

TOWARDS A FUTURE FOR EDUCATION IN SCOTLAND

Gordon Bell

It seems that in the tides of our times the idea of 'Education' is a dominant force. But the word 'Education' is increasingly being used to mean something quite different, namely 'Schooling'. And the difference between education and schooling is the difference between propaganda and truth, between knowledge and belief, and between tolerance and intolerance. In short, these two words can and do make a difference to the quality of our lives.

And whilst Scotland assumes full parliamentary powers for education, on a much more sombre note, we know from Hitler's use of the popular vote, of general franchise and of secret voting, that the more cruel a dictatorship the more democratic can and - in general - will be its institutions. Even the inmates of Dachau Concentration Camp emphatically approved his policies in 1934.

I take this stark and uncomfortable reminder from the works of Michael Polanyi who, having been prevented from holding a public position in Germany for being a Jew, went to the University of Manchester as Professor of Physical Chemistry in 1933. His critique of an account of Soviet Socialism published in 1936 contains the following:

Dictatorship wishing to control the totality of human life in its territory will try to extend the democratic machinery as far as possible; it will draw the whole adult and juvenile population into participation whilst at the same time widening the scope of public life to include activities formerly private such as, for example, sports, love or cooking.
(Polanyi 1936)

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My main purpose in offering this brief contribution to debate is to assert that the quality, character and standard of participation in democratic institutions will be determined by whether the path of education or schooling is chosen.

I trust that this is not an unpardonable simplification. In what follows, I will attempt to illustrate some implications not least by acknowledging that this distinction is not confined in its consequences to what are now called 'schools'. For the underlying issues have far reaching influences upon higher education and a wide range of social institutions including hospitals, the courts, the family and welfare services, indeed what might broadly be defined as 'social businesses' of which the host for this lecture, the University of Edinburgh Settlement, may be said to be an invaluable part.

And so I want to ask us for a moment to focus our attention on the difference between the phrase 'Towards a Future for Education in Scotland' and the phrase 'Towards a Future for Schooling in Scotland' in an effort to dispel what Ludwig Wittgenstein referred to as 'the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language'.

For whatever we might mean by education or schooling is essentially an act of imagination contingently made real through an exercise of one form of power, political power. Which introduces the second main implication of the distinction between education and schooling, and that is the relation in a democracy between knowledge, its production and distribution, and power, its organization and limits.

I believe it was Hegel in his **Philosophy of Nature** who prompts us to consider the force of our imaginal will by considering a fossil; is this a remnant of creatures long dead or a prediction of things to come? Our modernised vanities steeped in evolutionary theory might well think that particular question to be rather silly. But we perhaps overlook in this prejudice of our psychology that this judgement is essentially a belief grounded in an exercise of the imagination.

So too, I venture to suggest, is the concept of education and the significance of the distinction between education and schooling. These are concepts that are critically dependent on the uses of our imagination and the will that enacts their possibilities in the market place. And in the flow of actions, laws, institutions and traditions that have been built up through centuries of educational administration, I propose that we stand in danger of undervaluing the uses of imagination in our schooling systems and overvaluing the role of imagination through institutionalised approaches to pedagogy. And we do so finally if we too lightly accept that what schools do is to school and not to

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educate, and at another level that the prime purposes of our universities is to train for employment at the expense of pursuing truth. In short, we stand accused, as Michael Oakeshott puts it, of substituting socialization for education. (Oakeshott 1972)

Let me now explore in greater detail the uses to which these central concepts are put.

EDUCATION AND SCHOOLING

By adopting techniques of linguistic analysis, the philosopher of education Richard Peters some thirty years ago mapped the uses to which the word 'education' is put. He identified a range of meanings arising from its general and specific applications and offered the view that the concept has a set of conditions which govern its use (Peters 1966).

