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Welcome to Issue 23 of the PEN Journal

Josh Gifford

In introducing my first Journal as editor I would like to thank Peter Humphreys for his stewardship of the Journal for the last 11 years. Peter has consistently offered us a rich and varied collection of writing in each issue. In some issues, he has had to respond to the passing of some of our dear friends. At these times Peter has always found the right note to express our appreciation of each person and he has skilfully used the Journal to reflect their presence, thinking and achievements. Looking ahead, I hope that the Journal will continue to evolve in response to your needs and interests. Your comments and views are always welcomed as are your contributions. If you would like to offer feedback or submit contributions specifically for the Journal my address is joshie@phonecoop.coop. Another route for contributions for either the website or the Journal will be to continue to contact Peter. His address is [@blueyonder.co.uk](http://personalisededucationnow.org.uk)

There is a wide range of themes explored in this issue.

In the central piece, “**Sir Ken got it the wrong way round**”, Paul Henderson offers a follow up review to his first review of Sir Ken Robinson’s recent book, *Creative Schools*. As well as reviewing *Creative Schools* he explores, in some detail, the relationship between the thoughts of Sir Ken Robinson and those of Professor Roland Meighan. This section, entitled “A Tale of Two Professors”, includes a chart contrasting the views of the two writers on key issues. In this way, Paul really helps to clarify the thinking of both and underlines the contrast in thinking between them.

In her article “**Learning about Social Class**” Edith King argues that learning and teaching about social class and the effects of classism are vital topics for our contemporary curriculum. In her book review, Wendy Charles-Warner appreciates *International Perspectives on Home Education* by Paula Rothermel.

I have reviewed *The Teacher’s Introduction to Attachment* by Nicola Marshall. I commend it to you as a wonderful and important book, introducing the neuroscience underpinning attachment and, at the same time, suggesting a way forward in understanding our own relational styles and habit patterns.

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Sir Ken got it the wrong way round – a follow up review of *Creative Schools*

Creative Schools: The Grassroots Revolution That's Transforming Education by Ken Robinson and Lou Aronica, Penguin 2015

Paul Henderson

After eagerly anticipating the publication of Ken Robinson's new book, *Creative Schools*, with expectations held high, I was sorely disappointed when I finally managed to read it because, to me at least, the ideas put forward did not hold together very well at all. Within minutes of reading it on the day of its release I was finding problems; however, it has recently occurred to me that by making a few simple changes the book would have made much more sense. The two statements that I nearly choked on when I first read them were made in the introduction as follows:

"Education means organised programs of learning."

"School, as I use the term here, includes homeschooling, un-schooling and informal gatherings..."

If the words "education" and "school" were to be swapped over in the above two statements then that would begin to resolve many of the problems I had with the book.

Sir Ken's definition of school harks back to the days before state funded schooling when learned types would come together to develop philosophical schools of thought and ordinary people would come together informally through common shared interests in order to share and improve upon the best common practices of the day; but that was then, and this is now. Whether we like or not, nowadays school is institutionalised and predominantly state funded - that changes everything. If Sir Ken wants schooling to go back to the days before it was state funded then I'm perfectly happy with his definition, but I think we all know that that is not his intention. Consequently, any innocent and slightest unintentional whiff of a suggestion of bringing un-schooling under the funding umbrella of schooling as we know it today is like waving a very large red rag to a bull, the bull, of course, being the world of un-schooling. The last thing un-schoolers want is anything to do with state funding because state funding cannot be granted without some kind of mechanism for accountability, which means there are always strings attached, and you cannot practise the principles of un-schooling with any degree of integrity when it is attached to state, or any other, imposed and prescribed curricular strings. It was probably not Sir Ken's intention to suggest such a thing; it is more likely that his intention was to merely point out that informal gatherings and un-schooling could be thought of as schools in the original sense of the

word, and therefore his intention was probably to change the popular understanding of what a school is and can be, thus paving the way for a book which draws upon anecdotes and examples of personalised learning taken from both conventional schooling and alternative learning settings, all of which would contribute well towards his theory of change.

That's all very well, but in favouring the use of a semi-prescribed curriculum, albeit split into disciplines rather than subjects, it becomes quite clear that the principles of un-schooling and democratic free schooling, from which he draws examples of ways to enhance personalised learning, can play no part in his vision of either schooling or education. This is confirmed by his assertion that education means organised programmes of learning. The learning in un-schooling and democratic free schooling is organised by learners in consultation with significant others and by following organised heutagogical, andragogical and invited pedagogical principles, but to describe it as an organised programme suggests that it adheres to prescribed learning intentions, which it does not. The use of the word "programme" in relation to education suggests something very different from the organic, gardening and climate control metaphors that Sir Ken is fond of using. A plant may be biologically programmed to grow, just as humans are to learn, but its precise growing aims and objectives are not programmed by the gardener, therefore it is not following an organised programme of growing, but it is instead growing in a way that is shaped and determined by how closely its environment matches that of its optimal natural habitat. Proponents of alternative learning have clearly demonstrated many times over that a conventional school classroom is not the natural habitat of human learning, no matter how good the teacher is. The gardening metaphor soon begins to serve a dubious purpose when you realise that the gardener's job is to take healthy plants from all corners of the world and then grow them in a garden located in the Sahara desert without irrigation. The gardener might be brilliant, but no gardener is that good! It's not better trained and higher paid gardeners that Sir Ken needs to fulfil his metaphoric vision, it's magicians. Ah yes, but if we have policy makers who can change the climate of the Sahara to a more temperate one it will allow the gardeners to do their job brilliantly. That's all very well, but, what about the plants from the arctic tundra, and the Alpine mosses, and the tropical orchids, and those cacti that just love the Sahara? What is really needed is a separate micro climate for each plant. How do we achieve that? By replacing our policy makers with magicians, of course! I'm glad that's sorted out.

