

The Catalogue Curriculum

"The idea of a National Curriculum has little educational merit and a poor track record." When I wrote this in *The Freethinkers' Pocket Directory to the Educational Universe*, I detected some squeals of protest. But I actually thought I was being a bit restrained, because I take the view that the National Curriculum is an *anti-educational* concept and part of the regressive educational agenda.

The lines of analysis are clear enough. An adult-imposed curriculum, National or not, is part of the Authoritarian approach to education. The Democratic and the Autonomous approaches have different concepts to offer.

In this endeavour, I propose the idea of the **Catalogue Curriculum**. Others may have used this description before, but I have not come across it. Don Glines has something similar in his 'window-shopping' approach to the curriculum, and the 'shopper's guide' for students in his *Creating Educational Futures* (McNaughton and Gunn, Michigan 1995).

The learners are offered a printed catalogue of learning opportunities including set courses, ideas for making their own courses, instructions as to how to set up a learning co-operative, self-instructional packages and available learning resources and opportunities. Because the catalogue includes pre-planned, negotiated and individual options, it serves the requirements of both the Democratic and Autonomous approaches whilst also allowing Authoritarian offers to be included. It thus serves the Flexi-schooling synthesis which is an attempt to incorporate the advantages of all three approaches and types of discipline.

There are several operating examples of the catalogue curriculum approach in existence, although none of them is quite as broad-ranging as I have in mind. Thus, the *City as Schools* initiative in USA presents its students with a catalogue of hundreds of learning-at-work placements and associated college-based course options. From these, students devise personal study programmes in consultation with a tutor.

A second example comes from the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme which has an extensive catalogue of ideas for the skills

component. Another example is that of the Scout and Guide Movement's catalogue of badges. This particular example shows how an authoritarian approach can be dominant - all the badge options are pre-planned recipes for learning.

Of course, the catalogue approach is common in Further and Higher Education. The Further Education Colleges all produce a prospectus and the Open University, the UK's leading teaching university, is the best example of a catalogue approach to devising your own degree programme.

Nursery schools use a catalogue approach because the young learners choose from a range of activities. The teachers write it down in their team meetings for planning purposes.

In a previous life as a L.E.A. Evening Institute Organiser, I prepared the catalogue, assembled a team of part-time course leaders, and booked the various venues. It was a shoestring operation, of course, one full-time organiser, an assistant organiser half-time, and a full-time secretary, to service 10,000 local adult learners.

The case for the catalogue curriculum to replace any version of the imposed set curriculum, is based on the most recent research into learning. Howard Gardner identifies at least seven types of intelligence. Charles Handy suggests that there are more than this. We have known for many years that there are more than thirty learning styles in humans.

The flexibility a full-blown catalogue curriculum approach implies is now widely recognised as the way forward in order:

- to enable individuals to cope with a rapidly changing world, creatively and imaginatively, rather than with fear, obstructionism and fatalism
- to provide for the wide variety of individual learning styles, forms of intelligence and learner aspirations
- to meet the needs of the modern economy for flexible capable and adaptable people
- to create a modern, living democracy in which people participate by exercising responsible, informed choice, and by acting with all the tolerance needed to make an open and diverse society work.

Roland Meighan

Is democracy about to catch on?

"We need democratic philosophy ... We've got to restart morality. And this needs to be done, not just by a handful of intellectuals but at the democratic and popular level. In schools. And politics has got to be about more than just managing the economy and training people to be technicians in the daytime and couch potatoes in the evening."

(Don Cupitt in *The Guardian* Face to Faith series)

"The answer lies ... in a move away from the high consumption, high stimulation, selfish and unfocused lives which many of us lead. We need to share more, we need to be content with consuming less, we need to value above all else the social networks which nurture us."

(Dr. John Collee in *The Observer* 23 July 1995)

In a State of the Nation MORI poll earlier this year, only 22% of the sample thought the present system of government works well. The need for a Freedom of Information Act is now supported by 81% and 79% supported the idea of Bill of Rights. 79% want a written constitution. An elected second chamber is opposed by 24% and supported by 49% with the rest as don't knows. The shift to a proportional representation system of voting was supported by 61% with 19% against. Quangos need reforming to make them just a bit democratic, say 80%. MP's should not have other jobs (48%) or be paid for lobbying (78%).

(Source: Charter 88 *Citizens* No.11 July 1995)

Co-operatives - the closely guarded secret

As Education Now is a co-operative, it is no surprise that we have been developing closer links with the International Co-operative College at Stanford Hall. You will recall that the first successful co-operative began in Rochdale in 1844 when 28 people met and established the Rochdale Pioneers. An excellent video is available from Stanford Hall, *The People's Cinema* @ £12.99, about the origins and development of the co-operative movement which is now world-wide, found in 100 countries and involves 700 million people.

