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Welcome to Issue 25 of the PEN Journal. I began to put this issue together soon after our very successful Learning Exchange in Walsall in late March. At that inspiring event we welcomed five new trustees to PEN: Fiona Bevan, Emma Dyke, Sean McDougall, Nikki O'Rourke and Harriet Pattison. We are very excited about the experience, creativity and energy which the new trustees will bring to our work at PEN. These qualities were much in evidence in the wide range of presentations which Emma, Harriet, Fiona and Nikki shared following a compelling keynote presentation on Radicalisation in Education by Rachel Sara Lewis. We were also treated to talks from Tim Rudd, Alison Sauer, Mike Wood and Leo Sedgley.

During the Learning Exchange we expressed our warm appreciation for Alan Clawley and Hazel Clawley, who were stepping down from their role as trustees, after many years of very generous service to PEN.

We are delighted that Janet Meighan, who was unable to attend the Learning Exchange, is to become Life President of CPE in recognition for her outstanding service to PEN. We are so grateful to Janet for the leadership and deep care she has so generously offered PEN over more than three decades!

A warm thank you to all the contributors to this issue. I hope you will find that the range of articles in the Journal reflects the spirit of the coming and going of trustees at the Learning Exchange, a spirit so emblematic of PEN over many years: creativity and vision expressed with openness and generosity.

I would like to thank my daughter Elena and my son Benedict for all the help they have given me to get this edition over the finishing line!

Josh Gifford, Editor

Contents

Caldmore Community Garden	2
<i>Mark Webster shares his warm-hearted appreciation for a community which offers hope and inspiration in these challenging times.</i>	
A 'Unique Learning Community'	4
<i>Tanya Bartlett presents compelling evidence for the practice of Self Managed Learning and invites students to reflect on their experience of the SML College in Brighton.</i>	
A Life of Learning	6
<i>Nikki O'Rourke and Sean McDougall, two new trustees, explore their learning paths and the values and insights which underpin and inspire their work.</i>	
Book Review - Global Human Rights	9
<i>Edith W. King highly recommends this timely book for those who work with young people everywhere.</i>	
Book Review - Road School	
<i>Nikki O'Rourke enjoys and appreciates a journey with Sue Cowley in her home education travelogue.</i>	10

Caldmore Community Garden Mark Webster



Even if you have never visited Walsall you will have passed through it. Travelling north to south or back on the West Coast Main Line or motoring on down the M6. The fact that the trains bypass the Station without stopping, and that you can negotiate the M5 /M6 intersection without ever knowing that the gas works on your right or the RAC call centre on your left are based in Walsall, is sort of symptomatic of the place. Few people visit and many who live here have the stoical attitude to the place that only comes through lifelong toil.

To be fair it's a place that has struggled with its image for decades. Once the centre of the industrial revolution, Thatcher's legacy is mile after mile of crumbling silent factories and generation after generation of political leaders who don't seem to be able to do anything to reverse the relentless cuts that are ripping the heart out of the town (40% cut from the Council budget over three years!). The latest survey of household income suggests that it is the 6th poorest borough in the country. I came to live here 28 years ago and despite spending a few years abroad I am still living here now. There is a reason for this.

I live in an area of south Walsall called Caldmore (pronounced Karma). More than any other part of Walsall, this area and its neighbouring ward of Palfrey have been the funnel and filter for many thousands of the new communities arriving in Walsall over the past 120 years. When I arrived, fresh-faced from a pleasant Lancashire town, the community I found in Caldmore proved to be a cosmopolitan mix of White British, Black British, African-Caribbean and Asian. Since I arrived I have been followed by waves of other new arrivals; some escaping wars and persecution - people from Afghanistan, Kurds escaping Iraq, Somalians - and increasingly in the last 15 years many new arrivals from other European nations. Polish, Czech, Slovak, Roma, and Hungarian. All this has made for a place that is a complex feast of ethnic and cultural diversity that is almost impossible to comprehend. Add to this mix the kind of problems continually linked with poverty such as exploitative landlords, under-performing council services, fuel poverty, unemployment and under-employment, and then add some extra particularly Cald-

more ingredients associated with its traditional status as a red light area: drugs, street-based sex work and curb crawling... and it presents a picture of a place that has some very particular challenges.

Nevertheless Caldmore is brimming with creative and industrious communities. I love the place. It has character and attitude, and its people have a strong sense of place and community. Ask any of the kids round here where they come from and it will make no difference if their parents come from Kurdistan, Somalia or from Caldmore Road they will tell you they are from Caldmore! Since I arrived here back in 1989 I have been part of many projects that aimed to help the area reinvent its image and to turn the tide of endemic decline. Perhaps the most successful one and also the one of which I am most proud is Caldmore Community Garden.



