

Bound to be Free: home education as a positive alternative to paying the hidden costs of 'free' education
by Jan Fortune-Wood

Occasionally I come across a book which does something I have been trying to do, but with more authority than I have been able to muster. Dr. Fortune-Wood knows, and deploys with skill, quotations from many of the best-known writers on the theory of non-school education to underpin the central idea of this book - that schooling is, for most youngsters, the worst possible way to do education.

The text concentrates on the many ways in which compulsory school education, which is so often described as 'free', and assumed to be an integral benefit to all children, in fact binds them body and soul into prison of intellectual superficiality. By prescribing more or less everything a child will have to do from five years old to sixteen, Dr. Fortune-Wood asserts that schooling disables the vibrant mechanism for efficient, rapid and thorough learning which is the mind of a young human being. In spite of all the cant which schools build into their prospectuses, and hang on the walls where OFSTED inspectors can see it, about 'helping pupils to fulfil their potential', and 'developing the unique skills and interests of each child', schools cannot respond to what children's minds do naturally when faced with new sights and sounds. To do so would mean dethroning the teacher, ditching the timetable and the curriculum, and creating a free-flowing, unpredictable, learner-managed environment in which Authority no longer had any controlling role, beyond that of keeping the learners safe. This is, of course, too frightening to be contemplated by a Society which requires teachers to work office-hours, and to give regular evidence of having made children cleverer, or at least more knowledgeable in proportion to the amount of time they had had them corralled in classrooms, their noses to the grindstone. So it can only happen when parents take the dizzying step of taking their children out of the system.

Dr. Fortune-Wood takes some refreshingly radical positions. Compulsory schooling, she asserts, though it is often seen as the surest mark of a civilised Society, is nothing more than a breach of the human rights of children. As surely as slavery once did, it oppresses a group of people not for any objective motive arising out of something they may have done to deserve it, but simply because of who they are. It allows a corps of child-catchers to seize any children seen out of school during term-time and drag them back into a servitude where, if it had been doing them any good they would have been happy to stay.

Perhaps an even more flagrant absurdity which Dr. Fortune-Wood analyses in this book is the 'medicalisation' of children's behaviour under the stress of schooling. She focusses with some indignation on the school system's latest response to children who are bored, frustrated and unwilling to 'play the game'. It brings in psychiatrists, who solemnly 'examine' them and diagnose them as sufferers from 'Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder', or ADHD. All the things normal young humans do when the world around them is too slow, too restrictive or simply too boring to be endured any longer, become, through the alchemy of medical speculation, the symptoms of a disease. At least one medic, writing about this bogus malady, insists that it cannot be cured, and will continue to blight the 'sufferer's' life even when school is distant memory! In this way, a supposedly beneficent school industry transforms healthy young people into carriers of a dangerous social disease.

This book cuts a swathe through all the settled assumptions which rule our national culture of education. Dr. Fortune-Wood denies that teachers are in any way essential to good education. Most youngsters will need them at some stage, particularly as they prepare for adult life and responsibility, but since (the assertion is mine, but I suspect Dr. Fortune-Wood would agree) the entire curriculum of the Primary School could be communicated to the average 12-year-old in two months, tops, the role of primary educators ought to have more to do with being a playmate and companion than with instruction and task-setting.

The writing is dense. The book is accessible to 'ordinary' home-educators, but it needs to be taken in small doses, and pondered over. However, it will amply repay careful reading, because Dr. Fortune-Wood has grasped, and can account for, some of the most powerful and convincing reasons why every family should think seriously about education otherwise than in school.

Chris Shute

Can architecture ensure that School Works ?

by Ben Koralek

**‘Buildings matter precisely because we do inhabit them.
Wonderful buildings are a way of prompting the soul.
When a building cannot be reduced to its function,
it helps us to be more than functional ourselves.’**

Jeanette Winterson in *Building Design* 7/8/2001

When we bemoan the appalling conditions of Damilola Taylor’s North Peckham Estate in South London or are inspired and moved by the quality of space in Bilbao’s Guggenheim Museum, we are giving expression to the power of architecture to affect us both emotionally and spiritually.

Apply this thinking to a consideration of the exhausted condition of so many secondary school buildings around the country, and the current emotional and intellectual conditions found in most large secondary schools, and quite quickly a simple argument emerges.

Would the experience of learning (and schooling) be improved and enhanced if we insisted on architecture of the highest quality for school buildings ?

If we engaged architects in the design of school buildings in new ways, to what extent could the educational, cultural and management structures of secondary schools be developed in ways more responsive to change (both inside school and beyond) ?

In bringing together Head Teachers, architects and local authorities in a creative process, is it possible to integrate the educational and administrative infrastructure with the design of the buildings (and whole school site) to such an extent that we might realise more intellectually stimulating and socially sustainable environments for young people; and **save** public money into the bargain ?

These were the kinds of questions that Hilary Cottam, founder of the secondary school design initiative ‘School Works’, asked of the DfEE, the Architecture Foundation and the (then) New Labour think-tank DEMOS between 1998 and 2000. As she says:

**“We cherish our homes; we aspire to beautiful places of work.
Why should our schools be different ?”**

As a means to finding some of the answers to these questions, School Works started its research with the following, very common sense premise:

Perhaps the very best individuals and groups to speak to on the re-design of forty-year-old school buildings, would be those who work in and use the school buildings every day: students and teachers themselves.

Before scoffing at School Works' ability to state the obvious, it is worth recalling just how few school buildings were ever designed through user-group consultation or, as it is sometimes known today 'planning for real.'

**'The relationships between the educational experience
and the architectural context was, and is to this day, understated.'**

Mark Dudek in *Architecture of Schools: The new learning environments*
pub. 2000, Architectural Press, London

Of course, during the post-War heyday of new school building between 1950 and 1970 (when over 7,000 new schools were built in Britain), some architects **did** consult those who would use the buildings they were designing. More often than not however, school buildings were designed and constructed by the local authority with no specific reference to the community destined to use them.

These ways of managing large-scale school building programmes persist to this day; to such an extent – sadly – that attempts to introduce a more inclusive, participatory design process and architectural design of the very highest quality can be thwarted by the multiple pressures on the timetable for urgently needed capital spending within the local authority.

Amidst the sustained blizzard of current DfES initiatives crowding for our attention and requiring our approval, few *Education Now* readers will have failed to notice the commitment to re-building and refurbishment to the nation's education building stock.

Billions of our taxes will be spent on schools' refurbishment and new buildings over the next few years. Surely, the time has come to demand that this money is spent wisely: in such a way that the maximum number of people benefit for the longest foreseeable period. By definition, this rationale assumes that the long view will provide best for us, our children and their children in turn.

School Works' argument is a simple one; but it is an argument whose time has come.