This might be a timely moment to note that in alternative learning environments, such as un-schooling and democratic free schooling, you don't have to be a magician to ensure that every learner learns in the most optimal natural learning environment that circumstances will allow. A vision of a future educational landscape which harnesses the power of intrinsically motivated autonomous learning, and consequently allows the maximum number of people to be in their element, would undoubtedly include these alternative

settings along with voluntary flexi-schooling and a liberal peppering of voluntary, convivial, all-age, no-strings-attached community learning centres, as proposed by the Centre for Personalised Education. These centres would utilise a learner-defined blend of catalogue and open source (natural) curricula as well as a free choice of certificated courses, available on and occasionally created as dictated by demand. Through the sterling work and true grit of the trailblazing pioneers of alternative learning, much of this vision has already materialized; however, there is still much more work to do.

Sir Ken gives “homeschooling”, as he calls it, a slightly supercilious pat on the head for its efforts so far, and puts its existence down to parents’ dislike of industrial style schooling and home education’s ability to facilitate true personalised learning, when in reality those are just the tiniest tip of the iceberg of reasons for the existence of home- and community-based learning. For those, like me, who are interested in alternative learning, it’s a pity that Sir Ken’s praise of home- and community-based learning comes with so many reservations, although some recognition is better than none.

One thing that Robinson has consistently disapproved of is the hierarchy of subjects in conventional schooling and I was intrigued to find out how he would tackle this problem. It seems to me that there are only two ways to tackle this within present-day schools. Either you create a level playing field by abolishing the idea of core subjects altogether and let students study whatever they want, or you take a giant leap in the wrong direction by making all subjects equally compulsory. What Robinson suggests however is to have a curriculum comprised of disciplines, each of which has equal importance. I am uncomfortable with this suggestion because it implies more compulsion, not less; the knock-on consequence being more coercion, not less. Robinson says that a curriculum should provide “a framework for what all students should learn in common” as well as a balance of disciplines designed to meet personal interests. I’m not convinced that this arrangement would allow the maximum number of people to be in their “element”.

This leads to another of the book’s disappointments. Having been a fan of the “element” books I assumed that the narrative that these books started would be carried forward to this book but, sadly, this does not seem to be the case. I would have thought that this book would seek to arrive at educational solutions through which as many people as possible could be in their element. In the “element” books success is defined by the extent to which people are in their element. There are examples of people doing stereotypically successful things such as gaining entrance to Ivy League colleges, or high status jobs, but then finding that their “element” lay elsewhere, and therefore they consequently change direction in order to facilitate a more self concordant life. Things begin to look promising in *Creative Schools* when a dim view is taken of high PISA rankings and SAT

test scores being taken as indicators of success, yet he occasionally cites those same things, along with such things as entrance to Ivy League colleges, as success indicators in the anecdotes and examples. Sometimes it almost seems as if Sir Ken has lost his own plot.

A Tale of Two Professors

There are interesting parallels between Ken Robinson and the late great Roland Meighan, in that both of them were professors of education, shared a similar critique of schooling, drew ideas from the world of alternative learning, and originally viewed education from a UK perspective which they then expanded to form a more global view. It is interesting to note that, in his contributions to *Natural Parent* magazine, Roland Meighan explored essentially the same territory that Sir Ken explores in his most recent book, however, not without clear differences in some of the most crucial issues. Sir Ken says that schooling can be distilled down to the most basic constituents of curriculum, teaching and assessment. He also talks a lot about standards and standardisation, therefore, for the sake of clarity I thought it would be useful to contrast and compare what these two stalwarts of the education scene said about these, and other vital areas (see the table on page 4).

There are a great many things that are learned in common by almost everybody. Those living in information-rich societies who have been educated by means other than school and without “organised programs” have shown that these things can be learned in the most optimal way for each individual according to readiness and context on a need-to-know basis. Of course, there are times where some unschoolers, but certainly not all, may elect to be schooled through a traditionally taught organised programme of learning in a specific area when that is the most appropriate, convenient or realistic way forward (which is very different from the compulsory imposition of an organised programme of learning against the will of learners), but a great many have been very successfully educated without participating in any organised programmes of learning. These successfully educated people are living proof that education does not necessarily mean organised programmes of learning, and that a curriculum which provides a framework for what all students should learn in common is an entirely unnecessary imposition, one which has been shown to kill creativity and inculcate dependent learning through behaviourist conditioning. All of this plentiful evidence begs the question:

If Sir Ken says that schools kill creativity, why did he not offer a solution that would have stopped the world’s most prolific serial killer when he had the chance?

A comparison of the (mostly condensed and paraphrased) ideas of Ken Robinson and Roland Meighan