Peters observed that the ways in which we use the concept indicates a necessary connection with certain value conditions to do with the worthwhileness of the activities that comprise the learning experience, the intentions of the teacher and learner and the moral acceptability of these processes which are in turn influenced by cultural norms. He also observed that there are knowledge conditions to do with breadth and depth of understanding. When both the value conditions and the knowledge conditions are satisfied, we speak about 'being educated'. By this we mean that individuals are transformed by what they know, are committed to use their knowledge in guiding their conduct, and that the knowledge they gain is valued for its own sake as much as it is valued for its uses.

In summary, Peters's analysis of the concept of education in its specific sense maps the role that the word 'education' plays in our forms of life. The uses to which it is put refers to a process of initiation into worthwhile activities that have a cognitive core, have an intention to develop knowledge and understanding in depth and breadth, are valued for their own sake, and are governed by ethical principles and procedures.

If we accept this clarification we come closer to recognizing the nature of the contradiction between educating and schooling. This distinction matters because a very different quality of experience is implied and very different standards apply. For example, schooling may or may not involve worthwhile activities which may or may not be valued for their own sake.

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In modern times, these matters have been forcefully exposed during the decade between 1970 and 1980, and particularly in the U.S.A. by educators such as Everett Reimer (1971), Paul Goodman (1961) and John Holt (1969). These educationists offered the view that schools were failing to provide a satisfactory explanation for their existence in terms of results or sufficient justification in terms of philosophy for the compulsory attendance of young people in State institutions.

But it was from the developing world that some of the most trenchant and serious challenges were raised by educators such as Ivan Illich and Paulo Freire. Their personal experience of large scale adult literacy projects, mainly in South America, compelled them to conclude that schools discourage the poor and disadvantaged from taking control of their own learning. In the words of Ivan Illich (a Jesuit priest): 'to identify schools with education is to confuse salvation with the church' (Illich 1973).

The criticisms of the movement which came to be known as 'de-schooling' asserted that, all over the world, the school had an anti-educational effect on society. They proposed that schools failed to teach what they pretend to teach and labelled their own failures as a product of deficiencies in their pupils as distinct from inadequacies in their teachers (Lister 1974).

Planners and policy makers alike became alarmed at the scale and force of such criticisms and there was much talk about a 'crisis' in schooling. Confronted with the law of diminishing returns arising from the huge cost of institutionalized teaching and learning, they moved towards imposing tighter controls on schools and the training of teachers.

As a consequence, there is today a widespread reaction across Western Europe and the United States to use the full powers of the State apparatus to regulate schooling and teaching under the slogans of 'quality' and 'raising standards'. The question then arises: what kind of quality and whose standards?

These vitally important issues have a significant bearing on the nature of a future curriculum. They are well expressed in the words of a contributor to the recent Copenhagen Forum on Children's Culture (Von Hentig 1997).

Only when we are able to re-evaluate our condition and aims shall we be able to re-shape our reality, for instance by turning the school - which is now primarily a custodial institution focusing on understanding, selection, conditioning, testing and career preparation - into a proper place for kids to grow up in.

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The fact that schools in Western Europe are contingently custodial institutions (and I use the term 'contingently' to signal that it could be different and I suspect has to be different in the future) is a reminder that whatever we might think about the role of government in education or schooling and the attendant dangers of politicizing the curriculum - whether in schools, teacher training institutions or universities - for as long as schools remain custodial institutions it will be a core function of government to regulate them.

Some would argue that education need not be a core function of government, indeed would assert that it positively ought not to control education, for the inalienable powers of government are to do with the making of laws, providing for a system of justice, making appointments and conducting relations with other countries (Butler 1996).

The significance of the distinction between education and schooling for western governments is the dilemma it poses as to whether and to what extent they ought to regulate both the processes as well as the content of educational institutions. My contention would be that in the interests of active and responsible citizenship, and the promotion of participation in democratic institutions, government should focus its attention on the quality and standards of educational processes as distinct from the content of the curriculum of social institutions.

