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16. Ethics in Education

Amongst all the other debates about education, one of the more polarising is whether we see schools primarily as businesses. Whether there is something incompatible about running a school on business, rather than educational lines, is a moot point

when schools are required to be accountable for expenditure, but the need for a measurable outcome, whether by academic results, roll growth, or other measures (e.g. sport, music results) can place pressure on the ethics that underpin education. There is a difference between independent schools and state schools and some questions below may only pertain to one or other sector, but all are pertinent in the age of free schools and academies.

As education providers, it is worth submitting your school to a checklist to see whether it can be labelled as ethical.

1. How honest is the advertising and marketing of your school? Does it makes unsubstantiated claims or manipulate data? Is it triumphalism? Does it deliver to all students or just a selected few?

2. How selective are your entry criteria and how rigorously are they applied? Are they fair or do they discriminate in favour of the high achiever / talented student?

3. Does your school remove pupils / students from any national assessment to help bolster results? (off-rolling)

4. Does your school differentiate between what is a proper amount of help to give students in extended essays / internally assessed work and what is excessive? Do your staff cross the boundaries?

5. Does your school offer sports / music scholarships other than at the point of entry to bolster sporting performances at the top level (thereby displacing students who have played through the grades at your school?)

6. Does your school ensure that subject offerings and individual subject choices are made in the best interests of the student and not the school (ie to maximise examination results?)

7. How sustainable is the education you offer? Schools need to get students through exams, but not at any price. How do schools ensure that the students have the right pastoral and academic scaffolding to accompany their academic pressures and that the pressures are not generated by school expectations rather than what is the students' best interests?

8. On what premise is careers advice given? Social value, future income, civic worth, individual achievement? Does the school include ethical information for students in advising on career choices

9. Does your school unfairly hold teachers and heads of department to account for examination results and require them to do better without due consideration of other factors, such as their cohort, resources etc?

10. Does your school genuinely seek to address issues of well-being and mental health or does it ignore the causes and focus on aftercare through counselling etc?

11. Does your school treat all staff the same and look after their medical and emotional well-being and work conditions equally?

12. Does your school ensure that all children are given the same opportunities across the curriculum?

13. Does your school put success in examinable subjects ahead of the need to provide an all-round education?

14. Does your school provide extras (ie school trips) that are either (a) inaccessible to a cohort of students and / or (b) lacking educational justification

15. Does the school manage the bias of staff in subjects such as history and PSHE or in advice given about university entry, jobs, political affiliations?

16. Does your school actively encourage an outward looking philosophy (concern for others, the group, the community, society) or is it focused on individual achievement?

17. Is giving places to high achievers from other schools making a societal difference, apart from to the individual (ie why not take 'average' students who don't necessarily add to the value of the school in some way rather than 'asset stripping' local schools)

18. How do ensure you are giving equal value to all students?

19. How do you look after overseas students in the same way as domestic students and not treat them as 'cash cows?

20. Do you exclude difficult students when Ofsted are in?

21. Do you choose / advise courses for students that are in their interest or in the interests of the School because of their greater value on the performance tables, ie the international driving licence

22. In your careers advice, what advice do you give about inequities amongst universities, evident in the quality of education rather than the number of 1st class degrees, the enticement of students for roll growth, financial incentives, lowered entry requirements etc)

23. What is your school's approach to tutoring? How does it measure external help and maintain equality of opportunity?

24. How does your school take responsibility for the welfare of their alumni (ie ensuring education is robust and benefits the student going forward?) After three years? Five?

25. How do you work to prevent 'undue advantage?' (essay mills, cheating, plagiarism, etc)

26. How ethical is the process of selection? Should siblings be separated by IQ points alone? Is your school susceptible to selection on grounds of church attendance, parental influence, potential value to the school, networking and if so, how do you countenance what you feel are abuses of the system?

27. How does your school work to provide sporting and cultural opportunities for all students?

28. How do you promote environmental awareness and civic responsibility?

29. How much emphasis are you placing on EQ rather than IQ?

30. How confidently can you assert that what you are doing in your school, what you are offering as an education, is in the best interests of the children rather than the institution by balancing the books or improving your league table position?

15. Ethical Audits for Education Providers in the United Kingdom

Preamble: While Ethics and Philosophy exist as part of the Religious Studies curriculum, as a part of subject content, schools do little to embed ethical thinking in our schools . Invariably, our school curriculum and methodology of assessment is grounded in making choices that lead to academic and career success rather than in promoting community interests and job satisfaction. Good citizenship, like climate change, is seen as vague and intangible so is seldom measured.

If we look at where our society is, there is a moral vacuum resulting from a curriculum that is both outdated and predicated on a definition of success that is unsustainable and based upon unreasonable expectations. We need to promote good citizens as much as successful citizens, people across all vocations and professions that make good choices for ethical reasons, based on ecological, shared and community interests. (i)

These audits are designed to be used by schools and organisations for self-regulation and as a checklist of their own ethical health. There is no external moderation involved.

Section One:

1. Does the school keep true to its mission statement, school motto and aims and objectives?

2. How honest is the advertising and marketing of your school? Does it makes unsubstantiated claims or manipulate data? Is it triumphalism? Does it deliver to all students or just a selected few?

3. In national examinations, how selective are your entry criteria and how rigorously are they applied? Are they fair or do they discriminate in favour of the high achiever / talented student?

4. Does your school remove pupils / students from any national assessment to help bolster results? (off-rolling)

5. Does your school exclude students for any reasons that might be deemed unethical (discriminatory in terms of coming from different

specific language or cultural groups, SEN, BAME, pupil premium, disabled or disadvantaged).

6. Does your school differentiate between what is a proper amount of help to give students in extended essays / internally assessed work and what is excessive? Do your staff have measures in place to ensure staff do not cross the boundaries?

7. Does your school ensure that subject offerings and individual subject choices are made in the best interests of the student and not the school (ie not just to maximise examination outcomes for the School?)

8. How sustainable is the education you offer? Schools need to get students through exams, but not at any price. How do schools ensure that the students have the right pastoral and academic scaffolding to accompany their academic pressures and that the pressures are not generated by school expectations rather than what is the students' best interests?

9. On what premise is careers advice given? Social value, future income, civic worth, individual achievement or career and financial opportunities? Does the school include ethical information for students in advising on career choices and within A level subjects?

10. Does your school hold teachers and heads of department to account for examination results without due consideration of other factors, such as their cohort, resources etc?

11. Does your school genuinely seek to address issues of well-being and mental health by focusing on the causes and focus on aftercare through counselling etc?

12. Do the demands in your school create unhealthy pressures on students? Do you monitor health and well-being of your alumni?)

13. Does your school treat all staff the same and look after their medical and emotional well-being and work conditions equally?

14. Does your school ensure that all children are given the same opportunities across the curriculum?

15. Does your school put the quest for success in examination subjects ahead of the need to provide an all-round holistic education?

16. Does your school provide extras (ie school trips) that are either (a) inaccessible to a cohort of students and / or (b) lacking educational justification?

17. Does the school manage the bias of staff in subjects such as history and PSHE or in advice given about university entry, jobs, religious and political affiliations?

18. Does your school actively encourage an outward looking philosophy (concern for others, the group, the community, society) rather than individual achievement?)

19. How do ensure you are giving equal value to all students?

20. How do you look after overseas students in the same way as domestic students and not treat them as 'cash cows?

21. Do you take responsibility for all students you admit or do you exclude difficult students because of pressure from staff / parents / governors?

22. Do you choose / advise courses for students that are in their interest or in the interests of the School because of their greater value on the performance tables, ie the international driving licence

23. In your careers advice, what advice do you give about inequities amongst universities, evident in the quality of education rather than the number of 1st class degrees, the enticement of students for roll growth, financial incentives, lowered entry requirements etc)

24. What is your school's approach to tutoring? How does it measure external help and maintain equality of opportunity knowing that tutoring is most likely taken up by the middle class families, further widening the achievement gap?

25. How does your school take responsibility for the welfare of their alumni (ie ensuring education is robust and benefits the student going forward?) After three years? Five?

26. How do you work to prevent 'undue advantage?' (essay mills, external tutoring, cheating, plagiarism, etc)

27. How ethical is the process of selection? Is there a strict entrance requirement that can separate siblings by IQ points alone? How strictly does the school adhere to its own policy for granting places based on zoning, church attendance (for church schools) or is it swayed by parental influence, potential value to the school, networking. How do you countenance against abuses of the system?

28. How does your school work to provide sporting and cultural opportunities for all students?

29. How do you promote environmental awareness and civic responsibility?

30. How much emphasis are you placing on EQ rather than IQ?

31. How confidently can you assert that what you are doing in your school, what you are offering as an education, is in the best interests of the children rather than the institution by balancing the books or improving your league table position?

32. How ethical is the maintenance of your estate? (sprays, looking after the environment, handling waste, monitoring food and energy costs etc

33. Are you able to state exactly that what you offer as a school to look after the best interests of the whole individual?

34. How sustainable is the education you offer? Do you teach your children to learn from nature rather than learning about nature?

35. Does your school have a formal network for helping students after leaving the school? Is it ethical or promoting unfair advantage (ie unpaid internships?)

36. How ethical is the school's approach towards other potential income streams (franchised schools abroad, endorsements, merchandise, donations etc)

37. Are all SEN and disadvantaged students treated equally with each other (the wherewithal to get an education psychologist's report, for instance) and with other students?

38. How is your school working to become carbon neutral?

39. How fair is the admission policy in your school?

40. Does you school see it as an ethical responsibility to educate children about sustainability and climate change?

41. Is your school working to decolonise the curriculum by teaching about the history of colonialism and the slave trade from a less Eurocentric perspective.