Important Issue	Ken Robinson	Roland Meighan	Conclusion
Standards/Standardisation in Education	Standardisation is useful when it applies to mechanical or industrial processes such as barcodes etc., but learning and life are non-linear and organic processes and there is no such thing as the standard person. The side effects of the over use of standardised methods in education are very bad for learners' well-being. That being said it is useful to have standards when appropriate.	"...the idea of standards in schooling is both ambiguous and subjective." "Training students to be good at this shallow learning of the selected mechanical tricks of institutionally imposed syllabuses, does not produce the more important deep learning, the kind we need more and more of in the future." Standards should be self defined in consultation with "guides on the sides" – not imposed.	Meighan's message on standards and standardisation is quite clear, however, Robinson's is slightly vague, in that he says they are harmful but helpful when appropriate.
Curriculum	The curriculum should be divided into disciplines rather than subjects. "As well as providing a framework for what all students should learn in common, the right balance of these disciplines allows schools to cater to the personal strengths and interests of students as individuals."	No imposition. The curriculum should be a "learner-managed 'natural' curriculum, with personal learning plans supported by adults providing a catalogue of learning possibilities. Our society has been information-rich for many years now, and we have even more possibilities than before through computer access to a kaleidoscope of web-sites. We have the technology and know-how, we can rebuild the natural curriculum. It is time to move on from the superstition of subjects".	Meighan slams any door that is open to imposition firmly shut, whereas, by saying that the curriculum should provide a framework for what all students should learn in common, Robinson leaves the door ajar just wide enough to fit the jackboot clad foot of imposition. This is the poison in Robinson's elixir.
Teaching	Progressive and traditional teaching approaches are both valuable when appropriate. Very well paid and trained teachers will know when it is appropriate to use these and other techniques taken from a wide repertoire inspired by flipped classrooms, holes in the wall, homeschooling, unschooling, democratic free schooling and spoon feeding over-teaching so intense that teachers don't notice when they've set their hair on fire. Learning in the world of education may be seen as playing a similar role to that of growing in the world of horticulture and, consequently, teachers may be seen as expert organic gardeners who work in the best possible climate that policy makers can set.	Good teaching facilitates and encourages learning and research skills; it should not be primarily concerned with controlling and issuing diktats to crowds of children, or imposing compulsory learning intentions against the will of learners. Traditional teaching techniques are only appropriate when they are used as part of an education or training course chosen voluntarily or invited by learners, thus teachers or any appropriate kind of educational practitioner may use a repertoire of techniques drawn from heutagogy, andragogy and invited pedagogy.	Meighan is clear that direct instruction or teacher-led pedagogy is appropriate only when it is invited. This caveat is conspicuously absent from Robinson's thesis, again leaving the door open to compulsory imposition.
Assessment	We should veer away from high stakes summative assessments and meaningless grades towards much more continuous and portfolio type of assessments and use assessment as learning.	Personalised education results in learners whose outcomes are expressed in their character, personality, in the quality of life they lead... No imposition.	Ironically it is Meighan's approach which is much more likely to allow learners to find their "element".

Critique	Industrial factory schooling is damaging children and the well-being of the entire human race.	Industrial factory schooling is damaging children and the well-being of the entire human race.	Snap!
Vision	Adapt conventional schooling in order to incorporate ideas from alternative personalised learning and the ideas of curriculum, teaching and assessment mentioned above, as well as having more practical, pertinent and relevant hands-on classes and experiences.	Embrace a landscape of educational diversity or “edversity”, including home and community based learning, flexischooling and community learning centres recycled out of anachronistic, past-their-sell-by-date, schools.	Robinson’s vision is much more rooted in the past than Meighan’s. Like John Holt before him, Meighan came to the conclusion that schooling was already too good at doing what it does, and could not be significantly adapted or “improved” through reform. His educational vision required schools to be recycled into convivial, voluntary, all-age learning centres.
Theory of change	Encourage a ground-up revolution in which everyone involved with education embraces and acts to implement and promote the ideas put forward in <i>Creative Schools</i> .	Raise awareness through book publishing, the Internet and other forms of media in order to bring about slow and positive grassroots change in all areas of educational practice by emphasising the reality, viability and success of alternative learning environments, in the hope that these environments will become increasingly more attractive to greater numbers of people until a tipping point occurs which triggers worldwide change.	Similar in that both cannot envisage initial change coming from the top down; however, Meighan’s approach does not require teachers or policy makers to perform incredible acts of magic.
Compulsory learning and its associated use of coercion, resulting consequently in the inculcation of dependent learning and atrophied creative abilities	Robinson acknowledges that compulsory imposed learning kills creativity but he still leaves the door ajar enough for imposition to flourish in his vision of a future learning system. His silence on rectifying this issue is a bewildering and disappointing mystery.	No imposition of prescribed learning intentions against the will of learners. Coercion <i>en masse</i> is a form of bullying fascism which should have no place in anyone’s life irrespective of age. Compulsory learning, and its associated use of coercion, results consequently in the inculcation of dependent learning and atrophied creative abilities, and therefore it should be consigned to the past.	Sir Ken’s silence on how to rectify this issue says more than his entire book does about his current attitude to education. His assertion that a curriculum should provide a framework for what all students should learn in common, as well as personalised learning, implies that he is in favour of an appropriate balance between compulsory learning, achieved through coercion whenever a diktat deems it to be necessary, and individualised personal learning driven by intrinsic motivation. This is the main difference between Meighan and Robinson. Meighan, like his friend and mentor, John Holt (who spent a good ten years trying to reform North American schooling along very similar lines to Robinson’s ideas and who also achieved comparable levels of mass popularity through TV appearances, etc., as Robinson) ultimately came to the conclusion that <i>an educational vision that sanctions learning through a balance of compulsory diktats and innate curiosity is ideologically incoherent.</i>

Most people, including me, agree with Sir Ken's entertaining exposition of the age old critique of conventional schooling; however, his vision of a better, brighter and realistically attainable educational landscape is well meaning but flawed. As far as his theory of change is concerned, while it may have the very useful spinoff of raising awareness of alternative learning environments, I'm afraid that it is in desperate need of legions upon legions of the most masterful magicians the world can muster in order to bring it about. This reminds me of a comment from Edward Fiske, former *New York Times* Education Editor, who concluded that getting more learning out of our present schooling system was "like trying to get the pony express to beat the telegraph by breeding faster ponies". Roland Meighan put it like this: "Perhaps tinkering with the system is like getting the stagecoach to go faster by strapping roller skates on the hooves of the horses, when what is needed is a new type of transport altogether...."

