapegoats ... It is a tragic fact that parents beat their children in order to escape the emotions stemming from how they were treated by their own parents.

If mistreated children are not to become criminals or mentally ill, it is essential that **at least once in their life** they come into contact with a person who knows **without any doubt** that the environment, not the helpless, battered child, is at fault ... Here lies the great opportunity for relatives, social workers, therapists, teachers, doctors, psychiatrists, officials and nurses to support the child and to **believe her or him.**

Circus life - a drama lesson

This sample drama lesson addresses issues of prejudice, lifestyle and trust. It is written for use with 6-8 year olds, but can easily be adapted for older children. It could be conducted in an ordinary classroom or at home. Total time needed: 3 hours (perhaps broken into one-hour slots). Minimum participants: lead adult plus 3.

Key questions addressed by the drama

What is it like to have to travel and set up home in different places?

What is it like to experience prejudice because of your family background and profession?

Context of the drama

Who? People who live and work in a travelling circus

When? Present day

Where? In a park in an area of a city

What? Some local shops and schools are refusing admission to circus people

Lead adult's roles (required at different points in the drama)

A. The owner of the circus - an authority role, but also 'one of the gang'

B. A villain disguised as a salesperson

Tensions

Prejudice, hatred, ignorance and fear

Spreading gossip

Having to live in a place where you feel unwelcome

Telling lies

Conflicting attitudes and viewpoints

Strangers are not welcome v We welcome people politely

People who are different should not be trusted v People have the right to live how they choose

Look at pictures of circus acts. Talk about the children's own experiences of circus. Draw favourite circus acts.

Step 2. Build belief in the drama

Using the children's ideas, draw a plan of 'our' circus on a piece of paper large enough for everyone to see.

Step 3. Adult-in-role

Be the circus owner and welcome everyone back for the new season of performances. The circus owner asks the performers what jobs they have been doing during the winter. All performers are asked to sign a contract. The circus owner asks them to help put up the Big Top.

Step 4. Acting out

Everyone acts out putting up the Big Top.

Step 5. Adult-in-role

The circus owner asks the performers to practise their acts.

Step 6. Stop the drama

(everyone comes out of role)

The adult can lead a workshop on mimed/improvised circus acts if this is required by the children. The children can design advertising posters and make tickets.

Step 7. Adult-in-role

Meeting of all performers: it's the opening night, we need to decide what jobs need doing.

Step 8. Acting out

Everyone acts out doing jobs. This can lead into acting out the first night's performance. Ask the actors to create Still Pictures (sometimes known as Freeze Frames or Tableaux) which represent photographs of the circus which appear in the next morning's newspapers.

Step 9. Stop the drama

Discuss the excitement of the first performance. The children are told that the newspaper reports of the circus were wonderful. Adult reads a newspaper report. Everyone is to have extra pay for doing such a good job. However, the circus owner is a little worried and needs to talk to all the performers immediately.

Step 10. Adult-in-role

(introducing the tensions)

The circus owner calls a meeting. It seems that there has been some trouble in the local community. Some shop owners have refused to serve circus people and the local school insists it is too full to take any circus children. The children in role are asked if they have had any problems of this sort.

Step 11. Acting out

Ask one or two volunteers to act out what happened in the shops. The rest watch. Then 'thought track' the actors (ask what their roles are thinking and feeling). Do the same with what happened at the school.

Step 1. Set up the drama

Step 12. Hot-seat

Ask for a volunteer to take the hot-seat as a shop keeper (or teacher) who doesn't like the circus people. The rest of the group ask the shop keeper (or teacher) questions.

Step 13. Adult-in-role

The circus owner calls another meeting, this time to ask the performers how to handle the situation. The takings have gone down because people aren't coming to the shows. Wages will have to be cut.

Step 14. Stop the drama

Explain that a new character is going to be introduced into the story. The adult will play this role initially. The children are not told who the new character is or what he will do.

Step 15. Adult-in-role

Adult adopts the role of villain! The children in role meet this character as a salesperson. The character is actually trying to frame the performers for a crime. The villain role tries to persuade the performers to buy two new vans which are on special offer. The vans will turn out either to contain stolen goods or will be stolen vehicles. The villain has been paid to frame the performers by one of the local people.

Step 16. Acting out

Act out the scene with the villainous salesperson. The performers can buy the vans or be persuaded to think about buying them - the salesperson is prepared to let them sleep on it.