Emerging out of a sister project called Caldmore Village Festival about seven years ago, the steering group of that project were given the opportunity to gain the lease to a piece of derelict land right in the heart of Caldmore. We thought for a bit and imagined that it would be a good basis for a community garden and perhaps many other projects and we decided to take it on. I still recall the day that a senior officer of Walsall Housing Group (WHG), owners of the site and the biggest social landlord in Walsall, came to one of our meetings in a local curry house to sign the lease. I signed it, he signed it. We got a 7-year lease at a pound a year rent and he got a plate of samosa and pakora!

Unlike most projects I have been involved in, Caldmore Community Garden, as it was soon christened, has never attracted mainstream funding and indeed up to now it has had no paid staff at all. This made it a tough uphill struggle at the beginning as no one had much free time to put into the project. This, however, in the long run has proved to be the Garden's greatest strength as it has made it independent and resilient, almost completely protected from the vagaries of council funding cuts and political decision making.

In that first couple of years, community dig-it days and lots of help from a very small band of volunteers saw us clear the site and begin to construct the basis of what the Garden was to become. We were lucky in engaging the support of some local organisations and key people early on. Perhaps one of the most significant of these was a very outward looking local evangelical church called Bath Street Centre whose congregation enthusiastically joined us to help digging over the site and whose building caretaker, Steve, soon became the key Garden volunteer and later chair of the Garden steering group. We were also lucky to get support from some local contractors, many of them contractors for the Council or for local social housing providers WHG and Caldmore Housing, who were persuaded to do work for free, and so within a year or so the Garden was beginning to take shape.

Probably the hardest job for the Garden was getting together its own governing group and focusing in on what its purpose was and how it should move forward. Yes, of course it was a community resource and it should focus on community growing, it was a garden after all, but how was it to engage with the wider community, and what about the wider need for a community open space? The formation of the Garden steering group and the involvement of a wider range of people through more broad-based activity were instrumental in giving the group purpose, and without this group the Garden would not have had the impetus and focus to shape its own future.



Anna (Rogozinska), my partner and subsequently my wife, who arrived from Poland in 2012 and soon after started to get involved in the Garden, identified the decision by the steering group to start doing open days for the wider community to come down to use the space for social and community events as a defining moment. 'Up until then', says Anna, 'no one was clear whether the space was primarily for growing or for engaging the local community. From that moment on its future was sealed. We knew we were running a mix use site whose main purpose was to work with a broad cross-section of the whole community.' This made Caldmore Community Garden a very different beast from many other similar projects up and down the country. By not dedicating the Garden to one user group primarily, and not focusing solely on environmental education or growing, we created

a space that was open for as many people as possible to engage with and that could be run, as far as it was possible to be, as a democratic space.



Anna soon became heavily involved in the Garden and her energy and enthusiasm meant the Garden could step up its level of activity. By 2013 the Garden started to run regular broad-ranging community events and workshops. We established a bank of raised growing beds open to be adopted by local community groups and a year after that we built a Garden stage performance area so we could host events. About the same time we started hosting weekly volunteer open days where anyone could come and get involved. By this stage some of our events were attracting in excess of 200 people and the infrastructure started to suffer: we did not have electricity, proper paths or toilets. By 2015 probably the most significant development happened, when we gained the lease for the old school caretaker's house that was lying derelict at one end of the Garden. After a political intrigue reminiscent of some television drama, we were granted a 5-year lease for this shell of a building by the local Council and work started to renovate it. We gained support from organisations as diverse as British Gas and Morrison's supermarkets which would ensure we could open it as a fully functioning community meeting space, café and multi-use educational space in 2016. In tandem with this development, one of the Council's contractors came and helped us lay proper hard core paths and we were able to install a wheelchair lift giving us disabled access from a local car park.

2015 also saw us develop children's activities as a regular feature of our work thanks to 3-month student placements from Warsaw University, which enabled us to staff after-school activities throughout the summer, an arrangement that is about to be repeated for the third time this year. In the same year, thanks to support from Near Neighbours (funding through Church Urban Fund), we launched our themed open days enabling different cultural groups to host events in the Garden to share food, cultural traditions and music and dance with the wider community. The same funding also enabled us to launch two successful engagement projects that brought new people into the Garden: our Men's Shed project and Women's Tuesdays.