The trends are however in an opposite direction, perhaps as much for practical as ideological reasons. For approximately seven million people are employed in Britain in the 'social businesses', that is those organizations that can be defined as delivering a product or service with a specific social content meeting community needs. It is estimated that social businesses have a turnover of 35% of the Gross Domestic Product and, as a consequence, expectations have been raised and will no doubt rise even higher.

TEACHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

These issues are perhaps best illustrated by the European battleground of teacher training. And whilst the historic and civilized surroundings of Edinburgh University give no sense of warfare, an ideological war is most certainly being waged over this territory.

If we examine the diversity of ideologies that shape the education systems of European nations there is a well researched view that teacher education and training is at a crossroads. It is a version of the education/schooling

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distinction and the debate is represented by two dominant models. The first, described as the 'bureaucratic-managerial' approach, regards the teacher as a technician transmitting prescribed information. The second, 'professional' approach describes the teacher as having an active role in collaborative planning for policy development. The content of training programmes for each of these models reflects conceptions of the ideal teacher. It is argued that the successful integration of these interpretations of the teacher's role will yield a satisfactory relationship between the theory of education and its practice. However it is also proposed that such integration will only occur when theories are tested by available alternatives, when systematic reflection on acting and thinking is encouraged, and when external consultants and professional practitioners combine their resources. No particular method of achieving these features of teacher education is recommended other than entreaties that governments create 'an environment in which teacher educators and practising teachers co-operate on a professional basis' (Vonk 1991).

Tendencies towards such co-operation may, however, be inevitable with or without encouragement through the combined effects of certain underlying conditions which are being commonly experienced by European governments, most notably:

- *the technicalisation of the world of work*: a shift from unskilled to highly skilled workers requiring governments to raise the general level of qualifications and review school curricula;
- *the transformation of the school population*: through increased cultural diversity, modified family structures, integration of special needs pupils in mainstream schooling, new information technologies and links with the world of work;
- *the rationalisation of systems*: budgetary pressures reducing the unit of resource, introducing quality control procedures and shifting responsibility to local financial management;
- *the internationalisation of education and training*: to respond to the needs of a common market.

(Vonk 1995)

The conclusion is drawn from any one or a combination of these factors that throughout Europe the teacher's work as a change agent is high on the agenda of political educational considerations. We are back to a variant of the education/schooling distinction. Do we continue to school the horse and educate the rider? Or do we try to limit both by schooling both?

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The relevance of the outcomes of this question is nothing less than the prize of having a future worth having. And having a future worth having hinges on the view we might take about the relevance of the culture of work. Whether one adopts Charles Handy's view of the future as a 'contract economy' of short-term, part-time employment characterized as 'portfolio lives', or Will Hutton's view of a future 30/30/40 society; 30% unemployed, 30% short-term contracts and part-time workers, 40% full-time and longer serving part-timers, the message is plain (Handy 1994, Hutton 1996). There must be a relevance for education rather than schooling precisely because it provides a view of culture beyond the culture of work. As John White recently pointed out in his book **Education and the End of Work**,

so much energy in the present school and post school system is channelled not into creative directions, but into nurturing conventional patterns of work ... and as people have more of their lives for their own autonomous concerns, the wasteful struggle for 'better jobs' will come to seem that bit more pointless.
(White 1997)

In this way, the central myths of schooling, as Illich (1973) commented a quarter of a century ago, are to do with unending consumption, transferring responsibility from self to institutions, the measurement of values, the packaging of values for consumption in formalized curricula, and most significantly the myth of self-perpetuating progress. Are we not already approaching the point where further growth can neither be afforded nor sustained?