Step 17. Acting out

Act out part of another circus performance. By freezing the action and asking the children questions, investigate if the low audience numbers and general trouble are affecting the performers and their work. Is there a contrast between this performance and the first night's performance?

Step 18. Adult-in-role

After the performance the circus owner calls another meeting. During the show s/he saw some people sneaking round the back of the new vans. S/he overheard that the vans are stolen (or contain stolen goods). The performers must decide whether to inform the police, or to get the villain to take the vans away the next day, or to pack up and leave because the locals won't believe their story. Adult-in-role needs to explore the dilemma of not being trusted whilst actually being 'in the right'.

Step 19. Acting out

Everyone acts out whatever decision is taken.

Step 20. Possible developments

The police raid the vans and accuse the performers of stealing.

The villain has a change of heart and tells the performers that someone is trying to frame them. What should they do?

The performers leave the site secretly and leave the vans. What are the consequences?

Naturally, when the drama is finished it is important to debrief with the children by making connections between the story and the real world.

Drama works with forms of intelligence not generally developed by other teaching styles. It therefore plays an essential part in any broad and balanced, student-centred education.

Sharon Ginnis

Two NEW publications for teachers, parents, students and others concerned with how people learn

Multiple Intelligence Theory in the Primary School

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by Val Chamberlain, Brenda Hopper, Barbara Jack

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The Trailblazers ... part four ... Don Glines

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The director of the Educational Futures Projects, Sacramento, California, is Don Glines. Previously, he was employed as a teacher, administrator, professor, planner, and consultant at the elementary, secondary, university, and state department levels in both the public and private sectors in a variety of US States and in other countries. He directed the renowned Wilson Campus School recognised as 'probably the most innovative school in America'.

He proposes that we have three choices for the education system of the next century. We can retain the present schooling system, change the system, or develop a completely new one. If people believe that the present system is faltering in its tasks, the second choice appeals. But numerous attempts to change schools out of the rigid model of the assembly line have already failed. Don Glines and futurists like him think the third option of a totally new system is necessary and indeed, inevitable.

In the future learning system, the community is the primary learning laboratory and every person in the community is a potential learner and resource person for other learners. The learner is the focus and the system is based on the assumption that individual differences can and must be accommodated. Present schools *preach* this idea but continuously and dramatically deny it in their actual behaviour. Their present pattern of assumptions makes it impossible to achieve.

There are no schools and no full-time instructor-teachers in the future learning system, for **learning** not teaching is the central focus. The false principle that 'learning happens under the direction of experts called teachers' is jettisoned.

Each person is simultaneously a learner and a resource person, with both skills to share and much to learn. 'Seekers' and 'providers' are brought together by the use of computer information and retrieval networks. The three components of the new system are **resource people**, any necessary **supplies** (books, videos, computers, paper etc..) and appropriate **facilities**. The point is to provide alternatives for learners, rather than one model (school) to which all persons must adapt.

The Education Now precept of '*alternatives for everybody, all the time*' encapsulates the approach. The key word is choice - real educational choice, not the pseudo choice of rival schools working to exactly the same formula. The transition to future learning systems requires that we move right away from uniformity and establish variety and diversity. After all, democracy means, amongst other things, reasonable choice: it is totalitarian systems that impose uniformity.

Most proposals for improving education are fixed on modifying the existing structures. Though well-intentioned, these proposals are restatements and rearrangements of a system that has faltered in the past and is failing dramatically day by day.

Reading: Don Glines (1995) *Creating Educational Futures*, Michigan: McNaughton and Gunn

In the majority of states, organisations of school administrators are now urging principals to look toward the future and to become "issue oriented." The efforts have focused on finding answers to a multitude of problems: drugs, gangs, test-scores, accountability, fiscal support, at-risk youth, limited English speaking students, overcrowded schools, homeless children, non-college employment preparation, vigorous curriculum requirements, militant unions, non-grading, year-round education, and the affective domain.

Educational futurists state that though these concerns are of the utmost importance, and must be addressed in the real world of today, they are not the keys to tomorrow. To those envisioning the twenty-first century, there is only one overriding issue facing educators today: the transformation to communication age learning systems.

