

Our primary school council

Dallimore childrens' school council was set up in early 1992. It was set up, for us children to be involved in decisions that affect us and to create an opportunity for us children to 'voice' our ideas and opinions.

The school council consists of 14 children who represent each class and two teacher representatives. We meet every Monday and discuss any issues that the children of Dallimore want us to. After the meetings the representatives report back to their classes at circle time.

Over the last three years we have accomplished a lot. Schools Council have provided a healthy tuck shop for the school, we have bought over 200 toys for the children to play with at playtime and dinnertime and we have also paid to have many games and drawings painted onto our playground. E.g. Giant chess board, Maze, Compass, British isles etc. We have also introduced separate playtimes for Infants and Juniors. We have recently applied and been given a £410 Grant for a Derbyshire crime beat competition which paid to have to have a camera installed on our playground. We are in the process of having a Wendy House built and seats placed around the playground. They have all helped to reduce bullying.

Dallimore children's School Council wrote to Derbyshire County Council about the school dinners. We got them to change the dinnertime menu and include a vegetarian choice. We also recently devised a dinnertime rota that makes lunch time more fair.

We raised money to pay for all these activities in different ways. So far we have had a toy sale, colouring competitions, drawing competitions, lots of discos, fancy dress competition and selling cakes.

Should any child at Dallimore, whether in a nursery, infant or junior class, wants to say anything at all then they can contact

school council by asking their class representative or by writing a letter and putting it in the School Council box which is opened once a week. They do not have to sign the letter if they don't want to.

School Council has been very popular. We were even interviewed by Radio Derby when we had the playground painted and had an article written about us in a magazine. We think that it has made the school a better place.

Carly Barrett (Council Secretary, aged 11 years)

Cuts, what cuts?

* cost of the updated Parent's Charter	£ 3,000,000
* DFE Publicity Budget	1979 £ 100,000
	1994 £ 8,800,000
* cost of Dearing Consultation on the National Curriculum	£ 2,000,000
* development and implementation of the National Curriculum and its assessment from 1988 to 1993	£469,000,000
* operating costs of the National Curriculum Council, to 1993	£ 36,300,000
* operating costs of the Schools Examination and Assessment Council, to 1993	£ 69,600,000
* cost of each annual 'League Table'	£ 2,000,000
* refurbishment and first year's rent of NCC's York HQ for use of Funding Agency for Schools	£ 1,000,000

For the cost of the Parent's Charter, one shire county has calculated that it could

- * provide 75 nursery adaptations with 2,300 places, or
- * refurbish 20 primary schools, or
- * entirely replace 2 primary schools and refurbish 4 more, or
- * provide 10 secondary schools with a new 3-classroom block

For the cost of one year's DFE publicity, it could

- * provide a further 220 nursery adaptations thereby providing a further 6,600 places, or
- * refurbish 58 primary schools, or
- * entirely replace 7 primary schools and refurbish 3 more, or
- * provide 29 secondary schools with a new 3-classroom block

Knowing people?

Experience the latest techniques in training and education? Discover links between Accelerative Learning and other approaches? Enjoy an exhilarating international atmosphere? These promises were being made by **SEAL**, the Society for Effective Affective Learning. Their Sixth International Conference, **The Roots of Learning**, was in Brighton.

What persuaded me to attend were two names on the programme, both workshop facilitators known to me.

The first was Jonathan Barber who has just written a book on Holistic Education. In the Introduction he says: "*Sometimes when I think about Holistic Education I visualise it as a many faceted crystal, a multi-dimensional one at that. All aspects are part of the whole, and in describing one aspect I may end up describing another since the 'parts' are so inter-related*". Jonathan who still teaches in the state sector, is a scientist! As such, he was facilitating a workshop entitled **Developing and using intuition**.