CULTURAL LITERACY AND FUNCTIONAL LITERACY

The core of the debate about the relevance of education as distinct from schooling is I think illustrated by the difference between two competing forms of literacy; what I will term cultural literacy and functional literacy. One may become functionally literate by mastering the basic skills of being an educated person through being able to read and write and add up. Throughout Europe there is the idea that schools are failing to provide an adequacy of competence in these basic skills, and that being poor and disadvantaged is perpetuated by not being taught effectively enough to acquire these skills in a pre-determined time scale. But computers can be programmed to do this, and being educated in this minimal sense can also mean being uncivilized, intolerant and inhuman. Basic skills are a necessary but not sufficient condition for being an educated person. The lack of vision

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evident in relying upon so restricted and utilitarian view of human nature is one of the most troubling aspects of present day politics of education.

By contrast, the notion of cultural literacy signals that beyond these basic competencies to read, write, and add up are visual, aural and tactile skills that seek to achieve a balance between intellectual and emotional capabilities. These are the competencies that liberate and enable individuals to transform their modes of thinking, acting, and expressing themselves in ways that would otherwise impoverish and limit their lives. Cultural literacy is centrally to do with a disposition to reflect critically on the basic attributes of being educated. Creativity, aesthetics, history, and the literary, visual and performing arts are the keys to this capacity to think critically, for they celebrate the role of the imagination in becoming human.

But as Herbert Read noted in his seminal book **Education through Art**, the kind of culture we can acquire through State institutions is determined by the nature of libertarian or authoritarian conceptions of democracy within which they are set (Read 1956). And we will be painfully aware that the modern day dictators have all used the arts for the brainwashing of their people. Creativity, aesthetics and the arts are no good in themselves; they are however very good if combined with the right sort of politics and used in training for responsible and intelligent citizenship (Bell 1998).

This poses the dilemma as to whether in the politics of education there can be a third way between left and right. The apparent preoccupation of governments throughout the western world to improve schools and raise both quality and standards is apparently commendable but as I commented earlier, quality in what and standards for whom?

Experts tell us that up to the year 2015, the annual increase of the world's population will be 89 million. One of the most challenging consequences will be urbanization and its impact on the environment. In ten years, 3.3 billion of the world's 6.6 billion people will be living in cities. At present there are 14 mega cities with more than 10 million inhabitants; in 10 years this number will have doubled. In 1953 there were 83 cities of more than one million people; today there are 280 and in twenty years there will be 500. There are approximately 40 wars being waged around the world at the present time (Von Hentig 1997).

If basic skills are going to deliver more than reliability in counting the heads of the dead and improving the prose style of prisoners, then more imagination is called for. Indeed, if schools themselves survive to cope with this situation, it will be necessary but not sufficient to equip their pupils with basic skills,

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for to do that alone will be to give them tools with no sense of purpose. And the idea that the younger the better for functional literacy to be mastered stands in danger not only of instrumentalizing the young who will have their varying abilities and rates of learning ruthlessly exposed to the stigmatizing effects of competition, but also of displacing and marginalizing equally worthwhile activities. Not least amongst these activities are the arts but perhaps more importantly the development of attitudes and beliefs so crucial to the early stages of learning through having direct contact with and learning about cultures other than their own.

THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON EDUCATION: LEARNING TO SUCCEED

In drawing to a conclusion and by way of summary, I would like to refer to an enquiry into education that was launched a decade ago at the British Association for the Advancement of Science. Its relevance now is that it represents an independent and largely non partisan attempt

to present an overall view of education and training, a review which would be visionary about the medium and long term future facing our children and this country: treating the system in all of its inter-connected parts: and, last but not least, considering the changes in our working and labour market scenes.

The National Commission on Education, as it came to be known, reported in 1993. Its vision was billed as 'A Radical Look at Education Today and a Strategy for the Future', which was outlined in the following terms:

1. In all countries *knowledge and applied intelligence* have become central to economic success and personal and social well-being.
2. In the United Kingdom much higher achievement in education and training is needed to match world standards.
3. Everyone must want to learn and have ample opportunity and encouragement to do so.
4. All children must achieve a good grasp of literacy and basic skills early on as the foundation for learning throughout life.
5. The full range of people's abilities must be recognised and their development rewarded.