School administrators face the challenge of leading the transitions from schooling to education to learning. If schools are to become significantly better, most futurists believe they must be significantly different. Schooling must be replaced by learning systems not based upon the notion that a yellow bus takes "students" for six hours a day, five days a week, to a building called a "school", where "teachers" utilise sets of textbooks and measured time on tasks at desks to "instruct", and "evaluate" the outcomes by the amount of completed homework and the scores on cognitive tests.

From an educational futurist perspective, this assembly line industrial age model cannot continue far into the next century...

There is hope. The transition stage can be accomplished over the next 20 years, leading ultimately to the transformation. F.M. Esfandiary has placed the educational issues of the future in the positive optimistic perspective that can lead to a golden age for society, for students, for learning. Esfandiary has written:

"The future of education is glorious - though it has nothing to do with schools and colleges. Education is bursting out of the school system. School is a feudal industrial concept, and is obsolete and unworkable. School systems must develop into communication centres. They must cut down on their industrial rituals: grades, hierarchy, competitiveness. Rather they must foster a love of learning."

Unfortunately, the current heralded reforms being pursued since the Nation at Risk report are not fostering a love of learning ... They are designed to maintain and strengthen the existing "feudal industrial concept" called schooling ...

The educational issue is not better schools, but rather the gradual phaseout of schools ... After eight decades of more-of-the-same secondary schools, the 90's promise the opportunity for the creation of dramatically different and significantly better learning systems for the future.

Nat. Assoc. Sec School Principals Bulletin Vol. 73 No. 514 Feb. 1989

Can schools of today survive very far into the 21st century?

Book Review

Home Schooling: Parents as Educators by Maralee Maybury, J. Gary Knowles, Brian Ray, and Stacey Marlow, Thousand

Oaks, California: Corwin Press Inc. (In UK, via Sage Publications, London at £14-95)

This book provides some answers to intriguing questions about the rapid and sustained growth of home-based education in the USA, now the choice of over one million families. Why is this happening? What are the characteristics of the home-schoolers? What are their motives and their methods? The accumulation of research of the USA journal, *The Home School Researcher*, now in its 11th year, is used to explore these issues.

The most striking finding replicates that of the accumulated case study research in UK. It is that of diversity. Families differ widely in their motives, their methods, their aims, and their learning plans. The main thing they have in common is that they are remarkably successful in achieving whatever they set out to achieve. The diversity is also reflected in the variety of support groups in USA. The organisation Holt Associates "*serves primarily liberal, secular, and humanistic home education families*" and other associations exist to support the families with "*conservative and Christian parent educators*" (p.25). The division of families appears to be about 50/50 in USA, with half the families professing a strong religious motive and others much weaker or none. This categorisation can be deceptive, however, for some of these 'religious' families state that their motive is primarily educational rather than religious.

The profile of home-educating families in USA shows a tendency towards middle-income, young, and well educated, which is defined as having some years of completed study in higher education institutions. But plenty of "*parents with less education and fewer financial resources are also teaching their children at home. In many ways, home-schooling is an educational choice that appeals to a wide spectrum of people.*" (p. 34) One other thing families have in common is a marked degree of scepticism and lack of confidence in social and public institutions including schools, banks and other financial institutions, major companies, the press and the media, governments, the unions or the courts. (p. 40)

I recommend this book, even if, in the end, it is rather non-radical. The over-detached, clinical form of analysis serves to squeeze out most of the excitement and enthusiasm I personally have experienced in researching and working with families in UK. The joy of families who succeed in restoring both the sparkle into the eyes of their children and the zest for learning, by their home-educating, is somehow missing.

Secondly, the key question of how families can be so remarkably successful is not seriously addressed. It is the growth of an information-rich environment in particular, as well as other factors like the recent communications revolution, which makes so many homes more effective, efficient, and learner-friendly learning settings. As a consequence, the need for schools to abandon the current totally obsolete compulsory factory model and become flexible, democratic and invitational, does not emerge. In consequence, the last chapter talks about families dealing with schools **as they are**, rather than pointing to how schools have to be reconstructed in order to respond to the trail-blazing activity of the families.

Roland Meighan

The swallows went south for the winter. In the rest periods they got to talking about the new birds curriculum. Nests on ledges were rather draughty - the eagles were not as smart as they made out!. The ledges had got rather crowded and some bullying incidents had taken place. What was wrong with mud-plastered nests on the side of warm buildings, anyway?