The second name to jump off the programme was Lonny Gold from Paris. His booklet *SUGGESTOPEDIA: Activating the Student's Reserve Capacities*, is a little classic. I quote from his Introduction: "*SUGGESTOPEDIA holds that the starting point in all learning is the student's deep-rooted attitude to the subject matter and to her/himself. By creating a pleasant, relating, and stimulating environment, where all information has a positive EMOTIONAL content, the Teacher can help students to create networks of pleasurable association with the new material and thus to remember it longer ...*".

An EFL specialist, Lonny provided a fun-loving learning environment so that we, his large class from many countries, could absorb aspects of good grammar in action.

There were 13 plenary sessions. Among them Marshall Rosenberg, international moderator of situations of conflict, used glove puppets to present **The language of non-violence**. Micheline Flak, researcher on **Yoga in education**, gave a well illustrated talk showing how the Mandala is a useful tool for fruitful learning. And that wasn't all.

Other enticements were: **The wounded learner and photoreading** with Paul Scheele, an author from Minneapolis, USA; **Quantum learning** with Bobbi DePorter, Chair of SALT; and with Tim Wheeler, a composer of New Age Music, **The healing voice**. Each day delegates were twice asked to choose between 9 other workshops, all running concurrently! Phew! So let me just comment on two further offerings.

First, Paul Robertson, leader of the Medici String Quartet, offered **Music and the mind**. Giving a rich range of examples from classical times to present-day medical research. Paul illustrated the huge difference between the two lobes of the brain. The talk ended by showing how even the catatonic patient can be lulled back into communication using certain musical notes. After all, a tone-ic is taken to stop us being sick!

Finally, another dynamic learner/teacher was Peter Kline, author of *The Everyday Genius*. The implications of the very latest breakthroughs in scientific brain research are thoroughly integrated into Peter Kline's teaching modes. Witness his work as described in his books *Five Neurological Models of the Brain for the Classroom* and *Ten Steps to a Learning Organisation*.

Here is not space to report in full the latest medical findings. Suffice it to say that scientists have now furnished proof to console teachers like us who cry out for MORE WORKSHOPS, LESS WORKSHEETS! In brief, the human brain is not suited to factual learning. It thrives and comes most alive when triggered by EMOTIONS. Brain and emotion together provide a framework for MEANING-ful activities which satisfy the whole person. Music, for example, can successfully encourage whole-brain learning since music evokes multi-levelled responses. This also explains why active students, consulted in a creative process, remember such activities with a feeling of ownership. In short, emotions and imagination need more nourishment if learning potential is to be maximised.

This, then, is the message of effective, affective learning. On behalf of EDUCATION NOW I'd like to offer this Society our special SEAL of approval!

Christopher Gilmore

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Book Review

The Freethinkers' Pocket Directory to the Educational Universe

Roland Meighan (1995) Educational Heretics Press £7-50

One of the most depressing aspects of the current educational climate is that both the level and content of debate (inasmuch as

there is any real debate at all) are so restricted. Discussions about funding, curriculum and testing are important, but the way in which they assume, skate over or avoid what education is, or could be, is to me much more significant. For anyone who wants reassurance and stimulus concerning alternative conceptions of education, both in theory and practice, this book is a little jewel.

Each single page is devoted to one of fifty five topics - the only exception being flexi-schooling which gets two pages. Hats off to Roland for this. He has managed to summarise the issues in a concise, readable fashion which still does justice to the subject matter. The book is a pleasure to dip into; it stimulates without demanding that you follow any particular sequence. The entries are arranged alphabetically and no attempt is made to impose any order on them.

The majority of entries concern the contributions of great progressive thinkers such as Dewey and Montessori, notable working examples such as Summerhill, or key concepts such as holistic education. One or two are different, the National Curriculum in particular. This is dealt with summarily and amusingly - witness the first sentence: "*The idea of a National Curriculum has little educational merit and a poor record!*"

The selection of topics is interesting in itself. Roland says that they represent "*the most promising horses in the educational stable in the judgement of the editor, the writer and their advisory network*". Personally I would have liked to have seen the inclusion of Maslow, self-esteem and most particularly student-centred learning, but it would not be possible to please everyone in a book like this and my guess is that it includes most of the favourites of most people who share an interest in this area.