Since first viewing his famous TED talk, I have always thought, and still think, that Ken Robinson has a great book on education in him, but, sadly, *Creative Schools* is not it. Perhaps in a few books' time we'll see something special – here's hoping!

Paul Henderson is an experienced educator in the fields of science and music education. His own family is being home-educated and Paul uses his experiences of learning in conventional and Elective Home Education settings to write about education. He has been a regular contributor to the CPE-PEN Blog and previous Journals.

Learning about Social Class: A Global Issue Today

Edith W. King, Educational Sociologist

Sociologists recognize that inequalities spring from the social structures and social processes that create, maintain, or change the individual's circumstances. Life chances that create inequalities are defined as the conditions of material existence. These conditions include food, clothing, and shelter. This also takes in the quality of life issues such as education, future employment and career opportunities. It includes lifestyle, access to health care, environmental issues, and social and civic participation. Meighan and Harber point out that social class has continued to be a highly ambiguous concept. They note that "the links between social class and education in the UK have been researched frequently and persistently" (2007, p. 389).

Potent Forces of Social Class: When talking or writing about children and families Roland Meighan and I often discussed how this topic involved touching on the wider social class structure of a society or a nation. It is well known that the economic wherewithal of a group or a family is tied to accumulation of material goods. What is treasured and valued comes from the worth imbued to the material good, such as cash, precious metals and jewels, stocks, bonds, properties (real estate), through a cultural definition of what is valuable. Further, accumulation of wealth and status

means power and superiority over others. Social and economic status tends to give one group power over another and leads to attitudes that one ethnic or racial group is inherently better than another because it is richer and holds a higher social status. Material wealth not only endows an individual or a group with greater social status; often it is accompanied by wider political power.

Socioeconomic status (SES) is characterised as a measure that combines a person's education, occupation and income in order to derive that person's ranking in the social structure. This definition brings us to another concept in sociological thought connected with social class and socioeconomic status or SES; it is the word "classism". Classism is defined as discriminatory attitudes and actions towards individuals based upon their social class affiliation. Classism is considered a manifestation of discrimination and prejudice that arises from the wide inequities in the distribution of wealth in a society or nation-state. Sociologists depict most societies as consisting of the following major socio-economic classes: upper middle; lower middle; working class; and a growing group labeled the underclass, those living in continual poverty over generations.

In recent years the inequities in the distribution of wealth have been so dramatic that the number of those considered to be middle class in more affluent nation-states has been shrinking. Those living on the edge of poverty, the lower working class and the underclass, have grown twice as rapidly as the people considered more affluent. This situation points to a widening gap between the rich and the poor. Social scientists, social workers, psychologists, medical practitioners, all, concur that the major cause of inequality in childhood is the condition of living in poverty. In other words, those children and families are living in lower class or underclass groups.

Children's Literature and Classism: Through the books they read, through films and videos, children are introduced to the concept of social class, classism, and the inequalities created by social class affiliations. That vastly popular series, the Harry Potter books, as well as the films, exemplifies how children can learn about the impact of social class. The publishers of the Harry Potter books, Scholastic Publishers, estimate that 325 million copies of the first six books were sold by 2007 in the United States alone including: *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*; *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*; *The Prisoner of Azkaban*; and *The Goblet of Fire*.

In the Harry Potter series, the Weasley family is continually described as a large family with limited financial resources. Particularly, Ron Weasley, Harry Potter's comrade at the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, is teased for his family's inability to provide new robes, a fine wand, and a suitable owl for this fourth son to attend Hogwarts.

More evidence of the role of social class appears when we are introduced to Harry, in the first book, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. He is pictured as a penniless orphan despised by the Dursleys, who are portrayed as the typical British middle-class family, living on Privet Drive in their spotlessly clean home with manicured lawn. However, when Harry learns that his deceased parents have left him a small fortune and he can finance his schooling at Hogwarts, and not have to depend on others, his social status changes. Subsequently, Harry is treated with more respect by the Dursleys and allowed to have a bedroom to himself, rather than living in the closet below the stairs in the family house.

Another situation in the Harry Potter books that informs children about the power of influence and wealth on social class status is J. K. Rowling's portrayal of the Malfoys, both Draco, the son, and Lucius, the father. As a longstanding and wealthy wizard family, the Malfoys can be supercilious in stating their views about the social standing and monetary holdings of other characters in the Harry Potter books. Draco Malfoy refers to various characters as servants, has little regard for some of the teachers, and continually points to the Weasley family as being poor, of low status, and having too many children. An underclass appears in the Harry Potter series as well, in the form of the house elves, who work unseen and unpaid, living in the lower levels of the Hogwarts School or in the homes of wealthy wizard families; in reality, an enslaved people (Heilman and Gregory, 2003).

Awareness of social class and classism in children's literature is an area of the language arts and literacy that parents and teachers can access. Once an educator is alerted to this subject matter, the presence and the ramifications of social class, social mobility, and social inequality become apparent, even in classical fairy tales such as *Cinderella* and *Jack and the Beanstalk*.

Children and Social Class Inequality in the UK: Britain is a nation that has been deeply class-based for centuries. Early on British-born children are aware of their family's social class status, religious affiliation and relative degree of affluence. In the first decades of the 21st century it was reported that Britain's population numbered around 60 million. Refugees and asylum-seekers have been arriving every month adding millions of new immigrants to the British population. Many of these new immigrants are leaving financial stress in Eastern Europe or escaping armed conflicts in Syria, Iraq and West Africa. Furthermore, Muslim communities in Britain are growing. These more recent immigrants continue to struggle for a place in British society, much as those do in the US. Some of these people are highly educated and bring specialised skills and experience to ease their socialisation and enculturation into the UK. However, other refugee families, their children, and single young adults are poorly educated due to the continual trauma of fleeing persecution and violence. Lack of education directly affects social class status.