Firstly, as an advocate for architectural excellence in school building design, working with the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), School Works has devised a competition format to help Head Teachers and LEAs select architects that are right for them.

On the basis that every school community is unique, and that there is an ever-increasing range of secondary school types (City Academies, City Technology Colleges, Specialist, Beacon and Launch Pad schools; for example), School Works aims to encourage school client groups to select architects not simply on the quality of their design portfolio, but much more on their ability to listen, and respond, to the whole school community and its own vision for the future of their school.

Through a 'road-tested' participatory design process (see School Works Tool Kit), School Works also encourages architects to design schools responsive to their locality and to celebrate this individual identity.

However, perhaps School Works' greatest contribution to the current debate on secondary schooling is in its capacity to provide a framework for wholesale, radical reform of so much of the received wisdom of what works best for young people's learning.

Re-inventing the architectural infrastructure of a school building provides Head Teachers and LEA officials with a heaven-sent opportunity to simultaneously re-invent the internal workings of a 'traditional' or even 'bog-standard' secondary school.

School Works' pilot project at Kingsdale School in Southwark, for example, has seen (so far):

- the curriculum expand and adapt (to include a range of GNVQ programmes with dedicated workshop / studio spaces)
- a greater use of integrated IT systems across the school
- a review of socialisation in the school (resulting in the re-introduction of a house system and dedicated social spaces for students)
- a review of professional and relaxation needs of staff (resulting in greater provision of work space and 'soft' / desk-free space for teachers); and
- a review of staff and students' time usage (resulting in the removal of the problematic and time-wasting corridor circulation system).

Whilst these changes represent an enormous achievement for a school coming off OFSTED 'special measures' and with a very high turnover of students and staff, there is even greater potential for a free-thinking Head Teacher to take things much, much further in terms of:

- re-thinking the relationship of a school building to its wider community
- analysing the current teacher-student relationship (moving perhaps from 'banking' or 'supermarket' modes of learning to that of independent learning 'brokerage')
- re-defining the typical school day
- acknowledging the presence of multiple intelligences and different modes of learning
- establishing links between the school community and other learning organisations / facilities (galleries, museums, concert halls, libraries etc.)
- developing people-centred IT networks and the links to business, media & the arts
- the social function of schools (moving them away from custodial centres to invitational learning environments); and
- an exploration into a more human-scale education (and teacher-student ratios).

In short, an intelligent analysis of the architecture required to house and enhance the multiple functions of most industrial-scale secondary school buildings can provide us with a golden opportunity to take stock of:

- how adults and young people communicate together
- the relationship of young people to the wider social and work environment (without increasing the culture of testing)
- what kind of learning young people want and need
- what systems and materials will we need to bring this about
- how to ensure learning becomes pleasurable again
- how best to replicate new methods and ideas in a way which is regionally sensitive and community-specific
- what examples we might have at our fingertips already
- how best to spend our collective funding for learning

Contemporary British architects are more than able to take on this agenda. Along with many education professionals, a great many architects approach their practice on the basis that their work is an agent of social change. As School Works attempts to demonstrate, there is a shared language. With the support of education professionals, architects can rise to the challenge of re-inventing school buildings fit for use.

We must give them the opportunity.

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Visit School Works at www.school-works.org

Copies of School Works' publications:

School Works Tool Kit and Learning Buildings

are available direct from School Works on 0207 401 5333.

Flotsam and Jetsam

Why pupils need to be stretched

Men who are above average height at the age of 16 earn more later in life, say University of Pennsylvania researchers, with an extra inch representing 1.7 percent to 1.8 percent extra in wages. *The Guardian*, 26th April 2002

Totalitarianism watch

"Our national curriculum of 1988, even as it has been modified, is more nationally prescriptive than any other state and more so than the Stalinist regimes of the USSR." Professor Tim Brighouse, reported in *Home Educators Liberation Papers*, April 2002

Get yourself a plan

"Having attended a recent meeting on asset management planning, I realised I needed an asset management plan, a building management plan, and an accessibility plan which would be a part of our budget plan and our development plan which will, of course, include our literacy plan and our numeracy plan. Now, when we have a planning meeting to plan our plans, we plan to put all our plans into one overall plan and to take the advice of the DFES and plan to reduce our paperwork by having a paperwork reduction plan!" P.S.Booley in *Times Ed. Supplement* 29th March 2002

Feedback from the escape committee

"We own up to being two of the 155,000 teachers under 60 who have taught in secondary schools but are not now teaching. Seven years ago we, together with three others, were paid to take early retirement because our school could not balance its books. Although we were still on top of our jobs the local authority made us and offer we couldn't refuse - so we went. Having tasted life outside the classroom no inducement could persuade us to return."

Ray and Kathy Sylvester in the *Guardian*, 20th March 2002

The test of real intelligence

"How brainy is Britain? The BBC is giving us the chance to find out with a prime time IQ test. But if you're really intelligent you'll know the whole concept of IQ is discredited." In the *Observer*, 17th March 2002

Schools - are they really day prisons?

Since most juvenile crime is committed in the daytime, "Surely it would be better to keep these children in an institution that is both supportive and secure, where they would be required to spend almost all their daylight hours when they are most likely to be dangerous. They would be subjected to strict supervision, with their behaviour monitored by responsible, specially trained adults and benefit from mixing with their better behaved peers. There are such institutions scattered all over the country, some admittedly better than

others. Unfortunately, they are the very place from which the government wants the bad boys and girls excluded. They're called schools."

Dea Birkett in the *Guardian*, 4th March 2002

The cost of all looking alike

The Family Welfare Association, which provides grants for poor children to buy uniforms, reports that the average uniform costs £92 for boys, and £114-50 for girls at primary schools, and £156-50 for a girl and £157 for a boy at secondary school. In the *Guardian*, 28th February 2002

How many failing schools? Answer: all

Professor Guy Claxton concludes from his research that parents, teachers and other education professionals, practically without exception, believe that the school is doing a poor job of preparing young people for the demands of the future, and that currently mooted reforms are unlikely to improve the situation significantly. The breakup of the old certainties of job for life, a stable community and an agreed morality, requires a flexible, learning-based mentality that young people do not feel they possess and they feel let down by an education system that has peppered them with arcane activities instead. *RSA Journal* 4/4 2001

Bubble-blowing therapy anyone?

"Last summer I spent whole afternoon in our garden with our two-year-old blowing bubbles and discussing them in great detail - their colour, texture, direction of travel, and likely destiny. We made up stories about them, because as everyone knows, all bubbles are different even though they are borne equal. It's a great way to put the rest of the world into proper perspective. Who actually cares about the third way, the Tory party leadership, the directorship of the national theatre, digital revolutions and cyberspace? Blow a few bubbles, you know it makes sense." Playwright, Alan Plater in *Playgroup Network Richmond News*, Autumn 2001

Academies of bullying?