Trivial Pursuits addicts please read on ...

USA has 47,000 co-operatives which involve 100 million people. Of the 100 top performing USA companies, 30 are co-operatives. There are 260 co-operative telephone companies. 11 million USA homes are serviced by electricity generating and distributing co-operatives. There is a US co-operatively owned TV station using satellite to send programmes to 900,000 homes and a cable TV company C-SPAN. Co-operatives in Japan produce 95% of the rice harvest. Outside of USA, 8 of the largest banks are co-operatives including France's Credit Agricole, Rabobank of The Netherlands, and the DG Bank of Germany. In Spain, in the Basque region, the famous Mondragon co-ops have built almost a complete economy in microcosm.

It seems that Education Now is in good company and, indeed, the directors were delighted to be consulted by Ricardo Semler -some of you will know his book *Maverick* or have seen the BBC Documentary about his democratically-run factory in Brazil - on a recent visit to UK when he was collecting ideas about alternative ideas in education.

If any political party is looking for ideas to sort out the shameful mess of the privatisation of the UK public utilities, the co-operative alternative could well be the antidote to the greed, super-greed, and all that sleaze and corruption?

(Source: report entitled *A Day in the Life of Co-operative America* supplied by Alan Wilkins of the International Co-operative College.)

Celebrations of a closer partnership

Wedding bells rang out in July to mark the marriage of Paul, the editor of *News and Review*, and Sharon, whose cartoons enliven its pages. An active, participative role was expected of everyone present, including providing the evening entertainment! An eventful, joyful day marked the start of their future life together. We send them our congratulations and good wishes.

Autumnal activity

The start of autumn has brought with it a substantial increase of action in the Education Now office. We have been inundated with requests for information, help of various types, contributions to radio programmes ... One or two articles in the national press have referred positively to the Education Now agenda and these have stimulated considerable interest.

On the campaign trail

The *Education Now Campaign*, announced in the spring, is now well underway. An initial letter inviting support is being distributed. Who should it go to? Please send names and addresses of suggested recipients to Katherine Trafford, Campaign Co-ordinator: 12, Earlswood Crescent, Pendeford, Wolverhampton, WV9 5RL .

Toogood too good to be overpowered

Philip Toogood, a Director of Education Now, writes:

"Annabel and I have left Dame Catherine's School for the only valid reason: we did not believe that a Parent Power school with a passive teacher group was in the best interests of children. Our departure leaves us free to continue our work in Flexi College which has now also broken away from the Dame Catherine's Primary School. Flexi College, now The East Midlands Flexi College Ltd. will continue the good work from premises leased from the Congregational Church, Tutbury, recently refurbished by the parents of secondary age students."

A letter from Poland

Professor Zbigniew Kwiecinski, Poland's leading educational analyst, wrote to us on 28 August:

"I can see many parallels between education in England and Poland. Of course I support democratic approaches to education. The conference of the Polish Association of Educationalists will be held in Torun from 31 August to 2 September. Its theme is Democracy and Education."

Unfortunately, state control over the Polish school system is even tighter under the present Secretary of State for Education, but schools will be given financial autonomy from 1 January 1996 during the time of cutting back public services. Is it not another parallel with pushing crisis and stress down the line through different forms of so called 'self-managing' schools in England?"

Self-esteem and education

In July I attended the second International Conference on Self-Esteem in Cambridge. Presenters at the conference included some world-renowned experts in this field. The three day event extended my knowledge and understanding but also deepened my conviction that self-esteem is a concept which should occupy a central position in educational thinking and planning.

The concept of self-esteem

Nathaniel Branden, generally regarded as the leading pioneer in the field of self-esteem has defined it as *"the disposition to experience oneself as competent to cope with the basic challenges of life and as worthy of happiness"*. Ultimately it is, he says, best understood as a spiritual attainment: *"a victory in the evolution of consciousness"*. Branden identifies six practices (or pillars) of self-esteem:

- living consciously
- self-acceptance
- self-responsibility
- self-assertiveness
- living purposefully
- personal integrity

These behaviours have a relationship of 'reciprocal causation' with self-esteem. They are both expressions and generators of it. The more they are practised the more self-esteem will rise, and the more they will be practised and so on.