Jumping forward to today it's hardly possible to imagine what has been achieved. We have a fully kitted out community house in the middle of a beautiful community

open space. The Garden itself now boasts a willow tunnel, a wild flower space, a sensory garden, five pieces of public art by local artists, community growing areas and raised beds, a pond and a Men's Shed as well as a stage with its own electricity supply. The whole area is fully wheelchair accessible. In terms of year-round activity we are now heading towards having something looking like a full programme. We run regular community open days attracting over 200 people, a monthly open air outdoor cinema event, a programme of summer activities for children, as well as a weekly youth club and Woodcraft Folk. Every week we run the Men's Shed project with the unforgettable slogan – make every Monday a MANDay – and a project focusing on local women from across all the local communities called Women's Tuesdays. We hold regular Forest School events with local primary schools and every Thursday is given over to our volunteers who come to work on the growing and horticultural aspects of the garden. We run training events for volunteers and community members as well as one-off projects such as carnival events, lantern processions, fire shows, artists in residence, and this year we are set to run our first music festivals.

If I had to say what was most special about the Garden I would probably have to state the obvious. That it is first and foremost an amazing piece of social space at the heart of the community that depends on its volunteers for life and on the local community for support. Our last open day hosted on the 1st April this year attracted nearly 200 visitors for over four hours of fun-filled activity. It was planned and hosted by 30 volunteers drawn from our various core activities. These volunteers ran a community café, a wood-fired pizza oven supplying freshly made pizza, children's art activities and a range of other children's activities. They baked cakes, made and served food, came and put up gazebos and they hosted and led all the activities. These volunteers were recruited through the Garden, and involved in the Garden. They were made up of men and women of all ages and cultural backgrounds. The event itself was a triumph of voluntary collaboration and cross-cultural teamwork. Really I have to say it's the best of Walsall!



Mark Webster is a freelance researcher and community activist. He has spent his life working with people to make things happen in their communities. He is particularly interested in making things happen in his own community. He leads the Caldmore Men's

Shed project in Caldmore Community Garden as well as developing a range of community arts and local community development projects.



A 'Unique Learning Community' Tanya Bartlett

Self Managed Learning (SML) is an evidence-based approach developed by Professor Ian Cunningham in 1978. It draws on an array of well documented research about the nature of learning. SML is a progressive and innovative alternative to the classroom and curriculum-based learning, where students decide for themselves what, how, why and when they will learn. Whilst schools still work on the basis that students learn the same things, in the same way, at the same time, research has shown this is not the case. The SML environment caters to the individual and encourages exploration of different interests and ways of learning. At SML College in Brighton where we run programmes for young people aged 9-16 there is no set curriculum. Our research shows that people learn best when they dictate their own learning. What we have done is to create a new kind of structure to replace those that were designed for the world of the nineteenth century. A twenty-first century educational model has to respond to a complex and challenging world where a static job-for-life model is long gone and the ability to take responsibility for one's own continuous learning is paramount.

Students' experience of SML

Aside from our full-time programme at SML College, we have run programmes within a large number of organisations for the past 30 years as well as in a number of schools, both locally and further afield. A considerable amount of research has already been undertaken that provides us with a clear picture - supported by parents, learning group advisers and school staff involved - of the 'student experience of SML' programmes within schools.

In one study, the comments from 40 students aged 7-16 clearly show similar opinions irrespective of age and, crucially, that benefits extend well beyond the duration of the programme itself (Sankey, 2008). Students involved in SML programmes viewed the different way of learning to that offered in traditional schooling positively. Many welcomed the more relaxed, holistic and person-centred approach and enjoyed working in more creative and collaborative ways. They liked the emphasis placed on teamwork, **respect** and interdependent learning and appreciated having time and space to reflect and share ideas within the group. Being given time to talk freely was a key feature for many as it was something they rarely experienced in traditional settings. Students also welcomed the informal 'mentor/facilitator' role of the Learning Group Adviser and feeling that they were being **supported**. For many it was the first time they had been encouraged to think about and strategically take steps towards future goals.

Because of the exchange and reflection involved, students gained a deeper understanding of themselves and others - a universal outcome was raised levels of confidence, self-esteem and personal awareness. Many students noticed an improvement in their abilities to communicate, listen and interact effectively with others. Another benefit common to many of the participants was having gained various important life skills - goal-setting, problem-solving, research and planning were often mentioned. Significantly, most of the students with the benefit of hindsight, could see that SML had proved beneficial in the long run. Many noted an improved attitude to learning and greater motivation to work towards and manage their future goals.