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6. High-quality learning depends above all on the knowledge, skill, effort and example of teachers and trainers.
7. It is the role of education *both* to interpret and pass on the values of society and to stimulate people to think for themselves and to change the world around them.

It identified seven goals which it considered must be achieved to make a reality of this vision.

1. High-quality nursery education must be available for all 3- and 4-year-olds.
2. There must be courses and qualifications that bring out the best in every pupil.
3. Every pupil in every lesson has the right to good teaching and adequate support facilities.
4. Everyone must be entitled to learn throughout life and be encouraged in practice to do so.
5. The management of education and training must be integrated, and those with a stake in them must have this recognised.
6. There must be a greater public and private investment in education and training to achieve a better return.
7. Achievement must constantly rise and progress be open for all to examine.

(National Commission on Education 1993)

My response to this agenda has been to be directly or indirectly sceptical about general appeals to 'standards' and I have entered a note of caution about zealotry in curriculum fundamentalism. I am in particular unconvinced about simplistic comparisons of educational performance and cross cultural data yielding evidence of under achievement.

General appeals to achievement and its celebration are empty without models of excellence to which all can reasonably aspire. Otherwise, discourse becomes a re-run of Cavaliers and Roundheads thinking: one set wrong but romantic, the other set right but repulsive (Barber 1996). What is lacking is not talk of excellence but what counts as the pinnacle of excellence.

I am reminded of the reflections of one of the earliest military theorists, Sun Tzu who wrote 1,000 years or so before the birth of Christ. He had this to say:

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Perceiving a victory that does not surpass what the masses could know is not the pinnacle of excellence. Wrestling victories for which All under Heaven proclaim your excellence is not the pinnacle of excellence. Thus lifting an autumn hare cannot be considered great strength; seeing the sun and moon cannot be considered acute vision; hearing the sound of thunder cannot be considered having sensitive ears. The pinnacle of excellence is more subtle, more spiritual than the visible and spectacular.

INTERCULTURAL LEARNING PARTNERSHIPS

In summary, the future for Education in Scotland or any other democratic society lies, I believe, in the ways in which practitioners and policymakers resolve those dilemmas, paradoxes and contradictions that lie between libertarian and authoritarian forms of government. I do not believe it will be possible for teachers, pupils or students alone to take education forward. It can only happen in partnerships which are characterized by mutual benefit, mutual learning and mutual profit and which recognize a wide range of interests including our partners in Europe.

The central challenge in creating such learning partnerships in full recognition of a global economy is that they become intercultural in the broadest sense. This must mean that they not only promote international understanding but that they celebrate an intention for both pupils and adults to commit themselves to a learning situation so as to understand not merely the facts of life but a quality of living. And the term 'adults' here indicates teachers, trainers, policymakers, employers and parents working together towards some common cultural goals.

All too frequently educational institutions, when placed in a nationwide competitive climate, operate unilaterally and are thereby trapped in a monocultural world in which individuals are either isolated from each other or are alienated from the possibility of partnership through the effects of being encouraged to hold self serving attitudes to authority, hierarchy and territory.

Let me offer a glimpse of a current innovation in European education that attempts to organize the types of partnership which aim to secure mutual benefit, mutual learning and mutual profit, as I believe this example provides pointers to a school of the future.

In the Ministry of Education in Hesse - the area around Frankfurt , one of the most prosperous regions in Germany - there is an innovatory programme to

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interpret the existing curriculum of its secondary schools by means of five principles. I was appointed as Consultant Evaluator some five years ago to assist these schools to manage the process of becoming 'Europe Schools' through action research and self evaluation. (This is itself interesting; can you imagine anyone in Whitehall asking who should be appointed to evaluate the English national curriculum: a Dane, Italian or German maybe?)