I cannot help but notice that in many ways this book is a reflection of and symbol for Education Now, even though it is published by the sister company Educational Heretics Press. It is hopeful and humane and stands in opposition to the dreadful tyranny of the dominant ideology. Yet because it does not identify and clarify underlying issues, it is difficult sometimes to work out what it stands for other than diversity which, to me, does not seem quite enough.

In this sense, inside this book there seems to be another one trying to get out, one which articulates powerfully and clearly the unifying, fundamental beliefs which drive some of us to promote alternatives to current orthodoxy.

Perhaps I am overstating the case. After all some themes do emerge very clearly from this eclectic collection - the belief in the importance of children's own experience is one example. However, if it is true that nothing is as powerful as an idea whose time has come then it is important that we know, quite clearly, what the 'big idea' is.

For what it is worth, I have been taken recently with the notion that all of these alternatives are based on a fundamentally optimistic view of human nature and that this, in turn, is connected with a belief in the spiritual dimension of existence. This is an area which many people find particularly difficult to talk about, though I do detect signs of this changing. If they are connected, it is perhaps no wonder why it seems so hard to get alternative views of education accepted.

I both believe and hope that we are at what Fritjof Capra called the 'Turning Point' and that the future will see the ascendancy of new ideas alongside the decline of the old. Meanwhile books

like the Freethinkers' Pocket Directory provide an invaluable reference point and stimulus to the process.

Ted Harvey

Developing Democratic Education

edited by Clive Harber

In January 1995 the first international audit of children's rights in Britain accused the Government of repeatedly violating the UN convention on the rights of the child which it had signed four years previously. Two criticisms were that children are not consulted over the running of their school and are not taught about their rights.

At the same time, the collapse of communism in eastern Europe has created a new international consensus that democracy is the key aim of political development. Consequently, many countries and international agencies have turned their attention to the question of sustainability - how can we create political cultures that will support and protect democratic institutions?

Any answer to this question must include education because democracy is not genetic - it is learned behaviour. This book argues that education for democracy is now much less of a minority interest. It is high on the international agenda of debate. Such increased interest coincides with evidence that more democratically organised schools are more effective schools, both in the conventional sense of better examination results, less vandalism and truancy, and also in the sense of creating individuals who possess democratic values and behaviours.

This book explores both the management and curriculum of democratic education. While not ignoring theory, it is firmly grounded in school and college practice.

Contributors: Clive Harber, Derry Hannam, Frank Reeves, Janet Meighan, Roland Meighan, Patrick Ainley, Lesley Browne, Philip Toogood, Josh Gifford, Sharon Robinson, Mark Webster, Anna Frankel, Lynn Davies, Kate Gant, Paul Ginnis and Bernard Trafford.

From: Education Now at £10-00

The second meeting of the Institute for Democracy in Education was held at the University of Birmingham on 20th May. Among the outcomes was the creation of a new journal to be edited by Derry Hannam. Further details will be announced in the next newsletter. Also, a working party was set up to prepare outline plans for a European conference in the Autumn of 1996.

Listening to children under stress

Democratizing education is an advanced ideal and I seek to trace its aboriginal element of listening to children under stress. I submit that there have been three outstanding exponents of this skill.

The first, **Robert Owen**, is the unlikely case of a nineteenth century millowner and businessman turned educator. The second, **Homer Lane**, was qualified only as a teacher of 'handcraft'. He ran a 'reformatory' for only four years but he became a seminal influence for a generation of child carers of delinquent and emotionally disturbed children. The third, **A.S. Neill**, opened and ran a libertarian school for fifty years and wrote calculatedly controversial books aimed at challenging the educational mind-set of his era.