"Excluding bullies from schools won't make the slightest difference. The whole edifice of formal education is predicated on bullying, with its competitive league tables, and stark statistical measures of success. Not wanting schools to be academies of bullying is like saying the Nazis would have been sweet if it wasn't for the fascism ... it's school that makes everybody both bully and victim." A.A.Gill in the *Times*, 20th January 2002

How to be an undergraduate without debts

"The Open University is undergoing a boom as 18 year-olds discover they can study for a degree without going into debt ... Eight years ago around 1% of Open University students was 22 or under. Now the total is around 6,500 and rising - 5% of the institution's 100,000 undergraduates." Huw Richards in *Guardian Education*, 5th February 2002

Robin Hood in reverse?

"I used to think schools were a public service ... Schools are now a business, or maybe a charity; no one seems quite sure ... Meanwhile private schools may be charities. Covenants to schools attract tax relief, a possible 40% subsidy. Eton entered the top 100 charities last year with an income of nearly £30 million ... Public munificence towards the wealthy cushions them from paying the true cost of such privileges as small classes and superb sports facilities. It is a bizarre example of Robin Hood in reverse ... richer people are given state handouts while the poorest are maligned for not pulling themselves up by their bootstraps." Ted Wragg, in *Guardian Education*, 5th February 2002.

Educational Beachcomber

SPACE FOR Education Now BOX

Book Review

Natural Learning and the Natural Curriculum

by Roland Meighan

Educational Heretics Press in Association with Natural Parent

pp.115, price £10-00

ISBN 1-900219-19-0 £10-00

In his latest book, *Natural Learning and the Natural Curriculum*, Roland Meighan once again reminds us of children's incredible, innate capacity for learning and he issues dire warnings concerning the schooling system in its present form. It would not be an overstatement to say that Professor Meighan believes we will stunt that capacity for learning and the ability to think independently if we continue down this route of 'crowd instruction' (p.69).

Natural Learning and the Natural Curriculum takes us on a stimulating thought journey from Part 1: 'Natural learning and the natural curriculum' (including 'Natural learners'; 'Wanted! A new vocabulary for learning'), to Part 2: 'Parents' (this includes 'Reluctant educational heretics'; 'Parents as researchers' and 'Grandparent power?') and on to Parts three to six, which cover 'Teachers' (considering, for example: 'What is a good teacher?'); 'Superstitions and Myths' (such as 'The superstition of standards') and 'Visions of the next learning system' (which includes interviews with John Adcock and Sir Christopher Ball, and 'Learning centres instead of school?').

Meighan debates exciting ways of providing more appropriate learning opportunities, through both home education and neighbourhood centres, where teachers would be learning advisers and ICT facilities would support the community of learners. I say, community of learners because these would be places where everyone involved would be seen as a learner. And importantly, the teachers/ learning advisers should be, according to Meighan, who paraphrases the words of Robert Owen, 'fit company for learners' (p.69).

Further, Meighan argues that there should be a 'transformational approach' to learning – one which *'encourages dialogue and experimentation...is more radical and proposes that to educate the human being is not merely to make ... a knowledgeable, productive member of society (transmission), an engaged citizen (transaction), but also to encourage each person to discover a deeper meaning for his or her life.'* (p.113)

I cannot say why I found I was holding my breath as I read on through the book – perhaps I'm just a pessimist – I do so want (for my five grandchildren and their peers) an exciting, meaningful education and I know what's happening isn't going to be that, even though some (probably mainly girls) will cope with it all. Maybe a second reason was that I always worry that home education and learning accounts would be difficult for families to manage under stress, especially those disadvantaged by poverty and those who have, through their own inadequate schooling, been deprived of cultural capital. Further, I want to be convinced that as many fathers as mothers stay at home to educate their children.

However, the learning centres are really appealing to me – it's an idea that I've long held dear, especially in my own field of early childhood, and since I believe that's where real learning goes on if it's truly child-centred, I also believe it's a good model for learners of any age.

Of course both home education and learning centres make sense in relation to Meighan's argument for better adult:child ratios – and this fits with Vygotsky's social theory of learning – children need 'more knowledgeable others' with whom to co-construct their worlds – they could be other children, at least if there were a mix of age groups, and again families and learning centres often offer those opportunities to both the learner and the 'teacher' more so than is possible in most of our schools at present.

The last section of the book, a 'Postscript' entitled 'The Boulevard of Broken Dreams', rightly congratulates those teachers (and some whole schools) who have managed to maintain oases in a desert. But Professor Meighan's main message here is 'WE CAN SCRAP IT and devise learning arrangements and places that are more convivial' (p.118). His constancy to humane and sane principles is to be admired.

Natural Learning and the Natural Curriculum is a good read, a comprehensive, thoughtful text, and clearly a labour of love, but it isn't only that – it also contains a wealth of 'hotlinks' to other useful resources, books as well as websites.

Meighan uses the famous quote from Laotse, the Chinese philosopher, 'Of a good teacher, they say, when the task is done, we did this ourselves' (p.67). Perhaps when we have achieved a humane, transformational education system, at home, in learning centres, and a host of other settings, we will think we have done it ourselves - but it will really be because we learnt from Roland Meighan and a few other 'heretics'.

Tricia David,
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Education Now

Feature

Supplement

**Schooling can seriously damage your health:
education for violence, education for peace**

From the inaugural lecture at University of Birmingham by Professor Clive Harber

I want to make a personal statement about education – to draw on personal experience, my own research and my reflection on the work of others to present some ideas about what is wrong and potentially right about education. In particular I want try to get away from the many technical issues that pass as educational debate these days to look at more fundamental questions surrounding the basic purposes of education – what sort of individuals and what sort of societies are we trying to create?

Generally, it is assumed that formal education is necessarily and inherently a 'good thing', that it is a key indicator of development and that what happens inside schools and higher education is automatically of benefit to both individuals and society. This assumption is shared, most of the time, by national governments, global institutions like the World Bank and international aid agencies who expend a great deal of time and effort trying to get more children into school and keep them there with only an occasional hint in their literature that all might not be well within schooling itself. The concern is that this literature is overwhelmingly with rights *to* education rather than rights *in* education. Hence, the enormous global expenditure on formal education and the major conference held at Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 when most governments of the world met to plan how they would provide universal primary education for all children by the year 2000 – followed by a similar conference held in Dakar, Senegal in 2000 where they met again to explain why they hadn't achieved their targets for 2000 but promised to do so by 2015.

But is it true? Is formal education necessarily or always good for you or your society? There is little point in providing education for all, meaning most of the time schooling for all, unless it is going to do more good than harm. In the first part of this lecture I want to argue that **education as it has been, and is, organised in the shape of primary and secondary schools, has too often been harmful**. It is my contention that this negative dimension of schooling has been consistently played down or ignored in governmental policy documents and academic writing and research. Yet until we recognise what is wrong, we can't start to put it right.