Educational sociologists have reiterated that many-middle class, as well as working-class, parents share anxieties about social and educational inequalities imposed on their children (Apple, 2004; Meighan and Harber, 2007). For example, young UK children were questioned about their understandings of social class privilege and access to enhanced educational opportunities. Some children insisted their education was better than "poor" children's schooling because their families paid tuition to attend the school. It was better because it cost money. This is an example of how children are socialised into the notion of the superiority of tuition-based schooling. These attitudes may reproduce tendencies to reject the recent waves of refugee families and asylum seekers.

In the summer months of 2015 the media reported that over 100,000 refugees, the majority from Syria and Iraq, as well as other Middle Eastern countries, coming by flimsy boats across the Mediterranean Sea, landed in the islands off Greece. Numbers of these refugees told reporters they were escaping from the terror attacks of ISIS (the Islamic State). Among the refugees were over 4000 children, some of them unaccompanied. An assessment by Save the Children (savethechildren.org), a British non-governmental organisation (NGO), warned that these young people were at risk of exposure to various sicknesses, to trafficking, sexual exploitation and physical abuse when sleeping alone or pressed into cramped detention quarters. Furthermore, international media described the desperate situation of the Syrian refugee families who fled to the cramped refugee camps in Jordan. Parents with young children emphasised that their little ones cannot remember life before violence and homelessness. The toddlers suffer from seizures, malnutrition, and diarrhoea. Medical care is severely limited. It is evident that wars and governmental financial instability in countries such as Greece and Egypt, in Eastern European nations, and across Africa, are continuing to create devastating problems for humanity.

Learning and teaching about social class and the effects of classism are vital topics for our contemporary curriculum. In this article I have endeavoured to point out how global terrorism intensifies social inequality. With the knowledge of the power of social class status (SES) we can bend our efforts towards ameliorating the circumstances of inequality in the lives of children growing up in times of terrorism. Here follow some suggestions for thinking and learning about social class:

How has social class affiliation affected your students and those that you know?

What stories, plays or films can you recall where social class was important in the plot?

Discuss the impact of social class and social inequality with others. What responses and concerns can you list from these talks?

Do you discuss topics about social class or socio-economic status (SES) with your children and students? Have you

considered that stories such as the Harry Potter series and Cinderella, for example, have social class implications?

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Book Reviews

***The Teacher's Introduction to Attachment* by Nicola Marshall**

Jessica Kingsley (2014) ISBN 978-1-84905-550-5

Josh Gifford

This is a wonderful, timely and important book. It is written with much skill and care and it is suffused throughout with great heart. In her relationship with her readers Nicola Marshall models the qualities she suggests are needed when working with children who have experienced trauma. She writes with the authority of someone who is an adoptive parent, who has studied this area deeply and has, most importantly, made it into a relational practice.

In the Introduction Nicola Marshall provides the template, the key to her approach throughout the whole book. I have identified three sometimes separate, sometimes entwined approaches she uses very effectively time and time again: firstly the focus on understanding, followed by practical ways forward, followed by the qualities and attitudes needed to approach this work.

So in the Introduction, applying this template, firstly Nicola Marshall identifies her target audience and the area of study:

"Whether you work with children who have experienced trauma in their lives, you live with a vulnerable child or you are a professional who tries to help these children in some way, the fact that you have opened this book tells me you are keen to know more."

Then she goes on to indicate the area of study:

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"...this book will be a down-to-earth, practical and accessible look at this world of attachment and trauma, particularly in educational settings."

Finally the writer identifies some of the qualities needed to engage in this work:

"The key to most things in life is awareness and understanding. Once you have that the strategies are easier to find."

As would happen in any skilled approach to in-service training with teachers, Nicola Marshall settles her audience, creates safety and engagement, and gains interest and involvement. Throughout the book she is aware and appreciative of the pressures on teachers, parents and carers. However, her writing is always pointing to the possibility of a change of awareness in the reader, stating: "My aim is that, as you read this book, it will spark ideas and areas of interest for you as you travel this minefield of a journey." What she does not say, or perhaps cannot say because of the stated remit of the book, is that if you really start to get this stuff, it will transform your teaching and perhaps even change your life!

The book is divided into four parts. The first three parts are always informative, practical and thoughtful. In Part 1 there are seven chapters explaining and exploring the "Theories Behind Attachment and Trauma". These provide a clear grounding in these theories, with reference to research and suggestions for further reading.

Throughout, the voice of the writer is embedded in the writing, as when she states, for example, in the chapter "What is Trauma?": "Learning is not why they come to school; they come because we make them. Whilst they are there their main aim is to survive the day - to come out unscathed to live another day."

Throughout the book NM separates and puts light emphasis on some sentences by using italics. Here, for example, she is writing about the Ambivalent Attachment Style: "*the aim of the ambivalent child is to be noticed; in fact you will know who he is because, if you don't, he's not doing his job properly.*"

Part 2 builds on Part 1 by explaining some "Guiding Principles" to be aware of and follow when working with children who have experienced trauma. Nicola Marshall identifies five guiding principles, the first being "Relationships Over Programmes". In this chapter she introduces the methodology created by Dr Dan Hughes called PACE: Playful, Accepting, Curious, Empathic.