The swallows resolved to be brave and confront the authority of the eagles:

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Roland Meighan

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Episode 3 - The community of travellers: the swallows

The next learning system: "Alternatives for everybody, all the time"

In an article written by Don Glines of the Educational Futures Project, USA, he asked whether schools could survive for long into the 21st century. He thought not. A new synthesis was already coming into being. There are several ideas that are at work moving the present system into more flexible patterns.

We now know of thirty different learning styles in humans

It follows that any uniform approach is intellectual death to some, and often most, of the learners, and is therefore suspect. These learning differences fall into three broad categories, cognitive, affective and physiological. Some learners have a style which is typically deductive in contrast to those whose style is usually inductive. Others learn best from material which is predominantly visual as against others who respond best to auditory experiences. There are contrasts between impulsive learners and reflective learners. Some learn better with background noise, others in conditions of quiet.

We now know of at least seven types of intelligence

Howard Gardner in his book *The Unschooled Mind* (1994) reports his work on multiple intelligences. Seven types of intelligence (analytical, pattern, musical, physical, practical, intra-personal, and inter-personal) are identifiable. Only the first is given serious attention in UK schools. Charles Handy in *The Age of Unreason* (1989) declares:

"All the seven intelligences, and there may be more, will be needed even more in the portfolio world towards which we are inching our way. It is crazy, therefore, to use only the first of the intelligences as the criterion for further investment in any individual by society."

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

Effectively educated people need the flexibility to turn to each of the three major forms of behaviour and discipline as, and when, it is appropriate. People schooled in only one form of behaviour are handicapped in the modern world: as I indicated in *Flexischooling* (1988), rigid forms of schooling produce rigid people, flexible forms are needed to produce flexible people.

Adaptability has priority in a rapidly changing society

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

The recognition of the need for life-long learning

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

The arrival of the information-rich society

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

Democratic schooling has become an international concern

After the demise of State Communism in the former USSR and Eastern Europe, new governments look to schools in USA, UK and elsewhere hoping to find democratic models of schooling in operation. They find to their surprise, the familiar model of authoritarian schools, which are not just non-democratic, but anti-democratic. After all, a key feature of democracy is the principle that those who are affected by a decision have the right to take part in the decision-making. This is expressed in slogans such as *'No taxation without representation!'* If we apply this to schools, we get, *'No learning and therefore no curriculum without the learners having a say in the decision-making'*.

In the authoritarian approach to schooling, however, there is a chronic fear of trusting students and sharing power with them, and a fear of opting for the discipline of democracy. Carl Rogers in *Freedom to Learn in the 80's* noted that democracy and its values are actually **scorned and despised**:

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

In summary, the new synthesis means more flexible patterns. The new situation means **alternatives for everybody all the time**. People trying to persist with the domination of the inflexible authoritarian approach, are consigning our children to the obsolescence of a rigid mind-set.

Roland Meighan

We no longer have to force-feed education to children: they live in a world in which they are surrounded by educative

resources. There are around 500 hours each of the schools' television and radio every year in this country. There are several million books in public libraries. There are museums in every town. There is a constant flow of cheap or free information from a dozen media. There are home computers which are easily connected to phones and thus other computers...There are thousands of work-places... There are... the old, the disabled, the very young all in need of children in their lives, all in need of the kind of help caring and careful youngsters can give, and all of them rich sources of information about the world, and freely available to any child who isn't locked away in school. Richard North

The new education has as its purpose the development of a new kind of person, one who - as a result of internalising a different set of concepts - is an active, inquiring, flexible, creative, innovative, tolerant, liberal personality, who can face uncertainty and ambiguity without disorientation, who can formulate viable new meanings to meet changes in the environment which threaten individual and mutual survival.

The new education, in sum, is new because it consists of having students use the concepts most appropriate to the world in which we all must live. All of these concepts constitute the dynamics of the question-questioning, meaning-making process that can be called 'learning how to learn'.

Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner

There is, I believe, actually nothing more powerful to say about education than this: that all people, however young or old, have an enormous drive and capacity to learn; that many aspects of typical schooling get in the way of this, partly by assuming that the reverse is true; that learners really start to explore and exercise their potential only as they take charge of their lives; that the most effective teachers trust learners, enhance their self-esteem, have no need to control them, provide an unconditional support which doesn't go too far, and value all types of intelligence in all areas of learning. Paul Ginnis

"The fundamental educational problem of our time is to find ways to help children grow into adults who have no wish to do harm. We must recognise that traditional education, far from ever solving this problem, has never tried to solve it. Indeed, its efforts have, if anything, been in exactly the opposite direction. An important aim of traditional education has always been to make children into the kind of adults who were ready to hate and kill whomever their leaders might declare to be their enemies." (p.98) Holt TUS

"The case for traditional education seems to me much weaker than it has been, and is getting ever weaker, and the case for an education which will give a child primarily not knowledge and certainty but resourcefulness, flexibility, curiosity, skill in learning, readiness to unlearn - the case ... grows ever stronger." (p. 155) Holt TUS

"I believe we learn best when we, not others, are deciding what we are going to try to learn, and when, and how, and for what reasons or purposes; when we, not others, are in the end choosing people, materials, and experiences from which and with which we will be learning; when we, not others, are judging how easily or quickly or well we are

learning, and when we have learned enough; and above all when we feel the wholeness and openness of the world around us, and our own freedom and power and competence in it." (p. 95) Holt WIDIM

"Young people should have the right to control and direct their own learning, that is, to decide what they want to learn, and when, where, how, how much, how fast, and with what help they want to learn it. To be still more specific, I want them to have the right to decide if, when, how much, and by whom they want to be taught and the right to decide whether they want to learn in a school and if so which one and for how much of the time.

No human right, except the right to life itself, is more fundamental than this. A person's freedom of learning is part of his freedom of thought, even more basic than his freedom of speech. If we take from someone his right to decide what he will be curious about, we destroy his freedom of thought. We say, in effect, you must think not about what interests and concerns you, but what interests and concerns us." (p. 183) Holt EFC

Story 2 - The birds

The eagles got a bit fed-up with digging. The moles tried to help, but in vain. The eagles called a meeting of the birds. "We need a curriculum suited to us birds," they said. All agreed enthusiastically.

"Nest building should be a core subject." This was agreed. The eagles spoke: "The best nests, 'real' or 'proper' nests, are made of twigs on high ledges, because they are the nests of us eagles - the 'high flyers', as you might say." Now eagles are big and strong and liable to eat smaller birds, so that was somewhat reluctantly agreed.

So kingfishers and wrens and lapwings and swallows all tried to build nests of twigs on high ledges. It wasn't easy when you were used to holes in river banks, or weaving cocoon-like structures of grass and moss, or plastering mud under the eaves of houses. What was needed was a stage of lower ledges - a kind of 'key stage one' of nest building.

"It might help," the eagles said, "if you wore our brown speckled uniform. Nobody seems to know why, but learning seems to go better if you wear a uniform. So, well done sparrows, you already have the right idea, but you kingfishers ... well, we love the gear, and all those nice bright colours ... but for learning, you will need to put on a brown speckled uniform." And so the experiment continued in brown speckled uniforms.

Story 3 - The community of travellers: the swallows

The swallows went south for the winter. In the rest periods they got to talking about the new birds curriculum. Nests on ledges were rather draughty - the eagles were not as smart as they made out!. The ledges had got rather crowded and some bullying incidents had taken place. What was wrong with mud-plastered nests on the side of warm buildings, anyway?

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Roland Meighan

Thinkers in every walk of life are recognising that our current form of governance threatens ecological, political, social, and economic failure ... Management guru Peter Drucker says in his *Post Capitalist Society* "*there is a need to restore community.*" He sees a new community-centred society ... in which schools

are replaced by an open life-long learning system which any person can enter, at any level, any time ...

The 'Learning Community' theme is echoed by holistic educators who now recognise that 'child-centred education', much as it is needed for the flexibility inherent in the age ahead, is inconsistent with 'schooling'. 'Teaching' or 'schooling' implies that society, or someone is acting on, indoctrinating some amorphous blobs. 'Learning', on the other hand, implies a self-actualised process of creating skills, taking in knowledge, and satisfying one's natural curiosity ... Learning, like politics must be reinvented.

The vision of a 'World Without Schools' is being developed by organisations such as the Educational Future Project. Schools fade into the background as the community as a whole becomes a network of learning centres; and the people themselves take control of their own and their family's whole-life learning. Museums, libraries, churches, businesses, YMCA's and a growing set of other learning centres (mental fitness centres not unlike today's physical fitness centres) provide all citizens with the knowledge they need for their own right livelihood ... 'mentors' (whom we now call 'teachers') provide a personal consulting and advisory services to people of all ages. They keep detailed databases on learning opportunities throughout the region and by counselling and guidance help each family and individual reach self-set goals for gaining knowledge ...