Robert Owen

Owen had a deep interest in children and interrupted his rounds of the mills to talk with them.

"The feelings of some of them ... were so overpowering that it was afflicting to see how much they suffered. I have long thought that the mind and feelings of young children are seldom duly considered or attended to, and that if adults would patiently encourage them to express candidly what they thought and felt, much suffering would be saved to the children, and much useful knowledge of human nature would be gained by the adults."

This 'overpowering suffering' prompted him to clear some open ground where the children might play - possibly the first 'playground' in the world. On the clearing he then built a place for the children to play out of the inclement Scottish winter winds and rains: almost certainly the first indoor playground. He then began to order the activities within the building so that it became a 'school' ... *"to form character"*.

He created three schools in all. He opened the first ever infant school which included children from the age at which they could walk: nursery education was already universal in the village of New Lanark in 1816.

There was a second school for children up to the age of 14 where the pupil-teacher ratio was 20:1. Thirdly, a century before Henry Morris conceived of the 'village college' in Cambridgeshire, and 150 years before our 'community schools' opened, Owen had a school in his village for the education and recreation of the adults in the community.

However, it is not for his administrative achievements that we stand most indebted to him, but for his educational philosophy. He had listened to the children on his factory floor and knew with utter, uncompromising certainty that happiness was the prime educational priority and that punishment was wrong.

"Punishment will never be required, and should be avoided as much as giving poison in their food."

Some might wonder what kind of anarchy was produced by this apparent state of uncontrol. One Report of the Poor Law Guardians in 1819 records:

"In the education of the children the thing that is most remarkable is the general spirit of kindness and affection which is shown (by the teachers) towards (the children) The consequence is that they appear like one well-regulated family,

united together by the ties of the closest affection. We heard no quarrels from the youngest to the eldest; and so strongly impressed are they ... that to be happy themselves it is necessary to make those happy by whom they are surrounded, that they had no strife but in offices of kindness."

The influence of Robert Owen

There are countless schools throughout the country named after poets, writers, politicians, councillors and the like. There is, however, no Robert Owen College, no Robert Owen Society (in the country of his birth at least; there is a flourishing one in Japan). No college of education is named after him, no Robert Owen Chair of Childhood Deprivation. Let one tribute from Percy Nunn, educational historian, stand for many:

"Owen (unlike other educational theorists) sought to carry his precepts into practice; and the record of his heroic struggle to bring about the moral regeneration of a Scottish manufacturing village is one of considerable success, aided by brilliant intuitions of sound methods in education and the fostering of 'social welfare', but frustrated in the end by the failure of his age to understand his ideas."

Homer Lane

There is no evidence that Homer Lane, the early twentieth century pioneer in the treatment of the 'juvenile delinquent', had any knowledge of Robert Owen. However, his thinking was similar. We know that Owen listened to the individual child. Lane carried listening one step further.

His immediate rapport with children as a young man led him to work in an institution for behaviourally disordered youths. His method, however, depended not upon the force of his authority, but rather on his abnegation of it. He invested each child with his or her own authority. He gained experience of working communally in the 'Court', run by the inmates, of whom one was the 'judge'.

Gaining a reputation as an authority in child care, he was invited to England by Lord Lytton, who was setting up a venture for juvenile delinquents which he hoped might be more creative than the type of punitive institution 'approved' by His Majesty of the time.

Lytton was so impressed with Lane's vision that he invited him to become the Superintendent of the 'Little Commonwealth' in

Dorset. In the first days he made an impact with the growing number of children by the warmth of his nature. He was on the side of the child; he laughed, he smiled, he teased the children. He was 'Daddy' Lane. A vivid anecdotalist, he talked with the children in his sitting room in the evenings. He talked and, significantly, he listened.

He transmuted the concept of the 'Court' from his American experience into the less judicial one of the 'Meeting' whereby the adults and children gathered to discuss problems which arose during the day-to-day living of the community.