Section One: Notes:

1. Very important. If these are not adhered to, then the glue has gone

2. Schools need to monitor their marketing and ensure they keep within the line of self-promotion and maintaining integrity by avoiding making unsubstantiated claims, comparing results with neighbouring schools or manipulating data?

3. Crucial that the same opportunities, care and quality of education are available to all.

4. There shouldn't be any reason for withdrawal of students from who have completed the course. Yet 1 in 10 are so affected. Areport y the Education Policy Committee in October 2019 has revealed that more than 61,000 pupils who were due to sit their GCSEs in 2017 were removed from their schools without any explanation.

5. Non negotiable

6. Non negotiable

7. A necessary check. The TES in November 1 ran an article on a new report that asked the question 'Which are the most lucrative A-Level subjects to Study?" Awful. Where is a study that looks at the most worthwhile, the most helpful, useful, subjects – or do they not count?

8. Some honest reflection required here.

9. Careers advice should not only ibnvole the courses students could get into, but whether these causes are viable or are in areas where there is little prospect of them leading to employment (ie surplus of trained lawyers)

10. Any review should be 360 degree and take into consideration the students, resources, curriculum, pastoral concerns etc

11. This is more than after care (ie counselling, talks, bnurses) and should include preventative work including surveys to identify stress points and pressures that need addressing.

12. An honest answer is required and then action if necessary. A programme for monitoring alumni going forward is strongly desirable.

13. Schools that include their whole-staff in professional courses, social occasions, school photos are doing it right.

14. Who checks individual programmes of study?

15. An important question to answer honestly

16. Scrap them. Insist on justification and encourage fun-raising for one pot.

17. Important – some subjects are prone to unduly influence student thinking if unchecked

18. It needs to!

19. Each child should be properly represented (tutors, form teachers etc)

20. Food, language, regular communication with parents / guardians, educating others by sharing cultures. Many schools abuse this marketplace.

24. Decisions need to be made in the best interests of the collective of students, but excluded students (as with bullies) need education also and need to be kept in education. Schools have a responsibility going forwards.

25. Don't

26. Really important. You need to know what your career team are saying and how they define a successful school education.

27. Tutoring should to be recorded and monitor where possible. Tutoring by a school's own staff needs to be transparent and according

to contractual obligations regarding secondary employment. Tutoring, whether paid or not paid, is helpful and ethical so long as it is offered equally to all those in need and cannot be construed as offering an advantage to others.

28. This should be evident in your curriculum, your educational mission and ambition for your students. It can be staffing issue, but all efforts need to be made to ensure breadth of expereince

29. In other words, what is your PSHE programme and how do you include environmental education in PSHE, the Sciences, Geography etc

30. Difficult to answer, but a question to keep asking yourself.

30. A key question made harder by pressures from many sources

31. Look carefully at the choices and justification of your HoDs and ensure choices are no based on familiarity, convenience, cost

32. If you are not sure, arrange an environmental audit

33. The big question – it needs to be answered in the affirmative

34. There should be some method of monitoring students once they have left, as much for the institution as for the student, to ensure that the education they received was sustainable

35. What after care is provided by the school when students move onto university (sadly, an undue number of suicides, mental health issues are from a limited number of schools)

36. Governing bodies and financial governors / bursars / financial controllers need to look carefully at, for instance, the ethics of overseas and ensure their role of schools (or in some instances, charities) is not compromised.

37. Educational Psychologist reports are expensive and out of reach of families without financial help. Schools need to take this into account and assist families to access funding. It is estimated that 870,000 children out of 8.7 million school children in England have dyslexia but fewer than 150,000 were diagnosed, according to Department for Education figures. The fact that help doesn't come early enough unless you pay for it (an educational psychologist's report is c. £350)

38. One for governors, but regardless of funding constraints, it should be an ambition in schools.

39. Top schools are favouring admission policies that advantage the middle class – so argues the Good Schools Guide https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/10/25/top-schools-designing-admissions-policies-favour-middle-class/ Are you one of those?

40. This follows the announcement in Italy that from September lessons on global warming and sustainable development will be compulsory in the country's schools.

41. There is a current initiative to decolonise school curricula. It is worth asking what this means and if your History Department is looking at the diversity of their offerings and whether they are diversifying the curriculum to include more British history in a world context.

The other sections covered in separate audits are: senior schools; primary schools; independent schools; boarding schools; universities; students; parents; teachers; the education industry; governors and trustees; state and independent associations (unions, boards, groups); other tertiary providers; the DfEE;

Appendix (i) Ethical = Ethics is defined as a moral philosophy or code of morals practiced by a person or group of people.

An ethical code for a business might focus around identified business ethics (e.g. Honesty; integrity; keeping your promise; loyalty; care; fairness; respect; obeying the law; excellence; being a leader; morale; being accountable). Many codes of ethics contain many or all of these traits or similar traits although these do not mean that the business you work for is necessarily ethical (for instance, using palm oil products or cheap labour from offshore). So not only do teachers and those who run our schools need to be ethical, the business (schools and universities) need to be ethical and ensure that the interests of the student comes first, clearly not the case in off-rolling or in inducements for some university courses.

In education, while there is a professional code of ethics (the Teachers' Standards 2012) which outlines the main responsibilities to their students and defines their role in students' lives, we have

some way to go to ensure that external pressures and expediency do not affect the way we teach and how are schools run. All qualified teachers in England have to fulfil the Teachers' Standards 2012, which are embedded in their training. The Headteacher Standards for Excellence 2015 which are not mandatory can be used for guidance. Produced with the profession by the Department for Education, they articulate the profession's self-understanding and the expectations of the state. The essential rule of thumb is that schools should maximise the best benefit of its children). The current code that requires teachers to demonstrate integrity, impartiality and ethical behaviour in the classroom and in their conduct with parents and co-workers is hardly sufficient.

(P.S. The 'Preamble' to the Teachers' Standards 2012 gives a clear overview of the broad outlines of what currently exists:

"Teachers make the education of their pupils their first concern, and are accountable for achieving the highest possible standards in work and conduct. Teachers act with honesty and integrity; have strong subject knowledge, keep their knowledge and skills as teachers up-to-date and are self-critical; forge positive professional relationships; and work with parents in the best interests of their pupils."

14. The Leaning Tower of PISA: Why we need to be Wary

*"There is a deep belief that every student can learn. It's very important . They [*other countries*] don't have this inherent tolerance of failure that we have. We often blame things on the individual or their background."* Andreas Schleicher

In early December, the OECD published the results of the triennial PISA tests that measure and rank the attainment levels of 15-year-old students in reading, mathematics, and science literacy across seventy-five countries. Unsurprisingly, the improved results by British students were hailed by the Education Secretary, Gavin Williamson as reflecting *"the hard work of the education sector and Conservative governments over the last nine years"* in rhetoric similar to that used by politicians world-wide and significantly, and not unlike the noises made by schools celebrating moving up in league tables. PISA tests have deeply influenced educational practices

worldwide, with Britain being one of the keenest devotees. Its determination to drive up results has had a significant impact on British education, despite the fact that the tests are focused on single sample with little attention paid to the methodology used or that the report stated that the UK had some of the lowest scores of any country for "life satisfaction" amongst their students or for feeling they had "meaning" in their lives.

It didn't take long for teachers and educationalists to dig a little below the surface to look at the various messages contained in the report. Caroline Bond, deputy head (pastoral) at Pangbourne College, argued that the PISA data showed the critical importance of pupil well-being initiatives; Laura McInerney went further in an article in The Guardian asserting that the UK's standout statistic in the Pisa world education rankings was not for smartness – but for children's stress levels. Her article, titled *'British girls have finally made the global top table ... for fear of failure'* noted that *'. . . the most recent NHS data puts the figure at one in five (22.4%) by the age of 19, more than three times the rate for boys. This sounds ludicrously high – is every fifth teenager really struggling emotionally? But if we're fifth in the world for students' fear, I worry they are right.'*

Not surprisingly there was a robust defence of the charge that there is a correlation between excessive testing and children's mental health; that any stress comes not from tests, but from the weight placed upon the results by other agencies. While there may be some validity to the claim, was is indisputable is that exam stress is still identified as a very significant cause of anxiety in student surveys. To deal with rising levels of stress by focusing on counselling and after care in the first instance is disingenuous; rather, it requires us to identify and deal with the causes and the impact of stress on teachers and children . We know, for instance, that 50% of all mental health issues are established in children by the age of fourteen years and that suicide is the biggest cause of death for those aged between 5 – 19 years. Yet when Schools were asked what they were doing to protect students during these most vulnerable years, the Chair of the Exams regulator, Ofqual, argued that examination stress was the result of them being more "mentally fragile" rather than because of high-stakes exams.

One only has to evidence the mental health epidemic – and it is right to call it such – and the haemorrhaging within the teacher profession

to ask 'are the tests doing more harm than good?' and why are we allowing PISA to shape our assessment and the way we teach? In the future, we may well develop and use better algorithms to give us a broader assessment of a child by widening the traits and abilities we measure, but we can't wait for that paradigm shift. Seeing how primary schools up and down the country move from a rich and varied curriculum up until Year 5 to a soulless testing and re-testing regime in Year 6 should make us ask the questions 'what, exactly, are we looking for' and, 'what does this mean for my child?'