William. N. Ellis, Editor of TRANET

(TRANET is an international newsletter, by and for people at the grassroots who are changing the world by changing their own lifestyles and thinking.

Contact Address: PO Box 567, Rangeley, ME 04970, USA)

Wessex Efterskole Trust: the W.E.S.T School

The W.E.S.T. School is a new educational concept in UK. It will offer a one year residential course for 100 post-16 students, with a number of places for post 14 year-olds. Although new in the UK, the idea is well tried and tested in Denmark where over 200 such schools are to be found. W.E.S.T school, sited in the Wessex countryside south of Bristol, will be twinned with Thorsgaard School, Jutland.

This is to be a pilot project to promote the establishment of a network of similar schools in UK. Students will make up a programme of studies from options in vocational, academic, sporting and arts, and citizenship courses. The philosophy is 'learning by doing' and students will work with livestock, the land, construct buildings, maintain the school, service transport and clean for themselves. Theatre and music performances, communal meetings, celebrations and sports events will be part of the experience.

Further details from:

Paul Goodchild, 49 Colston Street, Bristol, BS1 5AX
tel/fax 0117 927 9177

When schools are gone ...

In another vision of educational futures, John Adcock tells the story of how a new system came into being in the UK in his book *In Place of Schools* (New Education Press, £5-95):

"It is Friday, 28th December in the year 2029. The hour is 0808 EST (European Standard Time) Susan Smith checks this on her personal computer screen together with the local weather and traffic news, and her day's appointments. Susan, born in the first hour of the first year of the 21st century, is a professional personal tutor to nineteen children aged from eight to ten years.

She tutors the children with their parents, or in small groups, in their homes, in her home, in community resource centres, in field stations, in museums and art galleries, in concert halls and theatres, in libraries and sports centres, and in other places where, in her professional opinion, advantage to her clients will accrue.

Susan is not a teacher in the 19th or 20th century sense of the word. She does not teach in a school. There are no teachers and there are no schools. There are simply personal tutors, pupils, parents and extensive support facilities.

Susan possesses for each of the children in her tutorial group a personal study programme. She devised each programme with the help of the child, his parents, and colleagues notes on the child's earlier achievements."

The Brambles Centre

At Brambles and our MAGIC Resource Centre, we are actively involved in de-schooling. All the families in the Co-op are home-educating. We see learning as a lifelong adventure that involves young people and adults equally. As well as living in the Co-op with our young people who do not attend school, we also offer support and advice to others who are de-schooling or thinking about it.

Education is a term that is very open to individual interpretations; but as the law currently stands every child has the right to an education. However, whether this happens in a school or 'otherwise' e.g. through home-based learning, is a matter of choice. We choose the home-based education alternative.

We want to see people taking control of their lives and working together to build a more sustainable world. Children who learn naturally in a supportive community, rather than being artificially taught by someone imposed on them, generally grow in confidence, become more self-sufficient and want to learn new skills.

Brambles was set up by a small group of unemployed people. Based in Sheffield, it is a registered non-profit making housing co-operative that enables us to house ourselves and others on low incomes. More and more people are realising that we can take control of our lives without bosses and landlords and create a sustainable future through co-operation and mutual aid. On the ground floor of one of the houses is a resource centre for use by the co-operative and a base for our home-based education and it is also used by other groups in the community.

Further details from: Brambles Housing Co-operative,
82 Andover Street, Sheffield, S3 9EH
enclosing a stamped addressed A5 envelope.

A world without schools

In the proposed Minnesota Experimental City, planned as a laboratory for social, technical, economic and environmental innovations, a new approach to education is proposed. The following *Learning Centres* are to be developed to replace the current model of custodial schools:

Early Life studios will be designed so that parents, young children and staff members could meet regularly to create an environment that provided creative learning experiences and offer opportunities for parents and older young people and other adults to learn about the mental, emotional, physical and other needs of early childhood.

Stimulus studios will be established where there would be a constantly changing array of prompts to provoke and extend learners' perceptions and thinking, to arouse curiosity, stimulate laughter, wonder, reverence, imagination and competence. There would be films, tapes, videos, exhibitions, books, resourceful people from the community, and virtual reality experiences.