The importance of self-esteem for education

There are many good reasons for regarding the development of self-esteem as one of the main aims of education. Personal growth has always been seen as highly desirable in schools even if inconsistently promoted and without any firm theoretical foundation. However, both the speed and nature of change in society mean that we need to tackle the issue of self-esteem with much greater urgency and commitment than in the past.

Our system of schooling was conceived and implemented in a society where factories and mass production were dominant. Leaving aside issues of ethics and politics for the moment, it was functional for schools to produce a workforce suited to this mode of production. Qualities of conformity and deference to authority were the order of the day.

Society in the future will be organised differently and will change even more quickly. Much of the knowledge and skills acquired by pupils at school will become redundant during their lifetime and new, unforeseen situations and problems will present themselves. Individuals with high self-esteem and the associated qualities of initiative, responsibility and adaptability will be much more able to cope and thrive in such an environment.

The way forward for schools?

To provide this sort of education schools will have to examine and change many practices so that they become much more student-centred. In order to do so it will be necessary for the issue of teacher self-esteem to be considered first. Teachers with low self-esteem will be unlikely to enhance that of their

pupils no matter how much training they are given. Teachers with high self-esteem will tend to do so spontaneously.

As superintendent of schools in a district in California, Robert Reasoner devised and led a programme which tackled teacher self-esteem first of all. Adapting Branden's 'six pillars' he arrived at the following model of teachers' needs:

- a sense of security
- feelings of identity
- a feeling of belonging or connectedness
- a feeling of purpose
- a sense of personal competence

Schools in his district implemented these on a sequential basis, taking about five years to effect all five. The results have been remarkable - academic achievement and attendance have risen and vandalism, drug abuse, teenage pregnancy and suicide have all declined. Most of the schools involved in the programme have subsequently been ranked as amongst the finest in California. Such has been its success that the government of Jamaica has commissioned Reasoner to do the same in the whole of that country's schools.

Making self-esteem such a priority entails a shift in thinking about education, in particular about teacher-pupil relationships and motivation. These have usually been seen only in terms of 'carrots and sticks' which are inappropriate to the development of self-esteem. However, such a rethink is overdue and self-esteem offers a clear aim and theoretical foundation for education in the future. It seems to me that there is no more precious and enduring gift we can give children than that of their own self-esteem. I hope it will not be too long before it becomes a serious and universal aim of all those involved in education.

Ted Harvey

League Tables and Cheating

Only the gullible accept the international league tables about school performance without scepticism. The compilers always say there are serious problems of comparison but journalists and politicians do not heed the notes of caution. One uncontrollable factor is cheating. The cheating industry is well established in some countries. A teacher who tried to stop cheating lost his life recently. *The Guardian*, 15/7/95, reported:

Students defend 'right to cheat'

Nearly 70 people were injured and a magistrate assaulted in clashes between police and students angry at being prevented from cheating in examinations, officials said yesterday. In Thursday's violence, students battled against police with home-made bombs and hockey sticks at exam centres ... The fighting followed Sunday's killing of a teacher by students after he tried to stop cheating, police said. More than 8,000 students have been expelled for cheating and attacking monitors since tests began a week ago ... Some teachers were suspended for aiding students. Reuter.

Meanwhile, here at home, in case you feel it does not happen here, the *Times Educational Supplement*, 16/6/95, had a front page item entitled '**Cheating 'rife' in national tests**'. Remember Alfie Kohn, the Trailblazer of News and Review number 8, who shows that one of the inevitable effects of the competitive approach in education is ... yes, you've guessed it ... cheating.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chris Shute

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

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

The poisonous pedagogy

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Developing Democratic Education

edited by Clive Harber, Education Now, 1995, at £10-00

This slim volume (115 pages of text) summarises and reflects the content of a one day conference on democratic education held in Bilston Community College, Wolverhampton, in 1994. There are thirteen contributions, none very long and all fairly digestible, even to a somewhat long in the tooth comprehensive school head teacher like myself.

The starting point for the conference is the belief of its organisers that ideas need to be developed about "*constructive alternatives to the existing regressive forms of education*". This volume, under the intelligent leadership of Clive Harber, explores the "*management and curriculum of democratic education*". It sets out to do so with a sparing nod to theory (well judged; not too much, not too little, just right; it went a long way towards convincing me that I was not reading the propaganda of a loony left group), an examination of the management and curriculum issues, and reference to practice in what are inevitably a small number of institutions.

You gain the impression quite quickly, wherever you open the book, that the contributors have tried out their ideas in real classrooms, and that they generally analysed the strengths and weaknesses with a welcome degree of objectivity. Only occasionally do you feel that the enthusiasm of the proselyte has meant a failure to give due weight to negative factors. Lesley Browne, for instance (Setting up a Democratic Classroom), in organising her A level Sociology group along democratic lines, might have anticipated the developing anxieties of her students during her illness, and, as she recognises, the Head of Sixth Form should have been fully in the picture from the outset of her experiment.