In our own research with students who have been attending the full time programme at SML College, the feedback is, unsurprisingly, very similar. Here's what some of our recent students have said about their experiences of SML:

Mia

'Before I came to SML College I was at Hove Park and before that I was at Brighton & Hove High School. I was always struggling at school and my mum wanted to find different options and she came across SML online. Although it was quite different to school I liked the idea of Self Managed Learning. In the beginning it was a bit daunting, because you've got all that freedom, so I had to get used to the responsibility and find where I was most comfortable working. I liked the respect within the community and that everyone was equal, including tutors. It's much more friendly than school. The tutors were really supportive of everything I did, and it was great to have that support every day. The best thing about being at SML College was getting to choose subjects I wanted to do and working at my own pace. I took

GCSEs in Maths and English a year early which I couldn't have done if I'd been at school and I gained an A and an A*. SML College also supported me in completing a Silver Arts Award in fashion and textiles, which I passed. I really enjoyed having the freedom to do what I wanted to do and being able to teach myself and find what works better for me. SML helped me to set weekly and daily targets and achieve them. I think being at SML College definitely increased my confidence as well as my organisational skills and managing my time. I'll miss the buzz of SML College but I'm excited about the future.'

Ethan

'I was a part of this unique learning community in Brighton for just over two years. Prior to joining SML College I had always been home-schooled and it was a big change suddenly being in a group of fifteen people with a lot more going on than I was used to. A good thing at SML College is that it's a democratic community where everyone's equal and treated fairly. Sometimes there are issues between students - like if someone doesn't do their chores at 'close-down' - but we try to sort things out at our morning meetings and if that doesn't work it goes to a Problem Solving Committee. So you learn really good people skills and even doing your jobs at close-down, which is kind of like housework, teaches you to take responsibility for chores and things.

Managing my own learning has shown me that I can be really self-motivated - with things that I want to do. In school you have to do stuff you don't really want to do, so there's no real interest, but here you learn what you want to learn. Obviously there's a lot more focus and motivation to do things you actually want to do and you'll probably do better at them. I'd been enjoying learning to develop games with the Unity game engine and in September of my last year I started thinking about next steps. I knew I wanted to study Game Development, Computing and Graphic Design at A level. So I found out the requirements for the courses I wanted to take at Varndean College and worked towards GCSEs in those subjects. I took three GCSEs - Chemistry, Maths, English Language - plus one AS in German. A big personal achievement for me was doing Chemistry GCSE because I started learning that a year late never having done any before, but I was really interested in it and I learned the GCSE syllabus within eight months. I also gained a Silver Arts Award (which is the same level as GCSE) in Computer Games Development which I wouldn't have had the chance to do at school.'

Ollie

'I was at SML College for two years. After primary school I went to the Steiner but I didn't like it. It was a different sort of approach to what I'd been used to. So I left and then my mum heard about this place. I did a trial week and it was nice so I stayed. As SML College is small and

A Life of Learning Nikki O'Rourke

everyone was really friendly and kind, it was easy to get into working. In the Steiner they just throw you in, there wasn't the same support so it's very different. It's basically like a mainstream school but with lots of arts and crafts.

There's a nice level of respect amongst all the members of the community. Especially from the tutors - you feel that you're all equal. The most important thing I learned at SML College is social skills - being able to talk to people properly, how to have conversations and deal with problems. I've been on the problem solving committee and learned effective ways of dealing with problems. As soon as there's a problem it's brought to the committee which is made up of students and tutors and then we try to find a solution. So we all have a say in what happens and how problems are solved. So this makes you feel confident about going out into the world.

The best thing about SML College is the freedom to be able to do whatever you want. You start by working through a series of questions to help you decide on your goals and you have the support of your Learning Group and your Learning Advisor. At a certain point I realised I wanted to focus on music, programming and knitting. The music tuition here has been really good. I didn't play any instruments until a year ago when I started learning to play piano. I took GCSEs in Maths and English and I got a place at music college. The approach at SML College prepared me to take my own initiative in my learning. I think it's a life long skill. Learning's really important.'

If you'd like to hear other accounts by young people of their experiences of SML and the College, there is a short film available to watch online:
<http://bit.ly/2adhQOR>.

For further information please see our website:
www.smlcollege.org.uk

Reference

Sankey, N & Dawes, G (2008) Student Experience of SML - research: University of Brighton

Tanya Bartlett has been a collaborator at SML College since 2015. She is passionate about the learning that happens when we immerse ourselves in new environments, cultures, and ways of life. She has previously lived and worked in Sweden, India, Spain, Italy, South Africa, Ireland, and Cyprus.

I am really honoured to have joined the board of trustees of The Centre for Personalised Education (CPE). Having spent my career and, in turn, parenthood becoming more and more interested in alternative approaches to learning, it seems like such a natural progression for me. Not to mention a tremendously exciting one. I feel very proud to be supporting an organisation with such a strong history in this field.