Gaming studios where learning takes place by playing educational games and there is the opportunity to take part in simulations and role play. Arena theatre events will also be developed and presented.

Project studios will be available where learners work on real projects such as making a video, writing a book or TV script, designing new materials and products, or planning projects to be undertaken later in the community. In the UK, the Walsall Community Arts has produced a *Dreaming for Real* project pack which has been setting such projects in motion.

Learner banks will be designed to store and loan out the tools and equipment needed by learners. A large part of the bank would store books and other material now found in conventional libraries.

Family-life centres where families will learn together. The centre will offer meetings, seminars, tutoring or community centred discussions. Provision will be made here for those who learn well for some of the time in school-type settings.

Community facilities such as homes, businesses, public places, sports facilities, would be available as appropriate, as part of the learning network. The network of learning centres will remain permanently fluid, open to evaluation, review and change. (see Glines, D. and Long K. (1992) *Transitioning Towards Educational Futures* Phi Delta Kappan March 1992)

In the new learning system, it is *learning* that is the central concern and not teaching. Every person is simultaneously a learner *and* a resource person for the learning of others.

Roland Meighan

The school system assumes that:

1. Learning is preparation for life so at some point learning stops and living starts.
2. Learning occurs mostly in school.
3. Specialists are needed to impart knowledge.
4. Education takes place in a school and requires a prescribed curriculum.
5. People do not and cannot learn on their own.
6. People with a large quantity of memorised information are better people than those with less.
7. Schools are needed to socialise and civilise.

Flexi college

The education system of the 21st century is likely to see a radical replacement of the existing authoritarian school by a new kind of school. This will feature flexi-time use of some existing school buildings and new resource centres for use by home-based educating families to create a regenerated education system in which person-centred learning in democratic and co-operative groupings enables a wider

diversity of provision to meet individuals needs for creative self-development within the new moral constraints of the current human predicament.

Flexi College is designed to be an adaptable model of such a school. The East Midlands Flexi College has grown out of Philip Toogood's previous 20 years work in mini-schooled large comprehensives, small schools and community education. A carefully researched proposal was produced in 1991 with Richard Terry, now one of the 4 tutors in the group flexi-teaching partnership working at the flexible learning centre at Monk Street, Tutbury, North Staffordshire. Here parents, teachers, students and local people contract together in an education venture at the heart of which is a small flexible school for students from 8 to 16 years old. In September, a 16 to 19 years group is planned and the Flexi College will be complete when an early childhood section is added later. This cluster of small groups served by a flexi-teaching partnership will be managed by a limited company with charitable status. All such Flexi Colleges will be licensed by a National Foundation for Flexible Learning and will be provided with co-ordination, training and support by the Foundation's directorate. All this will be set up in the next 18 months.

Meanwhile at East Midlands Flexi College, 17 students and teachers start each day with exercises, a review of world affairs, meetings to plan the day, mornings of intensive small group directed work in Maths, English, Information Technology, and French, afternoons of long autonomous tutor-supported sessions in Art, Design, Expressive Arts, Humanities and Science and finish each day with supported Independent Study sessions. GCSE, 'A' level, GNVQ and NVQ examinations are on offer. The year is framed into 6 modules containing 6 symposium presentation weeks, 3 expeditions and 3 specially negotiated activity weeks. Parents, students, tutors and local people join a Life-long Learning Association. By co-operative work, funds are raised and practical maintenance done. Underpinning the whole development is the informal support and advice provided by the very diverse membership of the Education Now Ltd research, consultancy, and publishing network.

Philip Toogood

(For further information, send stamped addressed envelope to: East Midlands Flexi College Ltd, Monk Street, Tutbury, Staffs, DE13 9NA or telephone/fax 01283 520714)

The new learning system assumes that:

1. Learning is life, because humans are learning animals, and whilst we are alive, we are learning.
2. Learning occurs everywhere and anywhere.
3. People can direct their own learning.
4. Education is a lifelong activity that needs to be personalised using a catalogue curriculum.
5. People can learn to make decisions on what and how to learn.
6. Everyone is important regardless of how much they have memorised.
7. People are socialised and get civilised in their communities.

Flexi-time schooling

Flexi-time is part-time attendance at school using schools just as they are. It can be seen as a temporary expedient for those who cannot wait for a new system to get established, but for various reasons, do not want to home-educate full-time.