Various reasons have been forthcoming. Andreas Schleicher, the man behind the Pisa global education study, felt that a significant difference was the oppressive inspection regime in the UK and the heavy workload. He commented in a TES interview,

"One of the things I've watched over time is there was a workload issue already 10 years ago, and then you had a dramatic rise in teaching assistants, which was meant to reduce the workload of teachers. Actually, it has changed nothing. Suddenly, England is one of the systems that has plenty of people in the system and still the problem of workload.'

The problem, he asserted was an excessive demand for data and control:

"It comes from a system where the lack of trust creates bureaucracy, creates mechanisms and the need to control. For public accountability, you have to give records for everything. There's a price for this and that price is teacher workload."

Further, he noted rather pointedly,

" . . . high-performing regions in Pisa – such as Estonia and the provinces in China – were characterised by a belief in every pupil's potential to succeed, no matter their background, which both England and Germany could learn from.'

Yet putting aside the issues of teacher trust and mental health, demotivated teachers and a subsequent crisis in recruitment, there are other, more fundamental questions we should be asking about PISA and its importance as a measure of global education.

Foremost should be about the tests themselves and whose interests they serve. At the outset, it is worth reflecting on the fact that PISA operates not under the auspices of UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, as might be expected, but the OECD, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, a group which was aligned to the EEC at the Treaty of Rome and consisted then, as now, of high-income economies. Funded by its member states, the organisation accounts for 42.8% of global GDP and is an influential player through such products as its model tax convention, as a statistical agency and through its huge publishing industry, including its twice-yearly analysis, the Economic Outlook.

Because of its lack of accountability, however, other than to its own shareholders and accepting the premise that the tests are based on economic rather than social worth, we should be wary of the rank scores - after all the aims of education should be more than preparing for the world of work and bestowing an economic value on students. With its provenance, it is no surprise that PISA relies on private-public partnerships through companies who profit from failing systems by providing educational services and advice and by promoting for-profit education in the third world. Nor should we be surprised to find that the cultural bias of the tests limits their validity and reliability, or that the psychometrical methods used are only partially compatible with thinking and knowledge about didactics. And despite the utility value of the results for government and its implicit role in globalising education, there is no underlying premise that reflects either moral or ethical standards or a value other than one predicated on GDP.

All of which would not matter so much if it wasn't for governments slavishly buying into the data. Of all the implications of PISA, the one that should cause us most concern is our unquestioned acceptance of a methodology that has been adopted into our education system, most significantly in the ways that the data gathered from the sample surveys impacts on the way we teach in our schools. Instead of seeking to measure and apply skills which are necessary for participation in society or applications to the types of problem that may be encountered in work, PISA only defines the outcomes of the three literacies, Reading, Mathematical and Science. As Antoine Bodin noted in 2015, '*PISA assesses with some degree of reliability, knowledge and skills for PISA'* going on to say that it is just a

sample, *'No more, no less'*. Rather than focusing on what they do measure, however, we should focus on the impact of the results as used by the media who are often poorly informed, and by politicians only after headlines and soundbites. It is a regime that led to EBacc and more recently Progress 8, both criticised for their impact on the non-core subjects, in particular on the arts, music, health and design. Worse, the drip-down effect of PISA has embedded a culture of expectation based on data and predicated on university entry. When I read of people's lives, I am always interested in what happened to them at School. These last few days, I came across three people (Stephen Cottrell, the new Bishop of York, Malcolm Gladwell and Professor Simon Fishel) each of whom had left school without achieving the qualifications to go onto university. No wonder when we read about baseline assessment or SATs tests that ignore readiness and social environment and define intelligence in such a narrow and utilitarian way, we shudder at the waste of our young talent.

The drip down effect of PISA, upon our teachers and children, has been a regime of testing delivered more often than not through multiple choice questions according to a particular prescription. The tests themselves are not without merit, but the use made of them by governments, leading to more prescriptive teaching, more accountability for data (not for children's well-being) and more stress has been toxic. We remain the only European country that tests children at sixteen, indeed, the most over-tested country in Europe. League tables for SATS, for GCSEs and A Levels drive our schools and hold back our teachers. We can now add to that by saying we are also the country with some of the most unhappy and stressed teenagers in the world. And that is not a badge we should wear with anything other than shame.

Changing the Circle

It was a good place to grow up in, Lake Wobegon. Kids migrated around town as free as birds and did their stuff . . . . You were free, but you knew how to behave. You didn't smart off to your elders, and if a lady you didn't know came by and told you to blow your nose, you blew it. Your parents sent you off to school with lunch money and told you to be polite and do what the teacher said, and if there was a problem at school, it was most likely your fault and not the school's. Your parents . .

. did not read books about parenting, and when they gathered with other parents . . . they didn't talk about schools or about prevailing theories of child development. They did not weave their lives around yours. They had their own lives which were mysterious to you."
Wobegon Boy Garrison Kiellor

Having a child is the most precious and universal human experience. It is an event variously described as the most magical transformational moment in adult life, a miracle of unconditional love. Prince Harry described it as *'the most amazing experience I could ever possibly imagine'* while another celebrity father wrote, *'Just thinking about the day my daughter was born sends a chill down my spine even now after almost 17 months. I can feel tears pressing on and if I were to speak right now, my voice would crack.'* Such popular expressions of endearment and devotion have been accompanied by a newly discovered admiration of the mother's role in the process, a by-product of feminism, and best expressed by Prince Harry when he commented, '*how any woman does what they do is beyond comprehension'* a comment made without properly appreciating that for many women around the world, giving birth is the easy part to what follows.
Speaking with children of a generation or two back, their fathers seemed distant and remote, even unfeeling. Perhaps because the experience of birth was seen as merely part of life's journey, or because men were excluded from the moment itself, there was not the same emotional connection. Hence, celebrations were muted, restricted to a round at the bar, possibly a fat Havana cigar, a few meals out while the mother and child convalsesced in a maternity ward for a week or more. It was to this stoic generation that James Cann wrote, '
"I never saw my dad cry. My son saw me cry. My dad never told me he loved me, and consequently I told Scott I loved him every other minute. The point is, I'll make less mistakes than my dad, my sons hopefully will make less mistakes than me, and their sons will make less mistakes than their dads. And one of these days, maybe we'll raise a perfect Caan."

Yet there are two things that should concern us with this belated arrival of fathers at the maternity bedside apart from the suggestion that we make fewer mistakes (possibly but those we do such as over-protection and vicarious ambition can be even more harmful); and the desire to have the perfect child, an ambition that teachers know

only too well. Quite possibly, what we have lost in the process of having children is the universality of the experience, the idea of this being a natural and normal process that it is. Instead, by putting all the focus on the baby as the touchstone around which we weave our lives, we have set ourselves, and our child, up for future disappointment. Having a child has pushed us inwards through our human instincts to preserve, protect and nurture, but perhaps, just perhaps we have gone too far. At its extreme, we have sublimated our children to parental ambition where parents push their children before them, taking on the roles of advocates and managers, clearing the obstacles from their paths and talking them up, as if they were a CV and not human at all.

Which is where the idea of the circle comes in. If we see children as part of the human condition with our responsibility to make them independent beings, then wanting to make them perfect and protect them from every possible danger may not be helping. Whether it was through the constant parading of celebrity children or 'Every Child Matters', we started to put children in the middle of the circle of the family, rather than adding them to the circumference. Being in the middle meant they become the focus of attention, the family's raison d'etre, the subject of endless photos and posts; whereas being part of the circumference allows them to be a part of the continuum that is family, an arc whose length depends on how many parts make up the circumference. It is a concept which exists at the beginning of school life through circle time (although even that is more often about the child looking inwards to feeling and ideas rather than empathically), and in the natural world through the inter-connectedness of people and nature. It exists also in the idea of a community, a collection of families, even if more and more try to exist outside the jurisdiction of its circumference. The difference between being the centre of the circle, with all eyes upon you or in the circumference , as a part of something bigger, is profound. Children need to feel comforted by those on either side of them rather than exposed, forced to carry the aspirations and happiness of others.
They need security as much as love and best if both are one and same. That cannot happen when the child is placed in the centre, made an island rather than part of the main.

The Transformational Curriculum: Why it is the time for the introduction of Social Studies in our primary schools

Since the introduction of the national curriculum by The Education Reform Act of 1988 English schools have been required to teach History and Geography in primary and secondary schools. It is accurate to say that both subjects have morphed and altered over time: what purports as history in the early years is more akin to mythology or story telling (albeit that history is largely about telling stories anyway). It usually starts with an examination of place and then, by way of contrast, one of the great civilizations: Greek, Roman, Egyptian, usually taught as a stand alone topic with no links to contemporary Britain. When taught by non-specialists who are usually limited to the texts and resources they or their school have available (even, heaven help us, 'Our Island Story' generously sent to all schools by Civitas a decade or so ago) it is likely that the nuances of the subject can be lost or that the lessons are dependent on the quality of the sources available. The focus on history's personalities, early civilizations and memorable milestones weaved into a loose chronology may be all well and good in providing body of knowledge on which to draw in the future, but without a context and with little relevance to the world that children live in (or even the idea of history as contested knowledge), can do more harm than good, by reinforcing stereotypes, bias and attitudes by promoting an inward-looking nationalism rather than a global understanding of the fluidity and bias of history. Worse, is the wasted opportunity to teach children about their own communities and their history in a wider context, as a collection of immigrants since before Roman times, as a country with a huge global footprint and what that means, so better to understand the world they are growing up in today.

The content of geography is less contentious with its focus on locational and place knowledge, and the introduction of simple human and physical geography and geographical skills such as mapping and fieldwork. What is missing in any systematic programme of teaching is the impact of climate change, the environmental crisis and its alarming decline in species, plant animal and insect and the loss of biodiversity, all surely deserving more than a passing nod.