However, as I said, my main concern is more clearcut – how and why have schools actually been harmful to young people and society? In particular, I will be concerned with some of the ways in which schools have been violent to pupils and have helped to perpetuate violence in the wider society. So, while there has been much attention in the media on the violence of pupils towards teachers in schools, this lecture looks at the other side of the coin but will also argue that there is a nevertheless a relationship between the two. I must stress, especially as there are teachers in the audience, including some who are my relatives, that the intention is very definitely **not** to blame any group such as teachers or lecturers but to explore what it is about schooling *as a system* that can lend itself to a violent and oppressive interpretation. Teachers, lecturers and administrators are often victims of education systems in the same way that pupils are.

There was a television programme on in January of this year which was called *Conspiracy*. The TV guide to the programme started the description of the programme in the following way: 'A dramatisation of the meeting that took place in Berlin on January 20th 1942 in which a roomful of well-educated lawyers sat down to a lavish dinner, with brandy and cigars, and voted to gas the entire Jewish population of the western hemisphere'. Hence for me the importance of the following letter which was sent by a USA High School Principal to his teachers at the beginning of every academic year. It concerns education under the Nazis in Germany. Some of you may have heard this before and indeed I've been using it since 1984 but its one of the most powerful reminders of the evil that the wrong sort of

education can do so I make no apologies for using it one more time – especially in the light of the increasing success of the far right across Europe at the moment.

'Dear Teacher, I am the survivor of a concentration camp. My eyes saw what no man should witness. Gas chambers built by learned engineers, children poisoned by educated physicians, infants killed by trained nurses, women and babies shot and burned by high school graduates. So I am suspicious of education. My request is, help your children become more human. Your efforts must never produce learned monsters, skilled psychopaths, educated Eichmans. Reading, writing and arithmetic are important only if they serve to make our children more human.'

From more recent times there is the religious violence that has taken place in India. In March of this year a crowd of 10,000 Hindus dragged a Muslim M.P., his brother-in-law, his brother-in-law's wife and their two small sons into the street from their house and set them alight. The Police Commissioner for the city where it happened stated *'I hang my head in shame. The people responsible for all this come from the better sections of society. They are not criminals. Many of them are educated...'* In South Africa right up to the end of the 1980s highly 'educated', or perhaps more accurately qualified, medical doctors were involved in cases of torture of political prisoners under the apartheid regime. Of the five men identified in a newspaper article as being closest to the French neo-fascist Presidential contender Jean-Marie Le Pen, two are law professors at French universities and two were described as having 'brilliant' minds – and this was in the Guardian newspaper! In the Rwandan genocide of 1994 when between 800,000 and a million people (one eighth of its population) were murdered in the space of a few weeks, teachers from a Hutu ethnic background commonly denounced their Tutsi pupils to the militia or even directly killed them themselves. Indeed, the role of schooling in this genocide poses some very serious and important questions about why and how we educate in all societies. As two commentators on the Rwandan genocide put it,

'The role of well-educated persons in the conception, planning and execution of the genocide requires explanation; any attempt at explanation must consider how it was possible that their education did not render genocide unthinkable. The active involvement of children and young people in carrying out the violence, sometimes against their teachers and fellow pupils, raises further questions about the kind of education they received'.

I hope, through these examples, that I have made the point **that schooling isn't automatically a good thing and that everything depends on its political and moral purposes and its resulting practices**. In this regard it is important to note that in the history of state provided mass education there has always been a tension between education for political control on the one hand and education for liberation and critical awareness on the other. It is my view that, unfortunately, the control function has almost always significantly had the upper hand. It is certainly the case that one of the main purposes for the introduction of modern mass schooling in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century was social and political control, particularly of a potentially troublesome organised working population – what we used to call the working class. As Marten Shipman put it in his study of education and modernisation,

'Punctuality, quiet orderly work in groups, response to orders, bells and timetables, respect for authority, even tolerance of monotony, boredom, punishment, lack of reward and regular attendance at place of work are the habits to be learned at school.'

Thus authoritarian control and surveillance have always been a significant part of modern mass schooling and this model was extended globally from European societies through colonisation where the purpose of schooling was to help control indigenous populations for the benefit of the colonial power. By the 1930s colonialism had exercised its sway over 85 % of the world.

In terms of control and surveillance the first thing to note about much of schooling is the element of **compulsion**. Yet many children for much of the time don't want to be in school in the first place. The essentially coercive nature of this forced approach to education was recently stressed by John Cosgrove a deputy headteacher with over twenty years experience in primary and secondary schools who wrote in a book published last year,

'Lets not kid ourselves. Even in the easiest, best motivated schools, many of the pupils, much of the time, would rather not be there. Children do not choose to go to school. The choice is made for them. Once in school, more or less unwillingly, pupils are presented with activities chosen for them and they are given no option about attempting them. There do exist schools where pupils have a free choice about which lessons to attend, and whether or not they complete assignments, but such institutions are as rare as primroses flowering on an English New Year's Day..For the most part schools make children do things' (Cosgrove 2001:51).

Indeed, the extent to which schools and other agencies will go to get pupils into school are really quite extraordinary and involve some stick and some carrot. On the carrot side, one school in Halifax, U.K. is offering pupils cash rewards for good attendance. Pupils who do not miss a single day in a year can earn up to £80.00. On the stick side, in Germany the electronics company Siemens has developed a tracker which can be sown into a school uniform or school bag which will use global positioning satellite technology and be able to pinpoint a truanting child to within five metres. But surveillance doesn't stop at getting pupils past the school gate. A school in Leeds wants to build a fish tank into a glass wall for the boys and girls lavatories so that staff can see into the washrooms and keep an eye on pupils hanging around outside the cubicles. It is interesting to note that the article in the TES which described this proposal made absolutely no mention of human rights issues.

Of course, when they get to school, they find an organisation which reflects elements of its historical origins in mass production, control and surveillance. Charles Handy, at the time a Professor of Business organisations, turned his attention to secondary schools in the 1980s and concluded that the nearest model of organisational style he could come up with in analysing schools was **prisons** in that the inmates routine is disrupted every 40 minutes, they change their place of work and supervisors constantly, they have no place to call their own and they are often forbidden to communicate with each other. He also argued that if you look at schools in another way then they are more like **factories** and the pupils like products which are inspected at the end of the production line, sometimes rejected as sub-standard and then stamped 'Maths', 'English', 'History' etc.