School becomes one of many resources, such as libraries, radio, television, computers, etc., to be used when the child and parent choose, according to a contract between them and the school. The parents are as equally involved as the teachers in the

education of the child, whilst the children are encouraged to learn for themselves as well as being taught.

Any school can accommodate flexi-time if it wishes to, but under current law, no school is obliged to. Many arrange flexi-time at will if the school staff decide it is required, either because of special needs or at the request of an educational psychologist. It is only when the *parents* decide it is appropriate that flexi-time suddenly becomes resisted. The Education Act 1993 (Part IV, subsection 298, No.4) applies:

"A local education authority may make arrangements for the provision of suitable full-time or part-time education otherwise than at school for those young persons who, by reason of illness, exclusion from school or otherwise, may not for any period receive suitable education unless such arrangements are made for them."

The case of Ganesh Sittapalam who enrolled as an undergraduate in Maths aged eleven in 1990, attended one day a week at Surrey University and spent the rest of the week at school, shows another application of flexi-time. In 1995 he sat his GCSE examinations with his classmates whilst he already had his degree in Mathematics.

At the school where my children attend on an agreed flexi-time basis, they are recorded as 'educated off-site' which is classified as an 'authorised absence'. This means that the funding is exactly as for a full-time student and the school returns are not affected. In the USA, however, the funding is split between the school and the home in the 'Independent Study Programs', as such arrangements are called. In California, specially trained staff work out appropriate flexible study plans with the parents and children who want this arrangement. Thus a personal learning plan or learning contract formalises the practical arrangements as regards attendance and learning activity. I also agreed to serve as a school governor

Kate Oliver

(Kate Oliver is willing to share her experiences of negotiating and implementing flexi-time schooling. Write to her at 21 St. Mary's Crescent, Leamington Spa, CV31 1JL)

In *Smart Schools, Smart Kids*, (1991) Edward Fiske, New York Times educational editor, reports that US press correspondents met to review the results of five years of educational reform. They began to suspect that things were worse instead of better. Fiske went on tour to try to find something more positive. He concluded:

"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."

Fiske advocated a complete rethink of the fundamental assumptions of our obsolete model of schooling.

The Otherwise Club

In February 1993 we set up The Otherwise Club as a centre for families of children educated out of school and committed to some vision of alternative education. It evolved out of a small learning club at one parent's house in which children from home-based educating families were able to work together regularly on interesting projects. The group was set up with two basic aims:

- to provide for regular social interaction where families can exchange views and ideas. This is something we feel causes concern to those considering home education.
- to provide workshops and group activities in which members can participate. This aspect of educating out of school for many families requires most effort and organisation.

Our premises are at the Carlton Centre, Kilburn where we hire a hall and several rooms and a kitchen for two days a week. There are also specialist areas for woodwork, photographic developing and pottery available. We have about 20 families who pay £100 per year to cover basic costs. Workshops have been enjoyed on first aid, philosophy for children and stained glass work. Forthcoming workshops include computers and rock climbing. Drama, pottery and the production of a newsletter are regular activities. Parents talking to parents and exchanging experiences about home-based education is a regular but non-scheduled vital activity. The whole family can learn together and also socialise with other families.

The Otherwise Club is run collectively, with all members having equal access to setting the agenda and to the decision-making process. There is a fortnightly meeting and a key planning meeting every half term.

(A leaflet describing The Otherwise Club can be obtained by sending a stamped addressed envelope (19p) to: Leslie Barson, 1 Croxley Road, London W1 3HH)

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 something new or whither away and be replaced.

Seymour Papert in *Mindstorms*

The Open School Project

Open school is a non-profit making charity started by Lord Young of Dartington in 1989 to make the methods of the Open University available to young students, especially those not in attendance at school for whatever reason. Its major initiative is tele-tutoring by fax as a new development in distance learning. It provides services for hospital education, traveller groups and families educating at home.

Courses are provided for both examination and non-examination work. GCSE courses are available including Maths, English, Sociology, Psychology, Law, Accounting, Spanish, French and German. GCE A-level courses are available in English, Maths, Sociology and Psychology.

(Information can be obtained from Open School, Park Road, Dartington Hall, Devon, TG9 6EQ Tel: 01803 866542 Fax: 01803 866676)