There will be many primary teachers who will protest – and rightly so – that, individually, do far more than this, that they are teaching about the environmental crisis and migration, but that is not the point. The issue is rather how can we do better by extending the

boundaries of the subject domains and asking more relevant questions (i)

Apart from what else is missing – notably any requirement to look at British history in a wider context of Empire and our historical interactions with ,other cultures or any reference of ecology, climate change and environmental issues – is the opportunity to draw threads from sociology and psychology, anthropology and politics, from philosophy and economics to produce a curriculum that is more relevant and asks quite different questions of our children. This is particularly so if we move from Social Studies and the study of human activity, past and present, to the more inclusive term, social science. Instead of teaching those aspects of history and geography that we deem important to know, we can connect ourselves with our communities through knowledge-bridges, ostensibly turning each subject on its head and approaching it from a need to know. Each journey results in the acquisition of knowledge and skills, yet one also connects us and what we learn to an understanding of how society works and how it has evolved to the point it is at.

Reading through the curricula for both subjects and then comparing them with what could constitute a social sciences curriculum with its focus on how societies work and how people can participate as critical, active, informed, and responsible citizens afford greater scope. In such a curriculum, the past is placed in a context and threads are drawn from the past and present and from places within and to the extent of England's historical reach. The curriculum would enable children to develop the knowledge and skills to improve their understanding participation and contribution to the local, national, and global communities in which they live and work; to engage critically with societal issues; and to evaluate the sustainability of alternative social, economic, political, and environmental practices.

Starting with a focus on the here and now and our relationships, with the earth, with a shared history, but most importantly with each other provides a different outcome from that generated by the content driven approach of the two curricula of History and Geography. Social Studies allows us to develop understandings about how societies are organised and function and how the ways in which people and communities respond and are shaped by different perspectives, values, and viewpoints. As they explore how others see

themselves, students clarify their own identities in relation to their particular heritages and contexts.

To help understand the difference between the two bespoke subjects and a Social Sciences curriculum, New Zealand provides a template in which the subject is divided into four main conceptual strands taught across eight levels:

1. Culture, and Organisation – Students learn about society and communities and how they function. They also learn about the diverse cultures and identities of people within those communities and about the effects of these on the participation of groups and individuals.
2. Place and Environment – Students learn about how people perceive, represent, interpret, and interact with places and environments. They come to understand the relationships that exist between people and the environment.
3. Continuity and Change – Students learn about past events, experiences, and actions and the changing ways in which these have been interpreted over time. This helps them to understand the past and the present and to imagine possible futures.
4. The Economic World – Students learn about the ways in which people participate in economic activities and about the consumption, production, and distribution of goods and services. They develop an understanding of their role in the economy and of how economic decisions affect individuals and communities.

   Replacing History and Geography in the primary years by a broader curriculum that allows a broader reach of study does not mean dumbing down the teaching of either discipline – in fact, quite the opposite. In a world where knowledge is readily available, but context and the skills to access it, less so, drawing together geography and history and adding an economic dimension as well as including elements of sociology, psychology, anthropology and philosophy makes for a richer experience.
   Of course, subject specialists will be up in arms, but they shouldn't be if they are thinking in the child's best interests.

Nor should History and Geography be at the heart of a social studies curriculum, but as with the New Zealand example, they can be feed the four conceptual strands rather than being ends in themselves.

(i) *To be fair, many schools go much further and do an excellent job teaching about the need for regeneration, but the problem is that it is a scattergun approach that is not mandatory.*

Why our History Curriculum is Not Delivering.

I have an O Level, an A Level, BA and PGCE in History and have never had a lesson on any aspect of the Empire – haven't taught it, either.' Jo Atherton on twitter.

Last year, in an article on the Chalke Valley History Festival I was critical of the fact that of the 120 talks delivered, on such a diverse range of subjects as the history of warfare (there were 34 on the two world wars alone), the Tudors and Stuarts, ancient civilizations, and biographies (almost inevitably of dead white men), there was only <u>one</u> on the British Empire from 1600 until the present day. Even that, (Lizzie Collingham's talk on 'The Hungry Empire: How Britain's Quest for Food Shaped the Modern World') was on a rather specialist topic, but at least it was there.

So wind twelve months forward and can we see signs of progress. Of the 140 talks this year (nearly a third by women), there were two that used the word 'Empire' in their title, one other on colonialism and two others on India during the time of the Raj. One or two other talks might claim some passing relevance by touching on some aspect of Empire or another, but it is scant pickings yet again and frankly not good enough for a festival intended to showcase our history in schools.

Of course there were some marvellous speakers and some wonderful subjects, and in their defence, the organisers may just tell us that these are the subjects that historians are writing about and these are the books / topics that appeal to them. So many tired, familiar faces. So many overwrought themes and subjects. Whichever way, it is deeply worrying.

When we look at what history is actually taught in our schools, rather than just the breadth of the curriculum, I suspect the experience of Jo Atherton is not that unusual. Think how few others who haven't done a degree course in history know anything about the Empire. Amongst history teachers there is a mood for change, but it is far from universal. The most committed historians are teaching about empire and emigration as the curriculum allows, and responding to calls to recolonise the curriculum, but they are still few in number. Of course, it takes time and money to develop new courses as well as the will to do so and strong school leadership, but change needs to happen with the caveat that history taught badly can be worse than no history taught at all, especially if it reinforces stereotypes or promotes national myths and fails to put our history into a context of those whose histories we interact with. So we need to be careful.

The greatest difficulty is influencing what is being taught in our primary schools, where so much history is delivered by non-subject specialists; who can blame them if the feel dependent on the texts and resources they have available in their schools? And while there are courses for senior students (AQA's 'Britain: Migration, empires and the people, c.790 to the present day' or OCR 'Migrants to Britain, c.1250 to present' and 'Migration to Britain c.1000 to c.2010), the take up is low. Many – most – students studying history go through senior school without paying the Empire anything more than lip service – and that is not good enough.

The issue is not of more choice, but less – even possibly a mandatory, prescribed body of history that everyone is taught – an island story quite unlike that written by H E Marshall in 1905 that can still be found on school bookcases. Its focus should be on placing England's history in a wider context through the drawing of maps, the history of migration (why people came to settle here over the centuries and still do), and why the empire has been an integral part of our history, of who we are. If we can do that, we might even make sense of teaching British values.

Whether history should remain a bespoke subject in our primary schools is for another article (i) but there needs to be a reappraisal of the history curriculum in all the key stages to ensure children are taught what will be of most benefit to them in the future. Failing to do so is not only to fail them and leave them without the wherewithal to connect with the rest of their country, but will severely compromise

our attempts to build a society that understands its past and its present.

(i) 'A Transformational curriculum: Why it is the time for Social Studies in Key Stages 1 – 3'

A New Paradigm of Education – And How to Get There

'State schooling both today and when I was a child seemed stuck in a Victorian-era paradigm . . of becoming a good worker and getting a good job.' Akala

The hardest part of deciding on a new paradigm of education is in questioning and, where necessary, jettisoning what we have always held to be sacred and undeniable – the acquisition and accumulation of knowledge, the need for a curriculum divided into subject domains, for a requisite body of skills to be taught, of rigorous and regular testing to sort and filter children according to ability; of schools and the teacher to be at the heart of education; of an adherence to IQ and a belief that significant deviations are abnormal and need special interventions; and a belief that what we do in our schools is equitable and delivered without bias. Added to that is the insinuation that social media is pernicious and dangerous and the mobile phone is the frontline in a battle with today's youth and we have the perfect storm.

So where to start? How about the statement that our education system is founded in the need for social control and conformity and rewards those that mimic it; that today's schools and our whole education system is profligate and wasteful of talent; that our education benefits the status quo by rewarding the same outcomes as the previous generations; that social media and the internet is not the bugbear it is frequently portrayed, but an opportunity in waiting; that there is no need for selective education just more opportunities; that education, as offered in our schools, is serving the needs of a decreasing number of children; that deciding how we access knowledge and what we choose to learn is more important than ever; that technology must be used rather more smartly than just enlivening the education experience through immersive teaching; seeing why we must replace an adherence to GDP by an ethical understanding of the world we live in; and why education needs to be life-long, not adversarial, but desirable and available for all.

The current system is failing. Its goals are wrong, its premise driven by competition and accountability, by vested interests including teachers' unions, a system directed towards, and determined by the requirements for university entry even knowing that most will not go there. The social stratification of education that sees BTecs and vocational courses pushed down the order as more rigorous testing and accountability determines schools' offerings. True, many subjects don't need to significantly change other than in the way they engage with students, but others such as History need a complete overhaul. Nor do we need to eschew high expectations, a good work ethic, memory, even repetition, because these are implicit in all learning. We need to guard against bias and the best way of doing that is to ensure a new paradigm is diverse and fluid, that it embraces e-learning and changes in the way we teach. We need to open our minds and think anew.

A root and branch review of our education system needs to be delivered not from within the current paradigm, but from without. After all, of all the many impediments negating change, the education industry with its numerous splinter theories, books and courses to sell, detox clinics to market and conferences to populate is not going to let unfettered change happen without a fight. We need to look at what has changed in our world and respond accordingly: a pending environmental meltdown; an obesity epidemic; a mental health crisis; the doubling of information every year; rapid advances of technology; new areas of knowledge; a changing workplace; disintegrating communities – and respond appropriately.