Again in italics, Nicola Marshall gently highlights some key thoughts. For Curiosity, "*Staying curious helps you to stay accepting of their inner world*" and for Accepting, "*Being able to handle them and their behaviour is important for them to know - if you can't handle them, they receive the powerful message, albeit the wrong message, that they are so awful that no-one can be around them.*"

In Part 3, 'Areas of Concern', Nicola Marshall identifies, and explores more deeply, nine areas which children who have experienced trauma find particularly challenging. For example,

in Chapter 16 'Trust' is helpfully explored using Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. With reference to Maslow she states, "The problems arise when our needs are not met at those lower levels. The vulnerable children we have been talking about will be more concerned where the next meal is coming from than how to do their times tables. Coming back to the reptilian part of the brain, survival becomes the driving force for them. Learning is not a priority - survival is."

It would be unfortunate if the title of the final section, "Some Final Thoughts", led the reader to attach less importance to it than the (to some extent) more content-focused central chapters. Indeed Nicola Marshall shares about this section that "in all honesty they are things I wanted to include but they didn't fit in the other parts". I am wondering if this is because this book has a stated limitation. It is "down-to-earth, practical and accessible" and it's about "children who have experienced trauma in their lives". However, it is, of course, so much more than this as is demonstrated by the reflections which enrich each chapter and it is in this last section that this becomes really evident.

I can understand why these important chapters are at the end of the book. If they were at the beginning they probably wouldn't gain entry to the world of school which is not, for reasons too broad to explore here, receptive to deeper inquiry, particularly around relationships, both between teachers and between teachers and children. However there is a risk that the stated limitation of the book, which enables it to make it into the staff room, perpetuates the belief and practice that sound relational practices, kindness and thoughtfulness, are most relevant to children with special educational needs. Unless, of course, you really hear and get the final section.

In the chapter "The Most Important Thing We Learn" Nicola Marshall asks: "So what is the most important thing to learn? If you broke down the curriculum taught in schools today and picked out those things that help children to be emotionally resilient, resourceful and secure, how much would there really be? Could you honestly say that much of what we learn at school helps us to do that - to be resilient, resourceful and secure?"

This is followed up in the chapter entitled "What's So Wrong With Rewards At School" with: "The way our education system is set up these days is around behaviour modification techniques - getting children to behave in the way we as society deem is fit. What happens in the middle of this is there are millions of children who don't fit the mould - in fact I would go so far as to say no child fits the mould. They are all unique, different, individual and as such should be treated so."

Finally, in the concluding chapters, Nicola Marshall brings the book round to the question, which hovers throughout the book, about our own inner world, our behaviour, our attachment styles which we practise each day with the children in our care.

Firstly she declares in the chapter entitled "Triggers", "As with much of the content of this book, you could just as easily relate these aspects to children with secure attachments", thus broadening this practice to include all relational activity with children.

Then she adds in the chapter entitled "Inner and Outer Resources" that "there are two types of resources you will need - those within yourself and those outside of yourself". To complete this theme she goes on say, "that is why working on understanding your own attachment style is paramount".

In the final chapter entitled "A Word of Warning", Nicola Marshall explores the potential impact of this work on teachers and the importance of self care and support.

In the concluding paragraph she offers:

"So my final words to you are this - look after yourself, be kind to yourself and those around you, continue to try to connect with these children and see their pain."

I feel this is an important and seldom heard message in the context of school, perhaps in the wider context of anywhere in our society. Three simple things to encapsulate this wonderful book and continue to practise in our daily lives:

Be kind to yourself
Be kind to those around you
Practise connection

Josh has been a member of Education Now/PEN since 1989, supporting the life of our community and contributing regularly to conferences and journals. He was a teacher for 25 years, in various roles and contexts, in secondary education and he also coordinated a long term project for the Youth Offending Team. He is now a trustee of CPE/PEN.

***International Perspectives on Home Education* ed. Paula Rothermel**

Palgrave Macmillan (2015)

Wendy Charles-Warner

When you pick up a work on home education with Paula Rothermel's name on it you expect excellence, attention to detail and a very interesting read. *International Perspectives on Home Education* does not disappoint.

The work consists of a collection of short articles by respected researchers in the field of education, specifically home education. These are grouped into sections that make it easy to dip into if your interest is specific.

Part I: The Learning Process has contributions from Leslie Safran Barson founder of The Otherwise Club, who focuses on the experience of home educating parents; Glenda Jackson, the director of Australian Home Education Advisory Service, who examines links between Vygotskian learning theory and home education; Noraisha Yusof, who was home educated, examines mathematics learning; Andrew McAvoy, an education professional, looks at the impact of technology on home educators' learning and Alan Thomas, visiting fellow at the University of London Institute of Education, with Harriet Pattison, research associate at the University of London Institute of Education, provide an insightful and compelling argument for informal methods of acquisition of reading skills. This section sets the tone for the work, drawing in the academic reader as much as the interested enquirer, to look further.

Part II: Tensions and Criticisms examines perceptions that those of us who work in the field recognise well. Christian Beck,

associate professor at the Educational Research Institute, University of Oslo, examines social integration of home educated children in Norway; Samantha Eddis, of Gary K. Herberger Young Scholars Academy, urges understanding between home educators and Authorities of each other's community focus; Nicky Hardenbergh, author of *Homeschooling in Full View*, argues that "high stake" testing is not suitable for home educated children and Christopher Lubienski, Professor of Education Policy at the University of Illinois, with T. Jameson Brewer, a PhD student at the University, challenges home education as having unaddressed problems and being anti-institution. This section certainly challenges the reader to consider these tensions and adds to the overall feel of completeness of the work.