One early visitor was a lecturer at a prestigious teachers' training college in London. Elsie Bazeley was so impressed that she gave up her post to take up a menial job at the Commonwealth. She records:

"I was amazed, when I first went to the Commonwealth, at the outspokenness of the community meetings. No-one was afraid to be himself, no-one was afraid to give himself away. You could criticise another in the most direct and searching manner, or you could say or do the kindest thing possible for another."

She added a thought-provoking and striking paradox:

"I have never lived in a more socialised community, nor one in which individuality was more marked."

In the early days there were dramatic events, in order to create the desired ethos of creative self-fulfilment for each child, but the community developed in its maturity. Visitors marvelled at the mature and social behaviour of the erstwhile delinquents, and attributed this success to Lane's charismatic influence. He repudiated this praise, saying that it was the method of 'self-government', whereby the 'citizens' of the community listened to each other, which effected the changes in character.

The influence of Homer Lane

Several child carers acknowledge a debt to Lane's methods, but there were two who wrote most extensively: David Wills, his biographer, and A.S.Neill, who began with 'problem' children until he could afford to work with parents who sought to escape the punitivism and academocrism of schools of the day.

Wills ran several institutions. The outstanding contribution he made to the theory of the treatment of disturbed children was to replace Lane's simplistic term 'self-government' with the concept of 'shared responsibility' (between child and adult).

John Shotton's *No Master High or Low* (1993, Libertarian Education), a history of libertarian education, traces the lineage of Lane's influence in communities for the disturbed over 65 years:

"What unites the Little Commonwealth (1914), the Barns Experiment (1940) and Rowen House (1979), to name but three, is the importance of personal autonomy ... hostility to coercive pedagogy and the fundamental belief in self-government."

Lane begat Neill and David Wills. David Wills of the Barns Experiment begat the New Barns school, which begat Millfield Grange.

A.S. Neill

During the First World war, an awkward young soldier with a scarcely penetrable Scots accent was stationed at the army camp in Trowbridge. He had been the head teacher of the Gretna Green village school. In his first book he had declared himself 'on the side of the bairns'. *A Dominie in Doubt*, acknowledged his uncertainty about his role as an authority-figure. Doubts vanished during a weekend in 1917 when he visited the Little Commonwealth in nearby Batcombe. He had found his educational lodestar.

In October 1924, six years after the closing of the Commonwealth, he 'left education for child psychology', and opened Summerhill School which accepted 'problem children' expelled from orthodox schools. He adopted Lane's concept of the 'Meeting', held every Saturday night in the school hall. This event provided a forum where grievances could be aired and rules could be formulated.

Less need be said here about Neill's practice, as he is more well-known than either Owen or Lane, and is more accessible through his books and his biography.

The influence of A.S. Neill

No Master High or Low provides a roll call of communities for delinquent and disturbed children which acknowledge a debt to Neill, who despite his growing fame, never failed to acknowledge his to Homer Lane.

Neill begat Redhill, Epping House, Kirkdale and Rowen House, all communities for disturbed children. Also Kilquarity, Braehead and Risinghill for 'normal' children. His influence on the educational system as a whole is unquantifiable, but some evidence is contained in an appendix to Ray Hemmings' book *Children's Freedom: A.S.Neill and the Evolution of the Summerhill Idea* (Schocken Books, 1973; English edition entitled *Fifty Years of Freedom*, 1972).

Conclusion

It is, I submit, to these three men more than any others that we are indebted for the albeit slow melting of the permafrost of punitivism in our attitude towards the behaviourally disordered in our society.

Bryn Purdey

Book Reviews

The Freethinkers' Guide to the Educational Universe Roland Meighan (1994) Educational Heretics Press £12-50

Whether it is intended for light reading or as an educational resource, this book is to be highly recommended. It contains a selection of almost two hundred quotations on education which may be used as a library or classroom reference book, or as a coffee-table interest book.