In the end it comes down to the age-old question I have used throughout my career in education as a teacher, head and now as a trustee of a multi-academy trust and school governor: namely, '*what is the best education we can give our children in preparing them for their world and how do we achieve it*" We just need to think of how best to answer it – and I don't think we can do so staying in our current paradigm.

What if? A Levels for All

'There can be infinite uses of the computer and of the new age technology, but if teachers themselves are not able to bring it into the classroom and make it work, then it fails.' Nancy Kassebaum

'*The technology itself is not transformative. It's the School, the pedagogy, that is transformative.'* Tanya Byron

In 1922, Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu or Te Kura, formerly known as The Correspondence School was set up by the New Zealand Government to help educate the most isolated children in New Zealand with the premise that *'no matter where he lived every child should have as full an education as he was capable of achieving' (*this in the day of the masculine pronoun sufficing for all!) It is now, officially, New Zealand's largest school educating around 25,000 students each year, from early childhood to secondary level and providing an essential service to people in remote areas but also in schools where subject options are not otherwise available.

Nearly one hundred years on, with all the changes in technology and pedagogy, in the UK we would struggle to meet this pledge. If you happen to live in a remote area or attend a small school, your choices of subjects, come A Levels, is reduced to a core that mitigates against the creative subjects or those with a vocational emphasis. Even acknowledging recent indications that the Ebacc is being put back in its box, this restriction of choice, especially in languages, music, drama and some of the more technical subjects is inexcusable in today's highly connected world.

So in the spirit of naivety, I thought I'd put on a flak jacket and ask some very obvious questions: Why can't every school access every subject – A Level, NVQ, , BTECs through a combination of classroom teaching and e-learning; and why doesn't the government (not private suppliers such as those they farmed out exams to) set up a virtual school so that students in one small school can be studying eight different languages on line, physically alone, but in virtual classrooms with ones and twos from other small schools? Why are we not using technology in such an obvious way rather than spending billions trying to improve the pedagogy in classrooms, with so little tangible benefit?

Of course, such questions will be shot down, but in the spirit of my own school, where we had a 'Book of Ideas' outside my Study which children filled in as the mood struck them, we need to be thinking about bigger solutions to educational problems, however naïve they may be.

It wouldn't please everyone, of course. First in the queue of critics, I suspect, would be the teaching unions who will see it as attacking the very heart of the profession, the teacher as imparter of knowledge, and negating the relationship between teacher and student. But isn't this blinkered thinking? Perhaps it is the signal that we need to train a new group of teachers, more akin to tutors, facilitators with technical know-how to oversee on-line learning; perhaps, for once, we should put the needs of the children ahead of the needs of the profession. Perhaps we should be asking 'what is the best education we can give our children' and then work out how to deliver it.
Perhaps if schools had a much greater offering, the hovering line between BTECs and A Levels, NVQs and the IB would gradually smudge and blur; de-motivated students might find there is something for them; hybrid courses might grow, according to best fit. The physical shape of schools might change along with the whole approach to how we extend education to the wider community . Naïve again – probably, but we should be asking such questions, if only to be shot down.

Of course, there are numerous such providers out in the marketplace, but the experience in New Zealand suggests that this Virtual School with its potential roll of tens of thousands should be coordinated and run by government. There are already too many people making money out of education, selling quack theories, flogging books and study guides to augment exam courses or resources without accepting that they could be doing harm rather than good.

Distant learning is well-embedded in our universities, led by the programmes of the Open University and leading universities such as SOAS, (with its offering of 54 on-line courses specialising in Oriental and African studies), Manchester and Edinburgh. Distant learning is no longer seen as a poor man's (or more often these day, poor woman's) option. Edinburgh University takes pains to point out that their online programmes are academically equivalent to on-campus degrees, which means degrees don't mention that they were completed online – and nor should they.

Perhaps we have been blinded by the fact that distance learning is primarily associated with allowing students and adults to study around work or family life and that learning by using study materials and

online learning resources is a default method of education, driven by need or expediency. New Zealand's experience in distant learning in schools would tell us otherwise, that they can be used to promote active learning where other options are not available. When I started teaching 6th Form Art History, correspondence school notes were coveted by teachers (although not available to them) for their extraordinary coverage and resources – and this in the days of paper only. Now with all that we can do on-line, with all the resources we can muster and all the ways we can deliver learning, it seems rather Luddite of us not to be establishing our own distant learning school as a way of providing a breadth of education to all student whatever school they attend.

A Tsumami is Coming – a Mental Health Warning.

Published on May 15, 2019

At the recent TEDXSherborne, it was sobering listening to the experience of a father talking at about the effects of depression and mental illness upon, first, his son, and then his family. The illness had started with his son's anxiety about examinations and, without early intervention and professional help, soon deteriorated into severe depression before spreading outwards to affect other family members who began to suffer mental health issues of their own. Andrew Grundell spoke bravely of the pain his family had been through and argued that things needed to change to avoid a 'mental health tsunami' – one that would overwhelm individuals, families and communities. His response was a call to action: early intervention, making use of the deep lived experience of families, better funding to speed up the process of referrals, access to specialist professionals and placing the patient at the centre.

It was tough to listen to, but so much tougher to live the experience and hard to avoid asking why, why this has happened? What has brought us to this point that mental health at epidemic proportions? What are we doing that has led to 1 in 4 suffering a mental health issue? More worrying, what is happening to our young: 50% of all mental health issues are established by the age of fourteen years with suicide is the biggest cause of death for those aged between 5 – 19 years. What are we doing to protect them during these most vulnerable years?

The very next morning, the Chair of the Exams regulator, Ofqual, was

in the news stating that examination stress is the result of students being more "mentally fragile" and that stress was not the result of high-stakes exams. It was hardly cognizant of a landscape in which examinations now have a range of stakeholders: Teachers, HODs, Schools, parents as well as the students themselves, and that the drip down pressure of expectation and accountability this has generated has been hugely deleterious. We have to acknowledge that dealing with mental health issues by providing the changes that Andrew is asking for is crucial, but also important, I would suggest, that we take our heads out of the sand and look at the causesof anxiety in these most vulnerable years so as to prevent it getting a foothold: the language we use; the way we dump the detritus of modern life on young with no acknowledgement of their emotional and intellectual readiness; the way we sell education as being about winners and losers by our 'one way for all' approach; the pressure of exams and of self-image, fueled by social media; the effect of unstable home life, poor role models, poverty and the effects of marginalisation through race, faith or gender.

Well-being is the new buzz word in schools although the term itself has been about for some time now. Attempting to build self-confidence in children by talking about self, however, is not without risk as self-analysis can also lead to the early signs of anxiety and marginalisation. We are making children grow up too quickly and the results are plain to see.

An approach or course of treatment that works for one person might not work for another. Renowned psychologist Martin Seligman argues that we should stop treating depression as an illness to be fixed with pills. Last year, one in six people in England between the ages of 18 and 64 was prescribed antidepressants. Instead, we should employ other approaches such as cognitive behavioural therapy, and look at other ways of changing our personal space or environment, that having a dog is better for your mental health than Prozac and that nothing changes if we don't change our thinking or behaviour. Whether it be cognitive behavioural therapy, counselling, other interventions or medication, the key is early intervention and access to professional help be available when anxiety becomes apparent

Even before that point, we can do more to help our children by changing their environment and their mindset, addressing the conditions in which anxiety is allowed to grow. Connecting with the environment, for instance, is one age-old way to ease anxiety and release tension. Not only does a walk in the countryside allow time to

pause, observe and reflect on the wonders of the natural world, but it also gives time to focus on the more important things in life, family, friends and communities. With the pace of life as it is, old fashioned hobbies or interests may not have the same appeal they once had, but the idea of engaging with nature in some capacity or another, whether it be in rewilding, conservation, or even bird-watching is gaining currency. We should not underestimate the links between our physical and mental health and the world as we imagine it, and the natural world in which we live.

To stop the threatened tsunami of mental health will take a concerted effort by all stakeholders. Already, we know there is an urgent need to improve our mental health system through better funding, early intervention, getting rid of the stigma that is associated with mental health and how to get more specialist help. But as well, we need to work harder at identifying the causes of mental illness and, where-ever we can, pre-empt them.

Lessons from Nature – Re-Wilding our Children

"The principal task of civilization, its actual raison d'etre, is to defend us against nature." Sigmund Freud

Over the last century, whole societies have gradually gone about abandoning their inter-connectedness with nature. In most cultures and throughout most civilizations, Homo Sapiens has acted as if other sentient beings are simply there to serve us and that we can manipulate them as we see fit. Hence, we have rounded up animals and enclosed them in nets and fences, poisoned the soil and plant life through sprays and chemicals or by genetic modification and engaged in an unremitting war on insects. We have sent a message to such species as earthworms and hedgehogs that they are no longer necessary, made redundant by our use of artificial fertilisers that cleared our meadows for intensive farming, destroyed the forests and the pests and poisoned the sea. We were supreme, or so we thought. Now that supermarkets could fly in our favourite foods regardless of the seasons of the year and we can drink water from plastic bottles if we so desire, what else is left? We have even deemed it safer for our own children not to engage with nature by such dangerous activities as climbing trees or swimming in rivers, preferring it seems, that they become sedentary and obese. This has meant no more mudpies, rather lots of processed food creating a generation more susceptible to allergies, more prone to diabetes and

obesity, with their immunne systems weakened, their physical and mental health compromised, confined in spirit and geography by parental neurosis and fear .
Nature, of course, has responded to being ignored and trashed. Weather patterns have started to punish us for our temerity in ignoring climate change, there has been a sharp rise in allergies as our air has become more polluted and our farming practices have left our land denuded and dying. Now we hear over two million species are at risk because of the carelessness of just one of their number – us. Perhaps it is time to acknowledge the truth in Carl Jung's warning that '*the only thing we have to fear on this planet is man.'*

It all started in the 19th century, this sense of being different from other creatures, of being superior beings. Prompted by Charles Darwin, and Herbert Spencer, we even extended the idea of natural selection into distinctions within our own species by employing racial or cultural filters or, worse, eugenics to divide us while at the same time declaring open season on wild animals and birds, insects and fish. To do so showed an appalling lack of awareness of the interdependence of mankind and the environment and especially in the west where hunting was labelled 'sport' and the extinction of a species mere proof, in Darwinian parlance, that its time had come. In many other cultures, animals may be cared for as family; in others, they are venerated; but in the west, for too many of us, they were always mere commodities, a source of food or transport or entertainment, to do with as we wished.