I was lucky to have begun my teaching career in an amazing primary school, which I credit with why I am still as passionate and enthusiastic about education as when I first started my PGCE. The head-teacher, Anna House, had a very clear vision for child-centred, play-based learning throughout the whole primary phase. She sheltered us from a lot of the policy pressures and held true to her vision no matter what.

Within this protected environment, as teachers, we were given a lot of autonomy to try out new techniques and if they didn't work, we adapted them and tried again. As such, there was a culture of continuous learning for the staff as well as the children. Planning was kept to only things that had a true impact on what happened in the classroom. The net result of this approach was that all the staff were passionate about their jobs and genuinely loved working with children.

While I was there I chose to specialise in the Early Years, and felt that the approaches and understanding were different enough from my primary training that I wanted to study them further, so undertook a Masters in Early Childhood Education. This grounding and experience drew my attention to the freedom and independence the youngest children in schools were given, and how, even in such a nurturing school, this began to dwindle as they progressed through the school. This was the beginning of my real questioning of the education system.

As I moved on from this school, I became much more aware of the increasing pressure that schools, teachers and, ultimately, the children were being put under. However, I must admit that I was still insulated from the worst of it - being happily ensconced in the Foundation Stage.

Once I had my own children and the opportunity to completely step away from the system, I really began to question many of the fundamental approaches within our schools. I read a lot about the many amazing schools both in the UK and across the world that were challenging the status quo, and became frustrated by the lack of choice I had for my own children.

To try and address this issue, I found a team of local parents and applied to open a primary Free School. The

school based its approach in early years practice, following the interests of the children and offering much greater flexibility for families.

The process was very interesting and we did receive support from the New Schools Network, but I was always aware of the pressure to conform to the current model. Unfortunately we were unsuccessful in our application and at the same time, when my son didn't get a school place, I began the next phase in my educational journey: as a home educating parent.

This has probably been the most challenging phase of my journey. Both socially, in terms of being a visibly different choice, and personally, in terms of challenging my own beliefs about education. I have had to look really carefully at what learning is, and means, outside of the confines of the traditional classroom set up.

Now, I have the privilege of being able to respond to my boys' interests and talents, to progress their learning at their speed and enjoy the time to answer their questions as they arise. I also have the challenge of balancing the 'mum' relationship with helping them learn. The longer I continue down this path, the more evidence I see of the success of self-directed learning.

Those great leaps of understanding are so much more frequent when the boys are absorbed in an activity of their choice than whenever I am trying to 'teach' them. What's more, often these are activities that I would not have previously seen as educational. My preconceptions and biases are constantly challenged and I am really enjoying the opportunity to develop my understanding.

There are still aspects of school that I miss. The camaraderie. The space. The resources. Having read about alternative learning environments, such as the Sudbury Valley schools in the US and the Agile Learning Centres, I am continuing to work towards creating a multi-generational learning centre for families. Creating a space where adults and children can work, learn and play alongside each other.

To this end, I have partnered with Amy Doust, another former teacher, to run a series of pilots over the coming year to test and refine our ideas and approach. Amy brings a wealth of expertise with her, from her training as a secondary English teacher to her recent experience of setting up a small progressive school in Italy.

For our pilots, we have the fantastic opportunity to work alongside the Institute of Imagination, who are based in Lambeth. Utilising the themes the Institute's own programme of activities presents, we will expose the children to a range of big ideas through invitational workshops and activities.

These inspirations will then be explored further through the children's own ideas, with us providing them with the resources, space and time to develop their understanding. Our aim is to gather evidence to

demonstrate both the success of our approach, and that there is interest in this kind of multi-generational learning environment. We're very excited about where this next step in our plans will take us and, of course, sharing our findings.

You can follow our progress here
www.curiouserandco.co.uk

If you would like to know more about the Institute of Imagination
<http://ioi.london/>

If you would like to get in touch please email Nikki at nikki.orourke@icloud.com

A Life of Learning Sean McDougall

Sean McDougall is a MD of Stakeholder Design, one of the first agencies in the country to apply design thinking to the concept of learning. He learned his trade at the Design Council, 13 years ago, where he developed and popularised the idea of 'user-led' design of future learning. He is passionate about using design thinking to address disadvantage and was awarded a fellowship of the RSA for his contribution to the field of inclusive design. He is an active home educator.