In England this situation has been made worse by the introduction of the national curriculum. A recent study of the actual operation of the national curriculum over a five year period involving 7,000 pupils, 250 teachers and the observation of 97 lessons in primary, secondary and tertiary educational institutions concluded that, *'the national curriculum, in operation, enforced a limited course restricted to the rote-learning of subject-specific knowledge so that pupils may perform well in written tests of memory. It is my contention that this knowledge-based, assessment driven curriculum demands didactic drill-training to ensure examination success; and that such a pedagogy suppresses the development of a critical disposition, so that the school leaver becomes a passive serf or discontented outlaw, rather than an emancipated citizen or productive worker'*.

It is not surprising then that there is pupil resistance to schooling. Indeed, its perhaps surprising that there isn't more resistance. One researcher I met had spent an entire year sitting in with a class of 14 year-olds in a midlands school through every lesson they experienced. At the beginning of the year one of her research questions was *'why do pupils truant?'* At the end of a year of boredom, routine and irrelevance this question changed to *'why don't all pupils truant?'* And this was before the national curriculum. But resistance to schooling there is and resistance there always has been – sometimes violent resistance. Robert Adams in his fascinating book *Protests by Pupils* documents this in England and in many other countries, including the school strikes of 1911 which involved up to a *million* young people at one time.

In a survey of 15,000 British pupils carried out by the Guardian newspaper in 2001 some key findings were that the pupils felt that schools were not happy places, that pupils views weren't listened to, that they weren't treated and respected as individuals and that schools were rigid, inflexible institutions. This strikes me as a root cause of a lot of pupil-teacher violence in schools today – **if you shut people up in a place they don't want to be, doing things they don't want to do often with only very uncertain and unclear prospects of personal benefit then trouble will result.**

Bearing in mind this context of control, I now want to examine briefly in turn some of the specific ways in which schooling has been routinely involved in acts of physical and mental violence against children or helped to foster violence among children and hence the wider society. These will be physical punishment, gendered violence, stress and anxiety, militarisation and racism. I ought to say before I do this that these are merely brief illustrative examples selected from a great deal of documented evidence that I have gathered on pupils violent experience of schooling over the last few years. What has really shocked me is how easy it has been to come across so much material so quickly.

1. Physical Punishment. The control and surveillance origins of formal schooling are reflected in its authoritarian nature. I have studied evidence from a wide range of countries in South and Central America, Africa, Asia, North America and Europe and the one obvious conclusion is that, while there are some exceptions – particularly in Scandinavia and Holland, by far the predominant form of schooling internationally is authoritarian. A key element of these authoritarian relationships is the perceived right of teachers to punish, inherent in the need to maintain control and order. As one American writer put it,

'Systemic violence begins with the expectation that all students of similar ages should and can learn the same things. Children are placed with large groups of similarly aged students and teachers are forced to adopt methods of control and routine that would be better left to the military, the workforce or the penal system ... In a quest for conformity, students are monitored in their coming and going, they are required to carry hall passes and must seek permission to leave the room. Their activities are directed and timed and their learning is scheduled into periods of work followed by short breaks. Such regimentation requires rules and punishment and administrative models that rely on differentiated power relations'.

In terms of whether children in developing countries are better or worse off in school, it is interesting to note that a joint publication of the British Department for International Development and *Save the Children* recently and unusually noted that in some schools in a range of countries they studied (India, Mali, Lebanon, Liberia, Mozambique, Pakistan, Mongolia, Ethiopia and Peru),

'... it is almost certainly more damaging for children to be in school than out of it. Children whose days are spent herding animals rather than sitting in a classroom at least develop skills of problem solving and independence while the supposedly luckier ones in school are stunted in their mental, physical and emotional development by being

rendered passive and having to spend hours each day in a crowded room under the control of an adult who punishes them for any normal level of activity such as moving or speaking'.

Historically this punishment has often taken the form of physical attack with a stick known as caning. Its salutary to note that evidence suggests that violent physical punishment of pupils in schools (beating, ear pulling, cheek pinching and the like) is still widespread in many parts of the world. I have found evidence of the common use of caning in Botswana, Palestine, South Africa, Colombia, Morocco, Japan, India, Thailand, Kenya, The Gambia, South Korea and the USA. Indeed it was only finally banned in all state schools in this country in 1986 and in schools altogether as late as 1999. Even then a survey of 1,000 parents in England and Wales in 2000 found that 51% thought that corporal punishment should be reintroduced in schools. This is despite overwhelming and consistent evidence that violence reproduces violence. A major review of international research by the Gulbenkian Foundation published in 1995, for example, concluded that

'Research over the past 40 years has been remarkably consistent in showing that hitting children increases the chances of a child becoming physically aggressive, delinquent or both, The research in this book shows that corporal punishment leaves invisible scars that affect many aspects of life' (Gulbenkian Foundation, 1995:52).

Gender. In some societies the violence used to sustain power and control can be of a gendered nature. According to the South African Police Service, a woman is raped in South Africa about every 35 seconds. In South African schools sexual violence against females is correspondingly widespread. A report by Human Rights Watch last year on South African schools which was entitled *Scared at School* stated unambiguously that *'South African schoolgirls of every race and economic group daily encounter sexual violence and harassment that impedes their access to education. Girls are raped, sexually abused, sexually harassed and assaulted at school by male classmates and even teachers'*. In fact, it quotes a report by the Medical Research Council in 1998 which found that 37.7% of rape victims named their schoolteacher or school principal as the perpetrator. In case you think you misheard me – over one third of rapes in South Africa are carried out by school teaching staff. The report also notes that the prevalence of sexual harassment is also based on psychological coercion. The report states,

'In some cases girls acquiesce to sexual demands from teachers because of fears that they will be physically punished if they refuse. In other cases, teachers abuse their position of authority by promising better grades or money in exchange for sex. In the worst cases, teachers operate within a climate of seeming entitlement to sexual favours from students. In a wide spectrum of cases, the school response is weak, nonexistent or actually facilitates continued abuse' (2001:42).

Insights, which is a bulletin published jointly by the Department for International Development and the Centre for International Education at the University of Sussex found parallel phenomena on a widespread basis in Malawi, Uganda, Zimbabwe. Of course, in these contexts the added dimension of violence is the serious threat of the transmission of HIV/AIDS.

Stress and Anxiety. In some parts of the world there is increasing evidence of the psychological and physical harm - stress, anxiety and resulting physical symptoms - done to children and teachers internationally by increasingly controlled, regulated, ordered, inspected, competitive and test-driven schooling systems which are aimed at classification and ranking in order to serve markets in education. A survey of 8,000 pupils in England and Wales, for example, in 2000 found that stress is damaging pupils physical and emotional well being and is resulting in sleeping and eating disorders. The cause of this was endless testing which is why the report was entitled *Tested to Destruction*. It calculated that by the time the average sixth former leaves school he or she will have taken 75 or more external tests.