Not anymore. If humanity is going to survive, it needs to look at how to re-connect with the world. Freud's thesis was challenged by his psychology sparring partner, Carl Jung who wrote, *'Nature seemed to me full of wonders, and I wanted to steep myself in them. Every stone, every plant, every single thing seemed alive and indescribably marvellous. I immersed myself in nature, crawled, as it were, into the very essence of nature and away from the whole human world*.' This marvel is something we must hold onto and protect it while we can.

Sadly, we have a generation growing up now who don't see the countryside as something useful to connect with. It is no longer a normal habitat for childhood and nature is now visited in artifical domains or through virtual reality where threats and pestilence doesn't exist. Children don't necessarily see nature as serving any

useful purpose apart from growing their food. And don't blame them for that, for we have told them so.

In her best-selling book, 'Wilding', Isabella Tree writes *"The extinction of experience' in childhood has a direct bearing on attitudes to the environment in later life.*' It is implicit on parents and schools to ensure that children learn to re-connect with nature and understand that our future depends on looking after it rather better than we have managed so far.

It's not that schools aren't trying or that parents are unaware, though I fear a few will be unwilling to countenance the changes that a proper programme of conservation might bring. It's just the journey we have been on, as a society. We have grown used to living a life detached from reality in which image is everything. Supermarkets have been criticised for rejecting fruit and vegetables, that don't fit the norm, because they are misshapen or unattractive. And somehow, we, in our schools, have done the same, weighing and measuring our children and sorting them into categories with the less appealing, those that don't measure up, or produce the outcomes we want, cast aside. And our children repeat the mistake, craving approval, to be 'liked' on social media so as to define themselves without realising the superficiality of it all.

There is a job to do and teaching children about the recent reports on climate change and biodiversity will not be enough. Nor will be any piecemeal changes to the way we interact with the environment. No, what is required will be a cultural change on our relationship to both the environment and each other. We need to teach children to think ethically from a very young age, to know that a good job is not one that earns the most money, but does the most good. We need to teach them to care for their environment but also their communities, their classmates and families. And we need them to see their well-being as a by-product of the well-being of everyone. We need them to make the right decisions about money, power, influence, ambition. Then and only then can we move forward.

The Way Ahead (Attain Magazine, April, 2019

In the summer of 2012, having previously written an article or two for Attain, I was offered the opportunity by Matthew to start a regular column under the by-line 'Thoughts from the Study", a brief

that I was pleased to accept. Seven years later and four years after I retired from headship, I think the time has come to pass over to those admirable heads who are still on active duty, dealing with the reality of running a prep school. Over this time, I have thoroughly enjoyed working with Matthew and with Attain magazine and hope this column will continue, perhaps with a revolving door of contributing heads who will share their own thoughts and ideas, gathered in their own studies.

There is no doubt that headship has become harder in the last five or so years and for prep schools, in particular. Beset with financial pressures, (compounded by the recent increase in pension contributions), an increasingly unsympathetic government, and with demands for ever greater compliance, accountability and public benefit, the job is not an easy one. Parents are wanting more accountability for results, usually measured by scholarships and entry into the 'top' schools, not surprising considering the perceptions they are sold by the industry and the mythology of league tables. Teachers, also, have become more difficult to recruit and are more conscious of the need for a work-life balance than the generation before – even if the reality is hard to square in these demanding times. The constant, however, and thankfully, is that children remain essentially as children: humorous, mischievous, demanding, fun, obdurate, challenging and endlessly creative – they were always thus.

And yet, despite the restrictions and demands placed on the profession, teaching in a prep school is, in so many ways, the best job of all. Having taught in senior schools and seen the constraints of teaching a no-frills curriculum through ever more demanding GCSE and A Level courses, burgeoned with content and held accountable by league tables, prep schools should make better use of their independence to mould young lives, so that whatever follows (including the pressures of their senior schools), they will be able to cope. When parents decide where to spend their education pound, they should, I feel, think carefully about where it has most value, and not choose from the top down, but from the bottom up for, in my mind, there is no question that having firm foundations is the key. Sound basics and good work habits are what prep schools and pre-preps offer, before they add all those things you want for your children: independence of thought and self-discipline, a good work ethic, curiosity and imagination. Children at twelve and thirteen are capable of high-level thinking and I remember, when I moved back to

prep school teaching from senior schools, taking a topic on the poetry of T S Eliot I had taught to the 6th form and giving it to my Year Eight. Not only did they 'get it,' but the pupils asked much better, more searching and more intuitive questions than those seniors who were numb from force-feeding and inertia.

It is in prep schools that you can still experience a genuine joy of learning and teaching without being hog-tied by national exams. It is something prep schools should do more to celebrate and if there was one message for prep schools it would be to embrace your independence and empower your teachers to do the same. Of course, you have to take your parents with you, and inform them what you are teaching and the rationale for doing so. Prep schools should not be just preparation for senior schools, but for life beyond. It is not rocket science, nor is it foolishly ambitious. Too often, children work to our standards while our expectations, if they are too low or too narrow, can be hugely limiting. Our curriculum should extend children and draw them out. I don't mean making children work harder, but to work smarter, think more imaginatively, learn how to apply knowledge and communicate and collaborate with their classmates while gleaning a better understanding of the world in which they live. More schools could take advantage of the opportunities open to them, simply by asking 'what is the best education we can give our children' identifying the priorities of what should constitute a curriculum, and delivering it.

It is only right that I conclude with an exhortation to parents to relax. Education is a journey and it requires patience and trust in others, and especially your child's teachers – they are better placed at seeing your children in some sort of perspective than you are. Children are more than data, their childhood more precious than a bunch of grades and their mental and physical health more important than anything else.

I intend to continue writing my new work of fiction: a paradigm of education that looks at how we select from the new knowledge without jettisoning some of the old. Artificial intelligence, e-learning, environmental and ethical issues, new skills and new knowledge demand a new approach to the way we see education. – and that is the future.

Common Era or Common Entrance: A Talk to the Oxford Group of Prep School Heads, 24th January, 2019

Published on March 30, 2019

I must say I am surprised to be back talking about Common Entrance. It's thirteen years since I spoke to the Senior School Academic Deputies and Directors of Studies about Common Entrance at their conference in Lisbon in 2006 and various conferences thereafter. Although I was a director of ISEB - embarrassingly when I took my own school out of the humanities which I felt were dry and simply asked children to regurgitate knowledge without any analysis or thought - I couldn't help but feel that significant reform was needed – and I am pleased to note since then, most subjects have had a thorough overhaul and it is a different examination, albeit with the same constraints.But in the aftermath of the decision by the three schools, Westminster, St Paul's and Wellington College that led to this discussion today, please indulge me for a minute while I offer a reminder about senior schools and the use they made of common entrance when it suited them to do so.

They really had it good! They didn't have to prepare papers, supervise exams, justify their marking of exams, pay for any of the costs and, along with GSA and IAPS got a cut of some 80k, money taken from prep school parents and schools for their convenience - what a service!

But that wasn't enough. CE didn't evolve quickly enough, some subjects were content laden and soulless so that despite the convenience of what CE offered them, despite the wonderful bargain it represented, senior schools started to get edgy about filling their lists and hence looked at new ways of assessing their intake through entrance tests and scholarships that got earlier and earlier so they could get the jump on their rivals. It had nothing to do with education and complete disregard of how prep schools were structured. The action of three schools was no surprise, only disapponting in that the school decided to make a story out of it for their own ends. The irony is that it has taken this long after the conference in 2011 on *Common Entrance: Fatally Flawed or Fighting Fit* at Wellington College in 2011 at which Sir Anthony Seldon was hugely critical of Common Entrance for Wellington College in particular, to move. But we shouldn't get hung up on their decision.

After all, is is there <u>anyone</u> here on any of the Boards of those three schools?