I found the format of large type with no more than two quotations on a page absolutely ideal for my teaching. As an initial teacher educator, one of my concerns has been to ensure that students begin to develop a 'concept' of what education is all about, a knowledge of the sociology and philosophy of education. This is an essential element in the professional preparation of teachers and it is only during initial teacher education that they are likely to be introduced to these perspectives. In a 'teacher training' programme that has become dominated by the requirements of the National Curriculum, attention to these areas has become increasingly difficult. This is where Meighan's book really helps. It provides a means of introducing students to the major controversies and of encouraging an interest in the 'big questions'.

An example may be beneficial, in this case from a 3rd year B.Ed. degree 'teaching studies' seminar. I first photocopied the whole book on to A4 cards, very easily done given the A5 format, and sliced each quotation on to a separate card. Each of my student groups was given a random selection and requested to sort them, with the quotation they most agreed with at one end, and the one that they least favoured at the other. A group spokesperson then reported to the others justifying the selections. This provided an extremely stimulating discussion and launched an ongoing activity involving the students mapping their own individual 'concepts of education'. Further, I asked some students to apply the selected quotation to a particular subject area. These responses from science specialists are typical:

"We chose Elbert Hubbard: *"A school should not be a preparation for life. A school should be life."* We thought that science should be applied to real life situations as much as possible. Study things children can relate to".

"We looked at the old Hebrew proverb; *"Do not confine your children to your own learning for they were born in another time."* What parents want for their children may not be what is best for their children because what they are thinking about is what they had. This is really obvious with science and metrication, but it is also true of mathematics and English."

"We decided to pick on the Albert Einstein one: *"Imagination is more important than knowledge."* We linked it to our science work, you could say that in learning to devise, imaginatively, an investigation, children gain a lot more than simply from the knowledge of their findings."

I am sure there are many other ways of using this book, and I, for one have every intention of making the most of them. Another excellent book that I have recently come across is *Preparing for the Future* by David Hicks (1994, Adamantine

suitable quotations to be sent to me at the University of East London.

John Siraj-Blatchford

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Moving up and moving on ...

Congratulations to **Peter Humphreys** on his promotion to head of Mere Green Combined School, Sutton Coldfield. Peter, an Associate Director, says thanks to ... *"all in Education Now for providing a lifeline and forum to keep my educational thoughts alive"*.

John Siraj-Blatchford, another Associate Director, is moving from Westminster College, Oxford to the University of East

The Trailblazers ... part two ... Alfie Kohn

Press in association with World Wide Fund for Nature). Hicks makes the very good point that if education is for the future then the possibilities offered and the challenges posed by alternative futures should rate more of a mention in schools! To this end, therefore. I hope to compile a sister volume to the *Freethinkers' Guide* which will be *The Freethinkers' Guide to Alternative Futures*. I would be grateful for any suggestion for

London.

"Competition is poisoning us." Alfie Kohn's first book published in 1986 came to this 'blasphemous' conclusion as he questioned the fundamental doctrine of the market forces creed. *No Contest* is a powerful critique of competition.

Kohn's book is no mere polemic. He draws on hundreds of psychological studies to reach his conclusions, and he first presented his findings for his doctorate. He argues that our struggle to defeat each other at school, at work, at play, and at home, turns all of us into losers in the end. It does not motivate us to do our best for very long, and 'healthy competition' turns out to be a complete contradiction in terms. Rather than building character, competition sooner or later sabotages self-esteem and ruins relationships.

The first edition of Kohn's book dealt with work places in particular. The revised edition of 1992 had a new chapter devoted to education. But in 1993, he expanded this to produce a new book, *Punished by Rewards: The Trouble with Gold Stars, Incentive Plans, A's, Praise and Other Bribes*. Kohn demonstrates that although the strategy of 'Do this, and you will get that' seems to work in the short term, its long term effects do lasting harm. It reduces human learning to the same basis as dog-training. People, unlike dogs, end up doing inferior work when we constantly bribe them with incentives, as they lose real interest in what we are bribing them to do. Temporary obedience is all we can expect from such strategies and too much praise can even turn children into 'praise junkies' who get hooked on the approval of others.