Q: *How did you end up using design techniques to address strategy in education?*

SM: I grew up in Belfast on a council estate where 50% of adult males (including my father) were long-term unemployed and those who worked tended to be taxi drivers, barmen or welders. At 11, I asked if I could go to the local fee-paying grammar school as my friend was going there and I didn't want to be alone in my new school (luckily, virtually all the fees were paid by the local council, but in seven years I was the only kid from the estate to go to the school). Once there, I was told that I could achieve anything I wanted to in life if I put my mind to it – but that turned out to apply only to those who wanted to be doctors, accountants, lawyers or soldiers. Designers were a bit of a problem for them.

Growing up on the estate, and at an elitist, academic and obedience-orientated school, I could see how people can be both victims and beneficiaries of design. Today, when I see that almost 80% of middle class white girls go to university, while a similar number of working class black boys leave school at 16, it seems obvious that the educational system is benefitting people from one part of the community more than others. The knock-on effect of this in Britain, where almost half of all job opportunities

now require a degree, and where that degree costs £27,000 plus living costs, is almost incalculable.

Thirteen years ago, having worked in social regeneration and political campaigning, I got a job at the Design Council, where I was put in charge of a campaign called Schools Renaissance. Surrounded by the cleverest school rejects you could ever meet, we developed a process of 'user-led' design and showed how changing how we educate could improve both engagement and learning outcomes in British schools. Time and again, headteachers expressed wonder that their most disengaged trouble-makers suddenly came to life and proposed highly practical solutions to problems that affected everyone in the school. Conversely, the 'top-performing' kids would struggle in a less formal, open ended environment, where speculation was encouraged and everyone was treated as an equal. Of course, this does not make them better or worse than anyone else – it just demonstrates that we have no right to categorise people as clever or stupid because they don't fit into a system that only suits part of the population.

The idea that we can make decisions on behalf of children has a profoundly negative effect on learning outcomes. So does the idea that design has to cost a fortune. For instance, in one school, teachers were concerned about levels of concentration. As 'experts', they proposed numerous solutions, including changing how lessons happened, exercise breaks and the like. The kids then explained that the problem was to do with the toilets – they stank so badly that no-one would use them and, consequently, they avoided drinking during the day time. By lunchtime, they were near to passing out! The toilets were cleaned, children started drinking again and concentration levels shot up.

By working on factors that were not showing on the teachers' radars, accepting disengagement as entirely legitimate and not a sign of disobedience, and becoming more democratic in making decisions, that school saw its pass rate rise from 35% to 60% during the campaign timeframe. User-led design is now embedded in the school; its pass rate is now 82% and it is rated securely outstanding. The headteacher went on to win UK Headteacher of the Year.

In 2006, I set up as a consultant at the behest of some of the people I'd been working with through Schools Renaissance. Since then, I've been pulled sideward in terms of subject area and up and down in terms of age group. For instance, I set up and chaired the charity Pain UK as an umbrella group for charities helping people with different painful (and invisible) medical conditions. However, education remains the mainstay of my work.

Q: *Why do you home educate?*

SM: The experience of working in schools and seeing how the child is shaped to the system rather than the system being shaped to the child is one of the main

reasons why I home educate. Being told that our daughter would be coming home from Reception so tired that she would simply fall asleep struck us as child abuse – we preferred the more caring models found in countries like Denmark and Sweden. However, the main reasons are that I believe in choice, and also that my wife and I are both 40 years older than our daughter – so we both have a strong desire to max out the time we can get with her. Spending time with home educators has been one of the most energising and positive experiences of my life – the whole concept of being united in diversity, and understanding that home education allows for genuinely personalised learning, is incredibly affirming.

Q: *Most people think that innovation equals technology. How do you see it?*

SM: If we are talking about a British secondary school, then I remain doubtful about the ability of technology to deliver change. Frankly, products that make it easier to do the job of teaching are adopted much faster than those that make it easier to be a learner. For instance, electronic whiteboards are basically blackboards that clean themselves and remember everything ever written on them. They stormed British classrooms like soldiers on D-Day. Meanwhile, the average British student has to sit for six hours a day on a chair that costs £8, and which teachers are banned by law from using as their main seat on grounds of employee health and safety. The child also carries around 20% of their bodyweight to and from school – twice what a postman is allowed to carry. These are just two more examples of how we fail to treat children as human beings with the same rights as any adult.

Q: *What would you like to see happen next?*

SM: I'd like to see the cycle move from perpetuation back to innovation again. When the Victorians created our educational system, they did it for a reason: they needed large numbers of people with the right knowledge, skills and attitudes to run or work within the British Empire economy. The core requirements were an innate sense of British supremacy, the ability to read, write and count, and instinctive willingness to obey. Their version of school delivered this package very well.