Part III: Political Conflict is perhaps the most controversial subject to tackle and Paula Rothermel does not shirk in tackling it. Thomas Spiegler, Researcher in Sociology of Education, presents a thorough and useful overview of the sensitive subject of home education in Germany; Daniel Monk, Reader in Law at Birkbeck, University of London, discusses human rights aspects of home education; Joke Sperl, Professor of Education Law at the Juridische Hogeschool Avans-ontys in Tilburg, argues eloquently and convincingly that parents should not be prevented from home educating their children if they are in fact providing an education to those children, and Paula Rothermel's article on what can and does go wrong, where Local Authority staff and other professionals involved with home educating families, misunderstand the very nature of home education, cannot fail to affect the reader. This sometimes shocking piece opens eyes to the plight of these families and the sometimes destructive involvement of those professionals in a forthright and informative way.

Part IV: In Lifestyle and Choice sees Ari Neuman, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Education at the Western Galilee College in Israel and Aharon Aviram, Chair of the Center for Futurism in Education at Ben-Gurion University, demonstrate home education to be a rational choice in view of the "disparity between what is available and what is desirable, in education", and do it well. This is followed by Erwin Fabián García López, from the Education Research Institute Universidad Nacional de Colombia, examining family dynamics in home education in Colombia.

Part V: Models: War, Poverty and Necessity could equally sit well in a piece on gender studies, as it highlights the challenges faced by women and girls in war torn Afghanistan. Ulrike Hanemann, Senior Programme Specialist and Manager of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, portrays home-based education as essential for ensuring access to females, rather than a choice of the few. This article does not make comfortable reading, but it does make a necessary contribution to our understanding of home education in extreme circumstances. Sugata Mitra, Professor of Educational Technology at Newcastle University, shows us the future of education in a self-directed world, updating our knowledge of the 'hole in the wall' experiment as doing so; Cheryl Fields-Smith, Associate Professor of Elementary Education at the University of Georgia in Athens, examines the rise of home educating black families, in which collaboration leads to black children succeeding where their peers fail in schools, and Michael Apple, Jon Bascom Professor of Curriculum and Instruction and Educational Policy Studies at the University of Wisconsin, looks at "Godly" education. Perhaps an approach that sits less comfortably with UK readers than it does with readers in the USA.

Part VI: Cultural and Intercultural Relations brings the work to a slightly disappointing finale with Madelen Goiria, Lecturer in Civil Law at the University of the Basque Country examining her "carnival of blogs". This article felt less relevant to the UK reader than the work does in general. Finally, Carlo Ricci, Professor at

the Schulich School of Education at Nipissing University, takes a personal look at intercultural relationships and home education which fails to pull the last section up to the high standard of the majority of the articles.

Overall, Paula Rothermel presents a collection of pertinent, valuable and thought-provoking articles in an accessible way. Her work has already proven valuable in expert witness testimony and is certain to find its way on to the shelves of home education specialists.

Wendy Charles-Warner is a trustee / director of the Centre for Personalised Education. She is a tireless, experienced lawyer, advocate and campaigner on a range of issues including elective home education, home education and the law, relationships with local authorities and government.

Centre for Personalised Education- Personalised Education Now – News

Peter Humphreys

**Conference: Alternative Educational Futures.
Friday June 17th
Birmingham City University**

**Put this in your diary!
Details will be available shortly on our web
presence. Great line up.
Conference in memory of the work and legacy of
Prof. Roland Meighan and Philip Toogood**

CPE-PEN Web Presence

CPE-PEN Website: <http://personalisededucationnow.org.uk> (in need of upgrade / update)

CPE-PEN Blog: <http://blog.personalisededucationnow.org.uk>

Flexischooling Families UK – Facebook Group (some 2400 members)

Flexischooling – Facebook Closed Group (some 800 members... please request membership, follow, join in)

Flexischooling Practitioners UK – Facebook Closed Group (Emergent... please request membership, follow, join in)

Centre for Personalised Education – Facebook Closed Group (Emergent... please request membership, follow, join in)

Centre for Person Ed @cpe_pen – Twitter

Linked Sites

Educational Heretics Press:

<http://www.educationalhereticspress.com/>

Educational Heretics Press: Facebook page (search / like / track) <https://www.facebook.com/educationalhereticspress/?fref=ts>

Home Education and your Local Authority: Help with dealing with officialdom Facebook Group (some 4300 members)

PERSONALISED EDUCATION NOW

The vision of **Personalised Education Now** built upon a funded **Personalised Educational Landscape**.

- * A focus on the **uniqueness of individuals**, of their learning experiences and of their many and varied learning styles.
- * Support of education in **human scale settings**, including home-based education, community learning centres, small schools, mini-schools, and schools-within-schools, flexischooling and flexi-colleges, networks of groups or individuals, both physical and virtual.
- * Recognition that **learners** themselves have the ability to make both rational and intuitive **choices** about their education.
- * The **integration of learning, life and community**.
- * Advocacy of **co-operative and democratic organisation** of places of learning.
- * Belief in the need to **share national resources fairly**, so that everyone has a real choice in education.
- * Acceptance of Einstein's view that **imagination is more important than knowledge** in our modern and constantly changing world.
- * A belief in **subsidiarity**... learning, acting and taking responsibility to the level of which you are capable.
- * Adoption of the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms**.

PERSONALISED EDUCATION NOW

Maintains that people learn best:

- * when they are **self-motivated** and are **equipped with learning to learn tools**.
- * when they feel comfortable in their surroundings, **free from coercion and fear**.
- * when educators and learners, **value, trust, respect and listen** to each other.
- * when they **can invite support / challenge and co-create** their learning pathways from those educators and others they trust.
- * when education is seen as an **active life-long process**.