Seductively, rewards are often successful at increasing the probability that we will do something someone else wants us to do. At the same time, however, they change the way we do it and the quality of the results. People who are offered rewards tend to choose easier tasks when there is a choice. They are less efficient at using any available information to solve new problems, are more illogical in their problem-solving strategies, and become so answer-orientated they will get results by any methods including cheating. They can give the appearance of working harder and producing more activity. But the activity is of a lower quality, contains more errors, is more stereotyped, and less creative than non-rewarded people working on the same tasks.

Kohn explores five reasons why rewards are counter-productive in his section 'The Trouble with Carrots'. Rewards are disguised punishments because they are actually control devices, and also because the person who is trying to control the behaviour of another reserves the power to withhold the reward at will. Rewards rupture relationships by setting up companions as rivals. Next, rewards, like punishments, ignore reasons: they do not require any attention to why the desired behaviour, is being encountered in the first place. Rewards also discourage creative risk-taking. Finally, rewards impose extrinsic motivators over intrinsic ones: these are poor substitutes for a genuine interest in what we are doing.

Treating People Like Pets

As behaviourists cheerfully admit, theories about rewards and various practical programs of behaviour modification are mostly based on work with rats and pigeons. The underlying assumption, according to one critic, seems to be that "the semi-starved rat in the box, with virtually nothing to do but press on a lever for food, captures the essence of virtually all human behaviour."

But it is not only researchers who make this assumption. We join them in taking "one giant leap toward mankind" when we import the principles and techniques used to train the family pet to the realm of raising children. The way we sometimes talk about (or to) our daughters and sons reflects a view of parent-child relationships quite congenial to a committed behaviourist. Discussions about "how to handle" our kids are a case in point; on reflection, this seems a rather peculiar verb to use in the context of a relationship with another human being. Likewise, when we call out a hearty "Good girl!" in response to a child's performance, the most appropriate reply would seem to be "Woof!" With respect to the workplace or public policy, we talk casually about the use of "carrots and sticks," and there is food for thought here, too. Before these words came to be used as generic representations of bribes and threats, what actually stood between the carrot and the stick was, of course, a jackass.

Presumably most of us do not intend to compare ourselves - or more precisely, the people to whom we are administering these inducements - to poodles or donkeys. Surely we know that human beings can reflect on rewards and develop complicated expectations and opinions about them (and about the activities for which they are being dispensed) in a way that animals cannot. Yet it is not an accident that the theory behind "Do this and you'll get that" derives from work with other species, or that behaviour management is frequently described in words better suited to animals.

My claim is that pop behaviourism is by its very nature dehumanising. But I do not mean by that word merely that we are treated or understood as being on a par with other species; this is just a symptom. In the case of Skinnerian theory, the human self has been yanked up by its roots and the person reduced to a repertoire of behaviours. It is hard to imagine what could be more dehumanising than the removal of what defines us as human. In fact, even to suggest that we learn or work only in order to obtain rewards - an assumption held by behaviourists less extreme than Skinner - is not only inaccurate but demeaning as well.

*extract from Alfie Kohn's book
Punished by Rewards*

*published by Houghton Mifflin in 1993
page 24
available in UK priced £12-95*

Home-based Education - Research Update

The research on home-based education has now established that the students involved receive an education at least as good as those at school, and frequently better, with few exceptions. Therefore, current researchers are more interested in the question of why they do so well. The study by Terry Russell, reported in *Home School Researcher* (Volume 10, number 1, 1994) checked out some of the factors that might contribute to the widely recorded academic success of the home-educated. Russell asked nine questions, and surveyed the existing research on these, before studying 877 home-school parents in the Washington area. This is a lengthy paper using some complex statistical techniques and it needs to be consulted in original form to get into the detail. In summary, his findings are:

1. Does family income influence academic achievement?

It does not have any measurable effect and family income is not a predictor of academic success as measured by the SAT (Stanford Achievement Test).