In Germany last year the Bavarian Teachers' Federation warned of an alarming rise in the number of primary school pupils taking medication for stress or simply to improve school performance. One in five primary children in Germany is taking medication for these reasons, the union said following surveys carried out by health authorities in southern Germany. Common symptoms were headaches, stomach aches, sleeplessness and loss of appetite. In India the Chair of the Central Board of Secondary Education called for an overhaul of the examination system to tackle the problem of student stress. In 2000, as in previous years, at least four suicides by failing students were reported. In a study done in America last year, which was actually designed to find out the good news about schools, it was found that students were stressed out and regularly participated in devious, deceptive and cruel behaviour to get the best grade possible. It quotes one 14 year-old as saying,

'High school is simply a way of building up tolerance for stress. School turns students into robots, just doing the routine'.

Militarisation. The use of child soldiers in wars has become increasingly common in recent years. However, in some societies schools themselves have been militarised. There have been a number of historical examples of this but here I shall just give four brief recent examples. Under the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, as recently as the early 1990's dominant aspects of the school curriculum for children as young as nine were how to lay landmines, set booby traps with explosives and to make explosives from fertilisers. In America, our great ally, John Ashcroft, President Bush's Attorney General, has publicly stated that he believes that the answer to America's school shootings such as that at Columbine High School in Colorado in 1999, is in allowing pupils to be armed in the classroom. In Venezuela

President Chavez decreed in 1999 that all schoolchildren would be given military training which would involve weapons handling because it would make Venezuela more efficient. He announced this in a four hour speech to Venezuela's teacher union and it was received with a standing ovation. Ironically, the Venezuelan military held up as a model of discipline and efficiency were themselves later involved in illegal executions and beatings of civilians during the widespread flooding that hit Venezuela six months after this announcement.

Racism. Racial hatred and ethnic prejudice can also be actively promoted by an education system. I have already mentioned the examples of Nazi Germany, South Africa and Rwanda. In Israel and Palestine strongly 'us and them' stances taken in school textbooks has helped to sustain distrust and hatred as have school systems in Serbia, Bosnia and Kosovo. A national report in India published in April of this year stated that many lower caste or so-called 'untouchable' children are regularly beaten at school by teachers who regard them as polluting the class. Teachers in schools made them targets for their anger and abuse and they were punished at the slightest pretext and often humiliated. There are 200 million people of this caste in India. In an article on Cyprus that appeared earlier this year one Greek Cypriot at school in the 1970s stated that she had yet to forget the slogan '*the good Turk is the dead Turk*' two decades after it was drummed into her in the classroom. In the same article a fifteen year old said '*Our teachers always say that everything is the fault of the Turks*' while a Greek Cypriot school teacher who was himself active in peace and reconciliation nevertheless noted that, '*Usually whenever the word Turk or Turkish Cypriot is mentioned in state school classes, they are automatically associated with an act of barbarism. I see it with my own children who blame everything from a natural disaster to a car-crash on the Turks. What we are essentially fighting here is the mask of the devil we have painted on the other's face*'.

Schools are not therefore always or necessarily safe havens for young people and indeed can actually harm them and help to reproduce violence in the wider society. What there isn't time to discuss here today in any detail, but what ought to be at least mentioned, is the sin of omission, that is when schools ignore something violent that is happening and therefore help to reproduce it and there is also considerable evidence of this. One example for which there is considerable evidence is bullying in general and homophobic bullying in particular. I would also argue that, given the consistent evidence of widespread racism amongst British youth, and indeed the population in general, then the British education system and the national curriculum in particular has been guilty of helping to reproduce racism both by omission and by failure to openly confront and analyse it in an overt and systematic manner.

So, as Lenin once put it, What is to be done? The first thing to be said is very simple – schools should stop doing harm.. However, in the time I have left I want to move beyond the simple absence of *negative* experiences to look at what education ought to do – what should be the *positive* goals of education? Education for peace will be a key theme of the rest of the lecture.

Answers to questions concerning the improvement of education like 'better examination results', or 'better behaved pupils' or 'more effective schools' beg more questions than they answer as they tell you nothing about the philosophical and ideological context which is needed to judge words like 'better', 'examination', 'behaviour' and 'effective'. Even phrases like 'more flexibility', 'more creativity', 'more imagination', 'more independence' or 'more sense of enquiry', all of which I continue to argue for, are meaningless unless given an ideological context. Even happiness, a commodity in short supply in many formal education systems, is not context free. Let us take the example of a terrorist training camp. You could have a terrorist training regime which aimed to produce flexible, creative, imaginative and independent terrorists and did so. They may well also be very literate and numerate. And on top of that they may be happy and enjoy their training. Within its own goals it would have to be regarded as effective. But are the goals desirable? Are terrorists and terror a good thing to produce?

While it remains true that if we are forcing or pushing young people into schooling or other forms of education it ought at least to be enjoyable, interesting and relevant, there are nevertheless larger goals within which even these aims ought to be set. For me, and I think for my colleagues in the Centre for International Education and Research, **the twin fundamental goals of education should be peace and democracy**, which cannot be separated. These personal priorities stem partly from a long academic interest the politics of sub-Saharan Africa, and the negative consequences that authoritarianism, war and violence have had on development there. However, such academic interests became very real and personal during my four year stay in South Africa. For a series of historical and sociological reasons, South Africa is a very violent society. During my time as Head of the Department of Education at the University of Natal a temporary member of our staff and one of our PGCE students were both murdered. During a study I did of violence reduction in three schools, I turned up at a school to do an interview with a teacher minutes after he had been involved in a near fatal incident with a pupil with a loaded gun. So I have also learnt the paramount importance of peace and peaceful conflict resolution in a rather first hand way.

However, I would also argue that the achievement of more peaceful societies also requires the institutionalisation of greater levels of democracy than is currently the case globally. As Frederico Mayor, the former Director-General of UNESCO, put it,

'Lasting peace is a prerequisite for the exercise of human rights and duties. It is not the peace of silence, of men and women who by choice and constraint remain silent. It is the peace of freedom – and therefore of just laws – of happiness, equality and solidarity in which all citizens count, live together and share. Peace, development and democracy form an interactive triangle'.

Democracy provides the best environment available for the peaceful solution of disputes and conflicts. While democracies are far from being perfect, accountable and representative government minimizes internal violence and greatly decreases the possibility of going to war without good reason. At the micro level of social institutions such as the workplace or the school, if they are organised democratically then there is an emphasis on the peaceful solution of problems and disagreements through discussion and participation rather imposition, confrontation, conflict and violence.