In his keynote introduction, Clive Harber argues the case for democratic education, drawing on an international literature, research and practice. He makes a powerful case for institutional democracy as a means of supporting local, civic democracy as well as national democracy. He establishes for me the case that *how* we participate is just as important as participating (Nazi Germany had a very high level of participation - of a certain kind!).

The definition of democracy is a problem. Most head teachers struggle daily with communication, consultative and decision making processes. Whether committees have voluntary or representative memberships, whether members are mandated or have freedom to decide after due debate, whether committees are to decide or recommend, these are not unusual questions in schools nowadays, I suspect. Ginnis and Trafford clearly recognise the problems in their perceptive chapter (Head teachers choosing democracy). All democracies at the national level involve power struggles and brokerage, wheeler-dealing, and not a little bullying on the part of those with slender majorities, often based on a minority of the popular vote. Is this to be introduced to school management? As they say, "*not all democracy is good democracy*", and it can even be disempowering for some of the constituency.

Lynn Davies (International Indicators of Democratic Schools) tackles the problem of definition from a different angle. She lists those factors which constitute the "*visible and agreed signs*" of democracy without attempting to define the ideal democratic system. This is an ingenious and, I think, successful idea. As a head practising in the traditional manner (benevolent dictator?) over many years, I found her list fairly non-

threatening and unproblematic. All the questions she asks with respect to accountability, competency and human rights are valid for every school, no matter how it is organised. To achieve positive answers to the questions, a school will undoubtedly have to move towards a participative and person-centred style, but it need not be fully democratic.

Only in the political area of what she calls "*Legitimacy*" do I quarrel. Asking if those in authority have been elected by universal franchise and secret ballot is a silly question in the context of normal paid employment. We have a national system of hierarchical organisations which relate pay to formal responsibility through the Schoolteachers' Pay and Conditions document. However well disposed to the democratic ideal, teachers with mortgages and growing children are not going to be very happy at the prospect of losing pay were they to be voted out of office.

Just one small quibble. Teaching and learning styles, differentiation and staff development have all received a forward impetus from TVEI. These have had a broadly democratising influence on education. Teachers have been empowered and children more valued. TVEI perhaps deserved a passing nod of approval from a contributor or two.

This is a stimulating and thought provoking book, both for its ideas and for the descriptions of practice. I hope it is widely read.

Michael Warrington

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Paul Ginnis

Number 1: Forum Theatre

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HOW?

- Ideally sit the group in a horseshoe around a 'working space'.
- Introduce the fictional situation to be portrayed. It should involve a small number of players (e.g. *how a family handles the son being sacked*). The situation will need some kind of tension (*the sacking is for lateness and the father is proud of his own punctuality*).
- Decide where the action is taking place (*around the family tea table*) and what the opening line is (e.g. *Dad: "What are you looking so miserable about?"*).
- Invite members of the class to take on the roles and play the scene spontaneously for three or four minutes.
- Once the scene is well underway, members of the audience are free to '*Stop the Action*' by raising a hand. They do this in order to suggest modifications. For example, someone might ask the Dad to be tougher, or the boy to cry or the mother to use this as an opportunity to say how she has always hated being hurried along by her husband. Specific lines can be suggested. In addition, audience members can ask to take over one of the roles, or to join the original player to form a 'composite character'. Likewise, players can '*Stop the Action*' and ask for advice from the audience.
- All this enables the drama to be moulded. It allows the group to understand the effect of different attitudes, languages and behaviours.

APPLICATIONS

History: to examine the human issues in various moments of history e.g. a cropper comes home having just lost his job because of new machines.

Science: Louis Pasteur attempts to persuade sceptics about his latest discovery.

English: to develop scenes suggested by poems, novels, newspapers or to develop alternative scenes in published plays.

R.E.: a priest who has lost his faith explaining himself to a couple of faithful parishioners.

WHY?

Dramatic action brings ideas and information to life. It works on the level of feelings, as well as thoughts, and usually creates a permanent impression. This particular technique allows students to experiment with their own ideas so it is, in a sense, automatically student-centred or, if you prefer, democratic. It gives learners with bodily-kinesthetic or interpersonal intelligences (Howard Gardner) a chance to access learning in subjects which they might otherwise find difficult.