2. Does the parent's level of education have any effect?

The effect of parent's education, measured by years completed, was small, although this was the single best predictor.

3. Does the student's previous grade level have an effect?

There was no evidence in the analysis to suggest that students of previous lower or higher grades respond better or worse to home-based education.

4. Is the number of years a student has been home-schooled an influence?

This was not shown to be a factor in academic performance in the SAT. (The average length of time for the sample was 2.7 years, with a standard deviation of 1.5 years.)

5. Does the previous type of education have an effect?

There were no measurable effects except some small effects relating to structured learning (see below). Of the sample, 28.5% had been previously in private schools, 39% in state schools, 30.8 % always home-schooled and 1.5 % 'other'.

6. Does whether the parent has had training in home-schooling make a difference?

This particular study related to a local training class and showed no measurable effects except a marginal effect relating to structure (see question eight).

7. Does the amount of religious content incorporated in the curriculum have an effect on academic achievement?

No effect was measurable. (40% had a strong religious identity, 42% weak, and the rest none.)

8. Does the amount of structure used have an effect?

The SAT assumes a structured approach to learning, so it was to be expected that there would be some interesting issues. The amount of structure used in the home-based curriculum did have a small positive effect on the scores recorded in the SAT. Parents who want their children to perform well in such tests, are, on the evidence of this study, advised to be aware of this.

9. Does the number of hours per week spent in home-schooling have an effect on student academic achievement?

No measurable effects were found. The average time spent on timetabled study was 15 hours, with a range of 0 to 45 hours.

Conclusion

Russell concludes that, in line with previous studies, none of the factors examined in this study asserted a powerful influence on the success of home-based education. This study indicates yet again, that there is no reason to doubt that the home-schooled students in the sample are receiving a very good education.

Roland Meighan

Unfair Competition!

In our last year in England - 1991 - I tried to enter a team of deschooled children in the Observer 'Mace' Public Schools Debating Competition. As you may know, this is a rather prestigious contest. My team would have comprised Aliah

Blackmore and Caitlin Moran. Everything seemed to be in order, until in June I suddenly received a letter from David Bussey, Assistant to the High Master of St. Paul's, who was responsible for organising the competition. The new message was that these two deschooled girls would not be allowed to compete. It was felt that they represented "unfair competition".

Salaam Blackmore

Well done the Flexi-timing L.E.A.!

My 9 year-old daughter has been home-educated for nine months this year following several traumatic years at school. We are pleased, however, with the support of our L.E.A. (Lancashire), the school, and the educational psychologist. Katie's SEN Statement allows for part-time attendance.

Beverley

Poole

Bravery is in the eye of the beholder ...

One parent in Worcestershire explained that her friends and neighbours said she was **so brave** to take on home-based education. Her response was that they were the really brave ones because they entrusted their children's education to a bunch of complete strangers and then hoped for the best!

Home-based Education Effectiveness Conference

All 24 places were filled at the successful conference for L.E.A. officers and others, which was held at the University of Nottingham in February. The conference will be repeated by popular demand on Wednesday 27th September 1995. Details can be obtained from the Education Now Office.

Stop Press ... Educational Heretics Press expects to have a video on home-based education available by the end of July.

"Home-schoolers as a rule have no quarrel with teachers. My own parents are both teachers; I've seen a lot of work that teachers do, on their own time and out of their own pockets ... Our reservations are about the system of schooling, not the people who are doing their best within it."

Canadian home-educating parent

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 113 Arundel Drive, Bramcote Hills, Nottingham NG9 3FQ

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Printed by Mastaprint on recycled paper.