What is meant by 'Personalised Education'?

Personalised education as promoted by **Personalised Education Now** is derived from the philosophy of **autonomous education**. This centres on learner-managed learning, invitational learning institutions, the catalogue/natural versions of curriculum, invited rather than uninvited teaching, and assessment at the learner's request. Its slogan is, "**I did it my way – though often in co-operation with others**" and it operates within a general democratically-based learning landscape that has the slogan, "**alternatives for everybody, all the time**".

Within the context of the UK "schooled society" there are already some key institutions that work to the autonomous philosophy within a democratic value system. A prime example is the public library. Others are nursery centres, some schools and colleges, museums, community arts projects, and home-based education networks. They work to the principle of, "**anybody, any age; any time, any place; any pathway, any pace**".

Such institutions are learner-friendly, non-ageist, convivial not coercive, and capable of operating as community learning centres which can provide courses, classes, workshops and experiences as requested by local learners. These are part of a rich and successful, but undervalued personalised learning heritage, from which we draw strength, and which we celebrate.

Personalised Education is legitimated by the latest **understanding about the brain**, and how we **develop as learners and human beings** throughout our lives. It operates within a **framework of principles and values** resulting in learners whose outcomes are expressed in their character, personality, in the quality of life they lead, in the development and sustainability of our communities and planet, and in peaceful coexistence and conflict resolution. Learner success is therefore measured in terms of good physical and mental health, in peaceful existence, freedom from crime, usefulness of their contributions and work, and levels of active citizenship. In reality, these are more significant than the limitations and delusions of over-emphasis on assessment scores and paper accreditations.



Recycle Schools Now into invitational, all-age community learning centres operating year round.

Personalised Education Now seeks to promote educational "**alternatives for everybody, all of the time**" through a diverse, funded **Personalised Educational Landscape**. This would meet the learning needs, lifestyles and life choices made by individuals, families and communities. State funding would be secured through vouchers or personal learning accounts. We encourage education based on learner-managed learning, using a flexible catalogue curriculum, located in a variety of settings, and operating within a framework of democratic values and practices. An educator becomes, predominantly, "**the guide on the side**" rather than "**the sage on the stage**".



The Centre for Personalised Education Trust (CPE)

Personalised Education Now (PEN) is the trading name for The Centre for Personalised Education Trust (CPE), a charitable company, limited by guarantee (Charity number: 1057442). It emerged from Education Now in 1996 as The Centre for Personalised Education Trust (CPE). In 2004, after 17 years' pioneering work, Education Now transferred its resources and membership to PEN.

What can you do?

This is a message for everyone. Enter a dialogue with as many people as you can. Share the journal (hard and digital copies) with others. Engage them in the issues and encourage membership of PEN.

There are kindred spirits in all sorts of surprising places and of course there are those who just need a little more convincing. Often people partly understand but cannot conceptualise solutions or how we move forward. The arguments are not about blame as we need to engage the present system, not alienate it. One of our roles is to explain and show how current learning systems are and how things could be different. Within a developing personalised educational landscape solutions will evolve according to localised possibilities, including ways of learning that we have not yet imagined. It's all too easy to take the moral high ground and believe we have all the answers because patently the enterprise is challenging and far from easy. But even as it stands we can share the rich history and current practice of learning in all sorts of settings. These signpost a better, brighter learning future.

Publicise and forward our web and blog links, circulate our PEN leaflet (from the general office). Bring the strength of PEN to succour those currently engaged in personalised education, and provide vision to those who are not.

To find out more, visit our web presence:

Main site: <http://www.personalisededucationnow.org.uk>

Blog: <http://blog.personalisededucationnow.org.uk/>

Centre for Personalised Education – Facebook Group

Flexischooling Families UK - Facebook Group

Flexischooling - Facebook Group

Flexischooling Practitioners – Facebook Group

Educational Heretics Press: <http://www.educationalhereticspress.com/>

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Journal:

Contributions for consideration for publication in the Journal are welcomed. Authors should contact any of the Journal Publication Team to discuss before submission.

PEN operates an "Open Source" policy: PEN resources and copy can be reproduced and circulated but we do request notification and acknowledgement.

Blog – Ezine:

Contributions via

personalisededucationnow@blueyonder.co.uk

Newsletter:

Contributions for the Newsletter are also welcomed. Contact Janet Meighan.

Membership of Personalised Education Now

Personalised Education Now welcomes members, both individuals and groups, who support and promote its vision. Its membership includes educators in learning centres, home educating settings, schools, colleges and universities. Members include interested individuals and families, teachers, head teachers, advisers, inspectors and academics. PEN has extensive national and international links. Above all the issues of personalised education and learning are issues with relevance to every man, woman and child because they lie at the heart of what kind of society we wish to live in.

Newsletters

August 2016

January 2017

Journals

Issue 24 – Sum/Aut 2016

Issue 25 – Win/Spr 2016/7

Learning Exchanges / Conferences

Learning Exchanges / Conferences: Spring / Early Summer Annually

Further information - blog / newsletters

Join Personalised Education Now

Membership Includes:

Minimum of 2 PEN Journals a year and specials

2 PEN Newsletters a year

Learning Exchanges (usually April/May - free)

Access to the publications from Educational Heretics Press

<http://www.educationalhereticspress.com/>

Access to and support of a diverse network of learners and educators

Your membership supports:

Ongoing research and publications, development of the |CPE-PEN web presence, learning exchanges and conferences and other resources

Yes, I would like to join Personalised Education Now

Subscription:

£25 (£12 unwaged)

Send cheque made payable to the Centre for Personalised Education together with the details below:

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