These are the five principles (not in any order of priority);

- Intercultural and International Education including the European Dimension introduced into every subject taught in the existing curriculum.
- Co-operation with the Community making them a centre of activity and the community supporting their aims.
- 'Reformed Pedagogy' featuring self determined methods of teaching and learning including team teaching, uses of new technology, open learning, project based approaches, etc.
- Ecological Education: 'as a subject facing the challenges of today's society'.
- Extra Curricular Lessons: extending pastoral care, satisfying interests and helping pupils to find future jobs.

A flavour of some of the outcomes can be gathered from the following. There are 8 pilot schools, and 27 Associated Europe Schools currently. There are approximately 120 partner schools throughout the world (each pilot school has an average of 9 partner schools involving pupil and teacher mobility). There is a flourishing parent/pupil Europeschool Network and a whole school development plan implementing the five principles, actively monitored and evaluated by parents, staff, pupils and the Ministry. And all of this effort is open to the critical scrutiny of a foreigner on the basis of regular published reports!

During the third year of the programme I suggested that schools might seek out the attitudes and opinions of parents to check whether they were satisfied with what they were doing. One school responded to this challenge and developed its own questionnaire, processed the data and published the results. Following this lead, it was agreed that an independent research institute would survey parents in the remaining schools. During 1998, approximately 3,000 questionnaires were distributed and over 60% of parents responded.

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Early results from this data indicate that over 75% of parents regard their Europe School as good or very good. Their assessment of the five principles indicated that their first priority was that pupils should have access to modern teaching methods and to engage in co-operative and satisfying learning experiences. Access to foreign language teaching was thought to be very important. Critical thinking and being able to learn in a disciplined way was also valued highly.

These findings indicate that these parents expect more than satisfactory standards in the basic skills of reading, writing and adding up. The most important expectation of parents of Europeschools is that they should provide pupils with an ability to be independent and have a capacity to live together and co-operate with each other.

One of the Europe Schools has pupils from 32 nations. In the years ahead, in a unifying Europe this may not be untypical of many more schools. In this way, the Europe School programme seeks to reach beyond functional literacy to achieve cultural literacy. The early indications are that parents recognize the importance of this goal and expect it to be a defining feature of school achievement (Bell 1997).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I have attempted to explore the distinction between education and schooling in order to examine afresh the twin issues of quality for what and standards for whom?

I have proposed that if the surface grammar of achieving functional literacy must be pursued through what we now term 'schools', then this must not distract from the depth grammar of cultural literacy through education.

I have urged vigilance and moderation of attempts wherever they might arise to coerce and prematurely shape our future citizens through punishment, surveillance and unilateral examination. For these are the arts of exercising power over knowledge. On the contrary, I have suggested that we persist with and re-affirm our belief in the opposite path of knowledge – power in which we patiently but persistently support learners to understand the human condition through reason, reflection and enabling forms of personal expression.

Mounting an assault on the pinnacles of excellence will not be a passionless business. Education is an affair of the heart akin to learning to love one's

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enemy. For this enterprise to succeed, the uses of imagination allied to critical thinking must be in the foreground of action. This will demand innovation and not merely reform.

In exercising the powers of government, I have drawn attention to the dangers of the tyranny of the majority whether formal or actual. The proper corrective must therefore be collaborative action research and evaluation - research by professional educators themselves - as a condition of and in advance of legislation (Bell 1995).

In considering the challenge of raising standards, I have implied throughout that the baseline for educational processes is encouraging, challenging and continually supporting the sense of potency in persons to learn and produce. This is the core of the educational enterprise and access to it will demand creativity and uses of the imagination that scholastic approaches to curricula cannot meet. For the current definition of action imposed in varying degrees in most parts of the world upon what we now term 'schools' restricts their organization to satisfy more limited demands.

We should, if I am right, stop talking about education if we do not mean what we say. That I believe is the proper test of what it is to be radical and the proper standard that has to be raised. If this is correct, then what presently counts as 'radical' in talk of modernising education is what the military theorist Sun Tzu would have termed 'chaotic', and interestingly one of his six main paths to defeat.

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