And how many prep schools are even acknowledged when the these august schools get their raft of Oxbridge places, due in large part to your work in prep schools pushing them close to, or beyond GCSE

level on arrival?
Deciding a new curriculum isn't about Common Entrance –it's about what is the best education that we can give to our children. So forget senior schools. They are so constrained by exams, so desperate to retain their league table place, under siege from the Charities commission, the press, defending IGCSEs, establishing schools abroad etc they don't care. . . . nor should you think they act in our interests because they don't. If they could get all their intake from primary schools they'd do it as it would tick more public benefit boxes. If their roll drops, they lower their intake to Yr 7 entry as had happened in parts of London without any discussion – or if they may go to co-ed from 11. Either way, when times get tight, self-interest rules.
All of which can be very liberating if prep schools use this freedom to ask the bigger question of '*what is the best education we can give to our children?'* and place it inside a bigger question, which is how do we survive in a new marketplace without our traditional raison d'etre?
Before answering the question of a new curriculum, however, I do want to acknowledge the work being done at ISEB to widen consultation and to lead change.
I appreciate that many here will want the status quo albeit as an exit exam not an entrance exam - in which case an examination that will require common marking – something I'm sure ISEB will pick up on. And also that talking about Common Entrance is akin to talking about Brexit with its various constituencies. But we should be happy that CE has a future for those schools who want it. On the other hand, I hope that ISEB may look at what it is examining by working with prep schools to help influence a curriculum that sets prep schools apart, is more relevant to our needs and gives our children an intellectual robustness, new attitudes and values that will help them in a brave new world.
So what form would this new curriculum take? It would need to be more than tinkering. More than adding a few new trendy subjects. More than the Prep School Baccalaureate offers. Some schools have already looked at History, Geography and Theology and added some of the human sciences such as psychology and economics, but more than that. More than bringing in languages or public speaking and debating. More than creating extra-curricular clubs or activities to diversify the offering.
None of that would be enough to create a curriculum that would be truly distinctive, bespoke to prep schools, relevant to what is going on in education while also embedding environmental and social

responsibility into every subject.
Yet here we are in 2019 with the opportunity to create a different curriculum
When I began looking at what a new curriculum could look like from age 4 – 19 years I started with something that resonated with me in an article on what children wanted to be when they left school and the two most popular answers from the children were rich and famous. And I reflected on the alumni of the independent sector and the way they represent us and wonder *'are we teaching our children how to think ethically and of others rather than self - of community or the planet rather than GDP and wealth?* And when we consider the growing influence of infotech and biotech, of nanotechnology and unbridled social media and technology, of the need for ethics in weapon and medical research and of the ethical vacuum in politics, in industry, in law, in financial services, whether we are doing enough to make good citizens, as a sector, let alone as a country (i)
As a response to my own question, at present, I'm involved in producing a curriculum for Years 7&8 predicated on ethics and sustainability, and as a trustee of a charity www.operationfuturehope working in environmental education and re-wilding school grounds, giving talks to schools and thereby teaching children to think about their world and their future in a more ethical way. In that curriculum we ask some fundamental questions including:
1. What are our human values?
2. How do we make decisions? Designing a flow chart.
3. Fake news and critical thought.
4. What is philosophy
5. What is anthropology
6. How well do we know our world?
7. Trees and birds – know our own world
8. Climate Change
9. Setting up and running a weather station (P)
10. Making our own power through solar panels (P)
11. Economic models and the economic doughnut
12. Responsibility
13. Re-wilding
14. Conservation – our responsibilities
15. Our local environs
16. Animal conservation
17. What can we do? Activism is a dirty word.
18. History and myth

19. Financial literacy and business ethics

That way, we can encourage children to see themselves as part of a family, but not centre stage, to get them to think about their communities and their part in those communities. We should encourage them to be thinking globally, from a young age for that is the future. Without denigrating the huge impact of 'Every Child Matters' in safeguarding, sadly parents took the maxim to mean ' my child matters more than anything or anyone else' thereby placing the child at the hub of the family rather than as one of the satellites moving about lunar parents. While I might agitate that 'Every Pensioner Matters', the truth is a better message would have been 'every person matters' or in extremis, 'every sentient being matters.' We're not quite there yet! But this generation are up for it and want it to happen.

Clearly we don't want to throw out what works or jeopardise what we do well now and that is our academic and wider education offering, those subjects we do particularly well, our core subjects, classics and languages, but we should see if we can use our independence to create a curriculum that is more relevant to the issues that affect us all - and most important seek to change the attitudes to learning, to the environment and to each other.

We cannot join just extend what we do, and add an extra language, a few human sciences, more drama and art and music, debating, coding, a little technology, and call it a new curriculum, because it's not about adding new content or replacing old with new. Last year there were 213 suggestions in the press about what should be included in our curriculum – the largest groups being in health, finance and technology – and we all know the curriculum is the dumping ground for new ideas. But on the other hand, when we look at a list of some of the most advertised jobs in 2018 - Data science manager, engagement managers, senior mobile developers, Cloud solutions architect, strategic sourcing specialist – and the skills they are crying out for: creativity, critical thinking, flexibility –we do have to ask what we are teaching and why. For instance, we all know about ox-bow lakes: my father was taught about them as was I – and those I taught had more of the same. When we look at the various domains of Geography, a subject which has expanded in recent years in all its domains: human, economic, spatial, physical, environmental – we realise we have to make decisions about what to keep and what to off-load knowing it will still be there at the end of a google lifeline. The sum total of knowledge is doubling every year and we cannot keep expanding our curriculum by adding more. In any new

curriculum we have to choose who inhabits the framework and ensure that it is better / more relevant / more appropriate than what it's replaced.

In writing a new curriculum, we should consider how we should respond to the four biggest challenges facing us: Artificial Intelligence, climate change, terrorism, mental and physical health. As a sector, I worry about our conservatism and our hypocrisy as educators, pushing our children harder and harder and catering for burnout by employing counsellors, force-feeding information into children so they grow up content rich, but unable to process all they know. I am a believer in knowledge and skills working together – one cannot exist without the other – but not of front-end loading that happens in GCSEs and A Levels. Less can be more and prep schools should focus on understanding and utility of knowledge rather than the amount.

I wondered what David Attenborough would suggest as a curriculum? Many here no doubt promote forest schools and Green School awards, but we can get children thinking differently about green issues – one reason why the conservation and environmental education of operation future hope with its focus on regeneration attracted me. How many children live their school values in their behaviour and attitudes and in their day to day living? And how many will continue to do so after they leave? Ask those at Canary Wharf, consumed with careers and the acquisition of wealth and weep.

Getting the framework is key as is determining the purpose and function of a curriculum. It may well be a curriculum based in greater part on the human sciences and the creative arts, but it has to carry parents and senior schools by ensuring they are getting more, not less. So the packaging is important.

There are so many ideas out there: promoting languages / lectures / LAMDA courses for a year group, ESB, Grade One Music Theory for a year group / courses in critical thinking, more focus on Oracy, especially debating; studying the Human Sciences such as anthropology and psychology; Tackling health issues like Obesity through exercise; Climate Change; Artificial Intelligence, fake news; understanding Biotech and infotech / coding, literature / economics / Art History / Doughnut economics, how to use technology to advance rather than enhance learning (and area where we all follow like sheep); looking at our school grounds as learning environments through re-wilding, labeling trees, ornithology, expanding the creative arts: drama, music, art, technology, TED talks, e-learning and

so on and so on. The challenge is how to present a new offering into a manageable whole with a sound rationale while protecting what we already do well? What will this curriculum look like? And once the premise has been established, can it be rolled out across prep schools like a smorgasbord with various options from the preceding list, but all grounded in the same premise.

And if we choose to proceed, how do we embed the values we teach; how do we reduce the content, but increase the levels of thinking and understanding; how do we get away from the addictive algorithms and an education mindset wrapped up in binary debates; how do we give children a better understanding of the world they are inheriting so that when the tech giants – Amazon and Google launch their own on-line schools – 5 years 10 years at most is what I'm told – we are already there, with children who can think ethically about the world and act accordingly.

Which takes us back to the question '*What is the best education for our children'*– not what would senior schools like which would improve their results at GCSEs. Recent polls suggest parents do not believe schools are equipping their children with the subjects or the skills they need in life and want more attention paid to soft skills, coding, and finance skills. Nor does industry think we've got it right. Nor universities. We should listen more closely and take a lead.

It's not about doing more, it's about changing a part of what we do and doing all of what we do, differently. Listen to senior school teachers bemoaning the content-heavy syllabi, schools criticised for starting GCSE preparation in year 9 and rejoice that we don't have to go there!

Years ago, I wrote to every one of the Russell group to ask what they looked for and they were all that they said – independent and creative thinking, ability to write coherent paragraphs, communicate clearly attainable at prep schools. We can market ourselves on the fact that we do what senior schools are patently unable to do. My New Zealand experience was that if you have had a good prep school education you can handle everything, in spite of senior school!

Perhaps that is what we should be striving for? And marketing ourselves on? After all, schools don't need the validation of baccalaureates, endorsements, certificates? Years 7&8 are the best years to teach and they can handle high-level thinking. High expectations, a good work ethic and a pupil buy-in can move mountains, but it needs to ensure that what is learnt is going to offer children a future.

It will take cooperation amongst prep schools, but that should be

happening anyway - after all, prep schools are an endangered species - and changing the public perception of what a prep school education is able to give children might be the way of securing our future. We would keep our standards, and raise our expectations while promoting those things we do well: teaching children to listen, to question, to respect other opinions and the natural environment, to show manners, to become independent learners, to develop memory while seeing the world globally from a premise not predicated on GDP, but on community, service and ethics.

Of course, we have the hoary old chestnut that is assessment. Perhaps because it is my experience from New Zealand where there were school exams, but no entry exams, that I realised that motivation to learn doesn't rely on the threat of exams, but the joy of learning. Idealistic? Not in my view, but in the UK it would require an enormous change of culture. Perhaps algorithms will help us out by measuring what is currently immeasurable. Perhaps ISEB has some ideas?

But this is an opportunity to do something prep schools have been too reluctant to do – celebrate their independence without craving the validation of CE or anything else. And by answering the question, *'what is the best education we can give our children in the here and now?'* prep schools could become exemplars for other schools that have neither the courage nor the opportunity to do the same. And it could start with the schools gathered here who decide to make prep schools the first choice for parents, not the last.

Of course, all the above entails a great deal of work. It needs a structure. It needs a premise. I have given over considerable time looking at what a new paradigm of education would look like and also, a new curriculum on my website. It is a work in progress and is on my website for anyone interested.