A Tribute

Never Too Late

by John Holt Education Now Books, at £10-00

As a violinist in his fifties - an indifferent one - but with all the yearning that the occasional mellifluous phrase engenders - I enjoyed this book immensely. John Holt is quite right. It is, "*Never too late*".

As in all his writings, this observant, sensitive man displays an intense humanity. The wonderful thing about John Holt is his 'ordinariness'. This is not meant to be a put down, nor to give offence. It is just that, as in his educational writings, Holt always has the common touch, keeps close to the everyday experience. Consequently, he is able to show how it feels to be out of ones depth, to be full of longing - yet know that those particular musical phrases can rarely be produced by ourselves. In this there is a paradox - as Wilde once put it - you can be looking at the stars even when lying in the gutter. This paradox is about the immense reserves of capability we all have; the pleasure to be found in striving - the curious way that the affection and care of others nurtures and unlocks talent. 'Glimpse of the truth - we can no longer dodge'; such as the hours of practice necessary, or the things one must sacrifice to develop a particular art or skill; these are all the things which John Holt takes in his stride.

Reading this book takes one on a voyage of discovery; a voyage in several realms. There is a support throughout which inspires (perhaps I **will** tackle that Bach Partitas again); there is the honesty and humility which displays the struggles - and the occasional conceits. There are the insights, both into personality, which one expects from Holt, and into the music itself. The joy of it all runs throughout. I recall my own pleasure in first playing in Oxford in an **actual** orchestra (Never mind that it was a makeshift, 'added on' group of schoolboys and under grads). I recall the intensity of trio and quartet playing; the discipline and the camaraderie. Watch a current quartet play and then wonder at the composer - and at the human-mind which originates, yet perceives the welding of our humanity in concert.

No wonder Holt was such a visionary. He takes the ordinary yearning and shows us possibilities. He did it for children, for education - now he has done it for the failed musician in me. Holt is dead - more's the pity - since his words have real impact. We need people like this. They uplift the human spirit. It is never too late.

Philip Gammage

Developing Democratic Education

A Day Conference

"The only form of society which facilitates the continued evolution of the human species is a democratic form of society, and furthermore, the development of such a democratic society is dependent to a large degree on the democratisation of schools and schooling." John Dewey

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For details please contact the Education Now Office

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In the USA, over a million families are reported to be 'home-schoolers'. In the UK, the number of families opting out for home-based education has grown from about 20 families in 1977 to about 10,000 in 1995. As the numbers rise, the results are noticed. Official respect has been gained. A Boston University admissions director proclaims:

"Boston University welcomes applications from home-schooled students. We believe students educated primarily at home possess the passion for knowledge, the independence, and self-reliance that enable them to excel in our intellectually challenging programs of study"

It is *home-based* education because the majority of families use the home as a springboard into a range of community-based studies, rather than try to copy the factory model operated by the majority of schools. Every time the subject is reported in the media, more people come on board. They are surprised to find not just that it works, but that it works well, very well or brilliantly. Failures are rare.

What about the social competence of people educated at home? One answer is to give examples of home-educated people such as Yehudi Menuhin. Learning activities out and about in the community give children *more* social contacts, and *more varied* encounters, than the restricted social life of most schools. The 'tyranny of the peer group' is broken for the home-educated.

People often try to generate generalisations and stereotypes about families educating the home-based way. The evidence supports two:

- (a) **they display wide diversity in motive, methods and aims,**
- (b) **they are very successful in achieving their chosen aims."**

The Family Strikes Back !

is edited by Su Ansell, narrated by Christopher Gilmore, and produced by Janet and Roland Meighan. Original film material by Video-Film Telewizja, Poznan, 1992.

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Home-based Education - Research Update

Home-based education groups in USA are in dispute with some officials who are trying to make it condition that a parent has to be a certificated teacher. A recent research study by Joan Havens supports the home-schoolers because it shows that the certification of parents had virtually no impact on learning performance.

The factors that are proposed as more decisive in explaining why children learning at home do so well on academic tests are: low teacher-student ratio; close supportive contact between parent and child; the individualised methodology; and the freedom of the student to interact independently and creatively with the curriculum.

The study by Havens included another attempt to check out the academic success of the home-schooling families and it comes the same conclusion as the others, i.e. that the children scored significantly higher on the Stanford Achievement Tests than schooled children in the locality:

"This study focused on the academic aspects of home-schooling. It demonstrated that, for the sample selected, achievement was higher for home schooled children than for traditionally educated students."

Havens found that it was the high interest and involvement of the parents in the educational process that was significant rather than qualifications.

Joan E. Havens "Parent educational levels as they relate to academic achievement among home schooled children."
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