If we were starting again, we might start by recognising that our children will be expected to work easily and professionally with people of multiple cultures. This brings with it a requirement to respect and honour difference. They will co-exist with huge numbers of very elderly people. This requires a sense of compassion. They may live on four different continents during their career, so their children may have no particular sense of homeland. This requires a new approach to citizenship. And they may be educated with and by people of many different ages in many different countries. In that context, our school buildings could become as redundant as the travel agents' office.

Book Review

Peter Van Arsdale

Global Human Rights: People, Processes, and Principles

Waveland Press (2017) 117pp., ISBN
13:978-1-4786-3294-8; paper. Kindle e-book) ISBN
10:1-4786-3294-1 \$U.S.14.20.

Reviewer: Edith W. King

Conflicts across the world, devastating wars, human and environmental tragedies are destroying planet Earth. Today young people everywhere are directly affected by this terrorism and violence or the threat of it. Children are constantly exposed to the acts of extremism indirectly through the media or possibly when using social media. This book, *Global Human Rights: People, Processes and Principles* addresses today's urgent need to know more about universal human rights. Peter Van Arsdale informs and extends a reader's knowledge of the essential human rights - access to clean water and sanitary conditions, food security, freedom from violence and a life with dignity.

The lively, personalised written style of *Global Human Rights* provides a concise and focused coverage. Rather than emphasising protocols and covenants this book is filled with accounts of the history of human rights, the dedicated efforts and successful practices in the field. A unique and important feature in this book is the metaphor and original illustration of the "Tree of Rights", a universal conception. When depicting global human rights the analogy of the tree is eminently appropriate. This diagram (p. 8) shows how human rights grow and change over time, focusing on the provision of water, sanitation, food and shelter as basic rights. The analogy of the tree then builds on rights that are labeled "freedom of" and "freedom from" (see Chapter1, pp. 7-10). For example in Chapter 2 a reference to the Tree of Rights is employed to emphasise how essential basic needs are to the human condition. This chapter begins with a touching illustration of how access to potable water is vital and should be recognised as a human right. The Tree of Rights is again noted by the author (p.55) referring to creative discourse and debate as crucial for human rights. This Tree metaphor can be found throughout the chapters of the book and gives readers deeper insights into the critical significance of human rights.

The sub-title of the book, *People, Processes and Principles* is carried through in the creative use of "side bars" placed in strategic locations in Chapters 2 through 6. Van Arsdale points out: "The consideration of human rights goes far beyond the explication of documents,

covenants, and protocols. ... Human rights are about people's struggles and achievements, about their companions and their persecutors." The "side bars" are variously labeled Case (a case study), Agency Action, or Champion (individual). Van Arsdale brings out the dedication of groups and individuals to the causes of human rights by using this unique format. Through focusing on the sacrifices and the contributions to human rights actions, learners can build on this information for further study and investigations.

Useful, as well, is another feature of this carefully focused volume. Note the specific lists in the beginning and at the end of the book. On the first pages titled "ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS" is a listing described as "an important acknowledgement of the many nations and international organizations that have dedicated a day each year to a human rights, peace, remembrance, independence, or related human welfare issues." (pp. xv-xvi) Month by month from January to December this feature gives the names of the special day and the country where it is held -- examples: January -- Women's Day (Greece); February -- Tortures Abolition Day (United Nations); March -- Liberation Day (Bulgaria). Information, such as presented here, provides the home educator with valuable materials for year round activities and projects with international human rights content. At the end of the book, the Glossary of Acronyms (pp. 109-110) is especially helpful, not only for this book, but for use with other material such as newspapers, books, magazines, the Internet where acronyms, especially global references, frequently appear. Additionally, *Global Human Rights* is reader friendly with references found at the end of each chapter, rather than listed all together at the end of the volume.

In Chapters 2-5 Van Arsdale provides the reader with case studies from many places in the world. He begins with a horrifying example of water and sanitary deprivation on the African continent – Kibera, then on to hunger in Somalia, violence in Ethiopia, Sudan, and Nigeria. Chapters contain case studies that describe genocides in Sudan, Cambodia, and New Guinea. Further are the human rights violations in Europe and in the United States. The author notes: "...the complex array of ethnic relations must be understood, but ethnicity does not cause genocide. Resource exploitation, in concert with ethnic discrimination and corrupt government practices... does" (p. 69). Key terms used throughout the book such as "victim", "survivor", "perpetrator", "bystander", "witness" are clearly defined. The concluding chapter, "Obligated Actions; Moral and Material Possibilities" emphasises that now "violence is the worldwide situation" (p. 96). And this structural violence informs obligation for total action with urgency as stated by the author:

When our skills are sufficient, when our resources are available, and when we are

confronted with assisting those under duress, whose rights have been abused, we must act. We have an obligation. Obligation does not mean “optional”; it means “duty” that leads to tackling the opportunity.... Human Rights and humanitarianism are linked. Humanitarianism is defined as “crossing a boundary” to assist; risk usually is encountered by the service provider or advocate as scarce resources are used to help the vulnerable, to help those whose rights have been abused. (p. 95)

Reviewer: Nikki O Rourke

This is a delightfully engaging, light-hearted introduction to the idea of education away from school.