However, democracy is not possible without democrats. Democracy is only sustainable in a supportive political culture where a sufficient proportion of the population have a high commitment to democratic values, skills and, particularly, behaviours. This is based on an understanding of democracy that goes beyond the minimum ritual of voting (or not voting) every four or five years in an election. While democracy does require an informed citizenry capable of making genuine political choices, it also requires a fuller and **deeper notion of democracy** that forms the basis of a democratic society in which **people actually behave in a democratic manner in their daily interactions**. What are the characteristics of such a person? Somebody described as democratic would, for example, celebrate social and political diversity, work for and practice mutual respect between individuals and groups, regard all people as having equal social and political rights as human beings, respect evidence in forming their own opinions and respect the opinions of others based on evidence, be open to changing one's mind in the light of new evidence and possess a critical and analytical stance towards information. The democratic citizen would possess a proclivity to reason, open-mindedness and fairness and the practice of cooperation, bargaining, compromise and accommodation.

If education is to help to foster and develop such characteristics, then its organisation should reflect democracy in its daily practices as democratic values and behaviours are learned as much by experience as by hearing or reading about them. Education should offer opportunities for democratic participation and for the learning of democratic political skills and values in practice in terms of institutional and curriculum organisation. Yet contemporary formal schooling is an authoritarian experience for many and a violent, damaging and dehumanising experience for some. Power and authority over what is learned, when, where and how is not with learners and, in many cases, not even with teachers. This is despite article 12 of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child which says that children have the right to express an opinion, and to have that opinion taken into account, in any matter or procedure affecting the child. Modern mass schooling systems are not on the whole contributing to the development of more democratic and peaceful individuals and societies and indeed were not primarily designed to do in the first place. There is no single, perfect means of organising learning. Any system or vehicle of provision of education can be used for good or bad purposes. For example, distance-based education, the internet, religious schools and even normally progressive alternatives such as home-based education, flexischooling and small schools can all potentially be used to foster either greater peace and democracy or authoritarianism, bigotry and potential violence.

Educational provision needs to be designed to meet the needs and specific contexts of children rather than children having to fit into 'one size fits all' forms of formal schooling whoever they are and wherever they are. For example, refugee children, street children, special needs children, nomadic children, children in post-conflict societies, orphaned children, children in very poor housing areas in big cities and children in rural areas in developing countries all have widely differing needs and problems that cannot be met by one form of standardised provision. Their needs have to be accurately identified through research and discussion with them and appropriate education designed accordingly. So on the one hand I am arguing for a post-modern recognition of human diversity and a rejection of modernist 'iron law' thinking in which one form of standardised, conventional schooling is seen as good for everybody. On the other hand, however, and in opposition to some forms of post-modern relativism, education must give overall priority to education for democracy and human rights.

I want to end with a comment from an American official of that hard-headed citadel of global capitalism and scourge of developing countries, the World Bank in Washington. At first he advocated vouchers to maximise user choice. But he changed his mind:

*'In the case of Russia, I have been working in an ethnically heterogeneous federal system, much like our own, but falling apart. More than 100 ethnic groups now may control schools and, not having the traditional restraints, may now be able – if they choose – to teach disrespect for the rights of their neighbours. **Schools can contribute to Armageddon** and I have been forced to learn that there are things in life – such as civil unrest and civil war – which are more expensive and important than an inefficient and cumbersome public education system.'* He asks, *'What is there that makes an education system essential for a consensus of democratic values and for the creation of a democratic society?'*

These are good questions and should be first order priorities in education. We do have quite a number of well researched and recorded examples of democratic education and education for peace at a series of levels - whole education systems, individual schools and teachers, educational projects, non-governmental organisations and in home-based education and other forms of learning. We need to put these at the top of educational agendas and to learn from them so as to build an education that actively promotes democracy and peace rather than contributing to their opposites.

The Whistleblowers: Susan Isaacs (1885-1948)

Susan Isaacs was the last of nine children, whose mother died when Susan was six. Her own early schooling was difficult: she was removed from school at 14, but continued to self-educate and read voraciously. An innovator who both challenged mainstream thought, and with a brilliant capacity to synthesise ideas from diverse sources in digestible, practical terms, she possessed a burning mission to understand children, and to liberate them from the restrictive child-rearing practices of her time.

Isaacs trained as a teacher and in 1912 obtained First Class Honours in philosophy and a Cambridge scholarship. She became Lectuere at Darlington Training College, and lecturer in logic at Manchester University (1914-15). In 1924 she founded Malting House School, Cambridge, an experimental school with no fixed curriculum, fostering individual development and joy of discovery, and from which experience she wrote her classics of educational psychology – *Intellectual Growth in Young Children* (1930) and *Social Development in Young Children* (1933). Two other important educational books were *The Nursery Years* (1929) and *The Children We Teach* (1932) (about children from 7 to 11), and her *Psychological Aspects of Child Development* (1935) followed.

Isaacs also trained and practised as a psychoanalyst of the Kleinian school, and psychoanalytic ideas were profoundly to influence her work on early learning. Isaacs' writings are a mine of wisdom and understanding, whether or not one adopts wholesale the controversial Freudian theory of infantile sexuality. For her, children quite naturally experience intense feelings of jealousy, hate, fear, guilt etc., and they should be enabled to express such feelings in a free yet sensitively 'contained' environment, so that they learn to manage and integrate such experiences, rather than unhealthily 'split off' and repress them. Young children, she argued, need a subtle balance between explorative freedom and emotional expression, and the need for mild yet firm, supporting control in order that they be protected from the inner anxieties generated by their own aggressive impulses.

Isaacs was, in fact, one of the first educators fully to embody the potent mix of 'educationalist' and 'psychologist'. Refreshingly free of the 'labelling mentality' that dominated Psychology and the psychoanalytic theory of her time, she wrote, 'I never have been able to sympathize with the attempt to pigeonhole human personalities into types... Why not express the facts in terms of process and tendency?'; and she argued that categorical typologies only served to prevent *real* thinking about people.

A great advocate of nursery schooling, in 1933 Isaacs became the first Head of the Child Development Department at the Institute of Education, University of London, establishing an advanced course in child development for teachers of young children. Throughout the 1930s she was an 'agony aunt' for child care journals, including *Nursery World*, under the pseudonym of 'Ursula Wise', and she lectured nationwide on education and child care. According to the 75th anniversary edition of *Nursery World* (December 2000), Isaacs 'helped to enlighten a generation about the benefits of modern childcare', and 'overall her advice was sound, sensible and always sympathetic to the child. It was never so theory-ridden as to lose sight of individuality and difference between one child and another'. Isaacs shared a common touch which was especially commendable, given that she was equally capable of writing highly technical psychoanalytic papers, and of standing on the editorial board of prestigious academic journals.