Sue Cowley has authored over twenty-five books on education, but this is her first personal account. The book introduces the worries that many families are feeling about school right now; the narrowing of the curriculum and the mounting pressure on young children due to the increasing numbers of high stakes tests. These concerns, mixed with special childhood memories of a family VW campervan holiday, inspired Sue Cowley and her husband to take their two children out of school for a once-in-a-lifetime trip.

The family travel through Europe and China, with very few set dates in mind. While planning their itinerary, all the members of the family's interests and passions were considered, Edith's love of Da Vinci and her older brother's fascination with weapons. Although they had the opportunity to explore these points of interest along the way, their trip allowed for meandering and happy accidents. One of the rules set out at the beginning was that they would hunt for interesting things: 'we are looking for learning,' as Sue describes.

There are some delightful highlights along their journey. Sue Cowley illustrates their experience through lovely anecdotes. Some describing the awe the children feel in amazing museums or locations. Others demonstrating how challenging different cultural norms can be (the fear of nakedness in a German spa was something I think many of us could relate to). Then there's the revelling in the gruesome interest of children, as they were both transfixed watching the demise of a pigeon at the beak of a seagull while queuing for St Mark's Basilica in Venice.

As a parent, I couldn't help smiling at the more stressful moments. Running out of petrol just after entering France, arriving in Italy starving two minutes after all the restaurants had stopped serving. Getting horribly lost on the way home from a supermarket after leaving the children in the hotel room. The familiar tensions and unspoken 'I told you so's' and 'it's all your fault's' seep out in a hugely relatable fashion. These trials and tribulations play out, while everyone works hard to maintain the special family experience and memories.

One aspect of road schooling that I find really interesting, especially in the current climate, is the opportunity it provides to truly develop empathy, and cultural understanding. For children – in fact, for all of us – the opportunity to be embedded in other cultures that may be challenging for us, and to experience what it is like to be the 'other', can only help to develop our understanding and empathy. In the current climate, this is perhaps more important than ever.

This theory of obligation to act on behalf of those whose rights are abused will resonate with home educators and their learners calling for compassion and risk taking as described in Van Arsdale's narratives and anecdotes. For example, to highlight children's plight, the author has emphasised that refugee children are especially vulnerable as fronts have shifted village-to-village, camp-to-camp. These young people are exposed to being recruited as child soldiers, and over half are unaccompanied minors often having escaped from drowning in flimsy boats as they fled war-torn places like Syria or Iraq. The world is finally acknowledging that global migrations of desperate refugees show no signs of easing in the twenty-first century (Van Arsdale, 2006; E. W. King, 2016). Global Human Rights gives the reader specifics about what is being accomplished through models of human rights actions that succeed. I highly recommend this book for those who know, instruct and interact with young people everywhere.

References

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Van Arsdale, Peter (2006) *Forced To Flee*. Lanham, MD, Lexington Books.

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Book Review Sue Cowley

Road School: Learning through exploration and experience

Crown House Publishing Ltd (2016) 240pp. ISBN 1785831925, 9781785831928

The memoirs of the family's journey are interspersed with Sue's reflections on education; both the state of the current system and prompts to help families appreciate the rich learning opportunities available through travel and real life experiences. As a home educating parent, many of these ideas and approaches feel very familiar, but for those families beginning to question school and the education system as a whole, they are thought-provokingly delivered.

As such, while I tremendously enjoyed the book's unusual mix of road trip narrative, family bonds and educational insight, I think this book is perhaps best suited as a first step for families outside the school system. The examples Sue gives at the end of the book, showing how you can support all the subject areas while travelling, offering a supportive scaffold to bridge the move from the school curriculum to more open, flexible, real life learning is a great asset in this respect. The fact that this message is delivered as part of a family's adventure rather than a formal educational text makes it all the more accessible

- Adoption of the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UN Convention of 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.**

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, flex-schooling and flexicolleges, 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.

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.

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