At the centre of her child-centred philosophy was the need to understand the child *from within its own frame*. There is an implicit and recurring *holism* in Isaacs' educational philosophy: a student of Isaacs', Mary Maw, wrote that she 'looked at children... in whole situations, not confined within artificial limits, not narrowed by test requirements. The child's whole world was her workshop...; anything less would have

fallen short of the truth'. For Isaacs, 'It is always the whole child who plays and laughs, who quarrels and loves, who thinks and asks questions...'. And echoing Rudolf Steiner's holistic pedagogy, she wrote that 'The headwork itself is most fruitful when it is also handwork and bodywork. In these [early] years, the child's intelligence is essentially practical. He thinks as much with his hands as with his tongue...'

Isaacs did embrace, perhaps somewhat uncritically, the 'positivist' approach to measuring and classifying children (cf. her *The Educational Guidance of the School Child*, 1936), but in this she was no doubt a product of her time, when statistical testing was burgeoning within the still immature Psychology discipline. She did caution, however, that 'a child's attainment in academic skills should be noted... *only when he is working in an ordinary way, not under some special testing situation*' (my emphasis). For Isaacs, general attitudes and the complexities of social development were certainly not easily expressible in quantitative terms.

Isaacs would almost certainly have been very critical, if not appalled at the direction taken by the crass utilitarianism and assessment-obsessed mentality that have recently become a routine feature of modern educational practices. In 1936 she wrote: 'My own experience in recent years in contact with infant and junior schools suggests that all educational values are distorted through the need to prepare children for these [11-plus] exams... [I]t is extremely hard to humanize the education of even very young children because of this. We teach reading and writing and the formal arts too early...; [this] time would be far better employed in allowing the children to pursue the activities they so much seek connected with the business of living – washing, cooking, cleaning...'. *Plus ça change!*...

In the reassertion of the perennial values of child-centred education that will surely occur when the current policy 'madness' has exhausted itself, the educational contributions of Susan Isaacs, with her deep understanding of the principles of progressive education, will rightly take a prominent, if not central place in this desperately needed process of renewal.

After her death in 1948, the *Froebel Bulletin* wrote that 'In these new ways [of progressive education] with young children, Susan Isaacs had more part than any person of our generation in this country'. And in his moving Foreword to D.E.M. Gardner's biography, Donald Winnicott described Isaacs as 'quite outstandingly superior, generous, and at the same time human, vulnerable, modest, and humorously tolerant... - a struggling, striving, and radiant human being... , a truly great person... who has had a tremendous influence for good on the attitude of parents and of teachers to the children in their care'.

Quotations

- *[A]ll true growth is organic,... springing from the life within; it must not be predetermined, nor designed according to a plan conceived for any extraneous purpose, but arise spontaneously...*
- *[Play] is supremely the activity which brings [the child] psychic equilibrium in the early years... [It] is the breath of life to the child... If we attempt to control and contain it, we simply make it lifeless and formal.*
- *The passive work of the educator in leaving the child free to make-believe is as valuable a part of his function as his more active services.*
- *How serious a mistake it would be to try to make little children grow along the lines which these records show they can follow... If we tried to teach them these things formally, or to exert pressure upon them in these directions, we should simply waste our time, and might even do positive damage.*
- *The child is more important than the subject of instruction. The broad, all-round development of the child himself, his interests and efforts, are far more significant than the precise details of the level of achievement he has reached in this or that so-called subject.*

Richard

House

CUTS

Also, as befits somebody who works primarily in the field education and international development, I shall consciously take an international perspective. Essentially I want to examine an important paradox which is that under the general rubric of 'education' a lot of good things take place but a lot of bad things take place as well. There is nothing inherently good about learning. Learning can either be good or bad depending on what is learnt and what the learning is designed to do. This is a quotation from a teacher which captures this dual potential:

'I have come to a frightening conclusion : I am the decisive element in the classroom. It is my personal approach that creates the climate. As a teacher I possess tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate, humour, hurt or heal'

Let us begin with the bad news. We know that war and violent conflict are bad for social development and we know also that young people have been badly affected by war and violence. UNICEF recently put it that,

'In the armed conflicts of recent years children have been not only unintended victims but deliberate targets of violence. The number of children who have been directly affected is enormous. Millions of them have been killed, disabled, orphaned, sexually exploited and abused, abducted and recruited as soldiers, uprooted from their homes, separated from their families and faced with heightened risk of disease and malnutrition'

A casual glance at a world atlas brings home the wide range of countries where such conflicts have recently taken place – Afghanistan, Albania, Bosnia, Chechnya, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guatemala, Kosovo, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Israel, Nepal, Palestine, Philippines, Rwanda, Sierra Leone , Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Turkey, Zimbabwe and so on. We in the UK are not immune as recent events at Holy Cross School in Belfast have indicated.

While my main concern is going to be with ways in which schooling has been harmful, it ought to be noted that, even while schooling may not necessarily do anything harmful, it often doesn't do anything positive for pupils or their families either. In India, for example, a recent study concluded that for many parents and children the combination of expense, large classes, unmotivated and absent teachers, an overburdened and meaningless curriculum and an oppressive pedagogy is deeply alienating and accounts for many of the difficulties of pupil enrolment and retention.

However, there is also day to day resistance. A report by UNESCO as long ago as 1980 found that compulsory schooling brought with it an increased risk of violence against teachers in a situation where young people are forced to continue studying against their will and where the ensuing boredom and frustration is manifested in violence against the representatives of the institution in which they see themselves confined.

What is more is that this can reproduce itself down the generations. There was a report in the TES last year of a very nasty assault by a parent on a teacher. While nobody would excuse this sort of behaviour it was interesting to note that even the teacher who was assaulted commented that *'A lot of the parents had been anti-school in their youth and saw having a crack at the head as somehow winning against the system. For a lot of them, it was the only power they had...'*

experience but also reinforces the main point that I have been trying to make throughout the lecture, that it is vital to ask fundamental questions about the purposes of education and work backwards to design organisational and curricular means to achieve them rather than get distracted and bogged down with what are essentially means in their own right rather than means to a greater end. His comments refer to central and eastern Europe but have, in my view, global application. This is what he wrote,

Andy Green's study of the origins of mass schooling in France, Germany, the UK and the USA, for example, argues that 'The task of the public school was not so much to develop new skills for the industrial sector as to inculcate habits of conformity, discipline and morality that would counter the widespread problems of social disorder'. Schools were designed to inculcate the values and behaviours appropriate for the then modern mass production workplace.

According to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which most countries signed up to in 1989, it is the responsibility of the state to protect the child from violence, injury or abuse. So schools must stop harming children in the ways that I have described. They must stop actively and passively reproducing the violence of the wider society. Of course there are many schools worldwide where little harm is being done

As I have said many times before, democracy is not genetic, it is learned behaviour. There is nothing in our genes to programme us as democrats or dictators at birth. Therefore education must have clear idea of the sort of democratic person it hopes to cultivate

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