It would be an opportunity lost if, in creating a new curriculum, we do not look at changing how children think and feel about the world and their place in it: to teach children more about community than self, about the importance of making choices ethically rather than through self-interest, of seeing themselves as sentient beings, looking after their own space. Then we can put together a curriculum that challenges children and extends their knowledge, strengthens their core subjects and repackages others (like History and Myth) while embedding a whole new range of skills necessary for their life after school.

Imagine if prep schools became known for the fact that children who attended them had an international perspective on the world, that

their education was predicated on an ethical view of the world, that they were independent, curious, practical, community minded and creative human beings ready to lead us in another direction. Then a prep school education would be known not for a meaningless set of grades or for feeding exam factories, but for producing children with the skills and values that society needs more than ever.
Report this

The New Curriculum:
Published on March 3, 2019

'To change something, build a new model and make the existing one obsolete.' Albert Einstein

'While we're at it, let's rethink the school curriculum. Our young people should be taught entrepreneurship, and to think creatively – young minds must be opened and fired up, not turned off, as many students and teachers are, by a dull, dirigiste curriculum. Our universities, too, need freeing up to be the powerhouses of the regeneration. Much more should be made of our unique national history, especially in schools. As part of learning British history, children should also be taught to feel proud of our extraordinary nation and its values, of which they are a part.' Sir Anthony Seldon, December, 2018

"What is the point of trying to train up the 40% of underperforming children from deprived backgrounds in Britain when there is no evidence that they are capable of making the grade? If 3.5 million children have left school since 1999 without even a C grade in Maths – as Conservative research suggests – could that be because they are being taught academic subjects that they lack the ability to absorb? And if we really want to raise national standards, would it not be more effective to concentrate on those children who show an inclination to learn?' Magnus Linklater (i) Times February 4, 2009

So what will this new curriculum designed to inhabit a new paradigm look like? We can start by asking where the old curriculum came from and what was it a response to? Has anything changed? Of course, we might answer. We live in a different world, amidst an information and technological explosion unparalleled in our history, one capable of transforming our species. So how did we end up

staying with this '*dull, dirigiste curriculum'* that we are currently hostage to? To what extent is our education modelled on an economic model that is either (a) out of date or (b) there to perpetuate a system predicated on different values, principles, goals than we now espouse?

And having started by asking questions, how should we take the curriculum we have and reshape it, not subject by subject, but by dramatically increasing and personalising our offering and the means to do so? And in doing so, how do we ensure that we don't end up placing children in hierarchies based on exam results and on a narrow measure of ability rather than tapping into ability in a wider, non-biased way? And how do we recognise and reward people not on academic achievement, but on actual achievement? After all, our world is under the throe of people who have had the benefits of an independent school and Oxbridge education and yet whose lives appear predicated on profit and self-interest. Is this what our education is about, at its best?

Of course, I disagree with Linklater even accepting he is being disingenuous to make a point in one fundamental issue. This is his use of IQ or the results of our current examination system to denote intelligence. By doing so, we are ignoring the fact that the weakness of the definition resides in our misleading and narrow measure, which is not of ability, even intellectual ability, but only of what can be achieved by applying intelligence to a formalised learning and testing that is so restricted that creative or off-piste answers can be heavily penalised. Exams then don't become measures of what can be achieved, but something more nebulous with a dangerous corollary that such judgments are used to set and manage expectations and preserve a failing status quo. For too long, exams have driven education and the content is there for selective schools and universities to help sort the wheat from the chaff. Except they don't really know which is which, except by their own limited criteria. What they measure is a level of applied intelligence to a prescribed body of knowledge that is arguably less useful and less productive than other abilities which go unnoticed. That's all.

Whenever we are faced with attempts to redesign the curriculum there are two adages that come to mind. The first is 'anyone can tell me what's wrong. Who can tell me what's right.' The other is 'don't tear something down without the wherewithal to build it up again.' I'm mindful of both.

Before beginning it may be useful to define what we are writing about and where better to start than with Professor Mark Priestley's

recent article (January 2019) entitled 'Curriculum: Concepts and Approaches' that offers us the following definitions:

§ *Curriculum* – an umbrella term denoting the totality of the learning experience of children and young people in school. Considering the curriculum would thus include the questions of what, how and why listed below, as well as assessment (evaluation).

§ *Curriculum purposes* – statements of what the curriculum is intended to achieve. These include narrowly defined outcomes or objectives, and more broadly defined aims or goals. This is the why of the curriculum, and is often (but not always) made explicit in official documents that comprise the curriculum framework.

§ *Curriculum framework* – the documents that outline the structure of the curriculum and its purposes. This also usually includes and the content to be taught – the what of the curriculum.

§ *Curriculum provision* – the systems and structures established in schools to organise teaching, for example timetabling. This is the how of the curriculum.

§ *Pedagogy* (often referred to as instruction in the literature, especially American writing) – the teaching strategies and learning activities planned to achieve the aims and fulfill the planned framework. This is also the how of the curriculum.

§ *Assessment* – the methods used to judge the extent of students' learning (e.g. tests, homework, observation). Assessment might be used formatively (to provide feedback to learners to inform future learning), summatively (to provide a grade) or evaluatively (to judge whether teaching has been effective).

With this framework and similar examples in mind, what follows can realistically only provide a framework, focusing mainly on content and provision, the why and the how, although it is inevitable that it will include reference to pedagogy and assessment. After all, this page, this website, can never be more than a beginning, an attempt to identify a new paradigm of education and some suggestions as to how it should be inhabited

A New Curriculum

(a) What needs Changing:

(1) The idea of a national curriculum based on a single favoured academic pathway predicated on university entry

(2) The idea of defining learning by location (ie school or university premises), by quantity of time spent on task (hours, weeks) and by restricting the teaching of knowledge to traditional subject

boundaries (ii)
(3) Our adherence to the traditional means of delivering education, ie by schools, teachers, the use of specific technology, using the same pedagogy and in some instances the same curriculum that has remained essentially unchanged over many years.
(4) Our independence from vested interests determined to influence education for their own purposes. We need to ask what are schools for and whose interests are they serving? Children are often lost in the debate; when they leave schools, often hugely prestigious schools, to study law, accountancy, medicine without having been taught an ethical view on the course they are taking, then have been failed by their schools.
(5) Our assumption that knowledge is free from bias and political interference and is not-manuipulated by societal pressures. That is naïve. Which is why every teacher, every discipline needs to subject itself to a rigorous ethical cross-examination.
(6) Our idea of the delivery as education as fixed and mono-purpose. We need the flexibility to use different methology and pedagogy at different stages of education. So the way we teach enfants and early primary school will be different to the way we teach intermediate years and seniors. Of course it is different now, but we need to see each stage as stand alone and requiring different methods of teaching and learning.
(7) The lack of direction and creativity in educational thought evident in the suffocating and self-serving education industry with its endless, internalised debates about the differences between constructivist and "personalized" pedagogies, progressivism and traditionalism, knowledge rich curriculum and skills based curriculum, cognitive load theory, assonance and dissonance, redacted educational philosophy in neologisms and acronyms and a focus on the current fads, resilience, mindfulness and self-esteem. We need to put all this to one side (but not dismiss for there will be transferable value in much of the research in a future paradigm). At present, education is too inward looking and dissectionist, concerned with how to make the most of a closed box by changing the colours, sounds and imagination without seeing that the problem is the closed box that precludes any paradigm shift and without that, however we dress it up, it will still be a closed box and part of a paradigm that is no longer relevant or working for more and more children each year.
(8) Education should respond to the major threats that face us: mental health, obesity, climate change, terrorism, artificial

intelligence etc. Some responses are evident (i.e. Prevent), but too little. We need to think globally and ensure we teach human values (and before we worry about British values), and know that by teaching children to think responsibly and ethically, they will be good citizens.
(9) While there has been a good deal of writing and 'new language' to describe the 'domains' of knowledge which neatly divide the curriculum, it still begs the question about what makes up the curriculum and how fixed / dynamic should it be? A deeper understanding of the curriculum is not useful if what poses as 'the curriculum' is interpretation based on what is not what could be. Simplicity is the key.
(10) We need to make our schools inclusive and relevant. At present, our system with its limited gauge of ability, its focus on often unreliable data discriminates against those whose abilities transcend the offering of schools, ie those with different learning abilities. To be an intelligent and independent thinking student is to ask about the relevance of what is being taught and how they are being measured. Selective schooling is a major handicap to an inclusive school system.

<u>(b) What do we need to replace it with?</u>
(1) As with the new paradigm, the essential part of a new curriculum is to underpin it with a new philosophy for education based on a redefinition of what education is about, its values and purpose and the ways of delivery. Choosing the body of knowledge to follow depends on getting this stage right.
(2) A far greater range of subject areas or subject domains although not necessarily dressed up as stand-alone topics and new ways of delivering learning by using technology.
(3) We need to change how we measure ability, progress and attainment.
(4) We need to ensure that with our emphasis on STEM subjects, that our students approach each through an ethical framework. When AI is able to replicate and transform itself, it is crucial that it contains the right rules and ethics.
(5) We should also see STEM for what it is – an outdated push into subjects that are no more important than the humanities and creative subjects they replace. Useful for some, but not for all.

<u>(c) How do we manage change?</u>
(1) It is not possible to achieve successful change without achieving

some change in political will.
(2) We need to acknowledge that change will happen anyway; the key is managing change.
(3) Any change needs to be preceded by a recognition that we need to first, redefine the purpose of education. Without this, little will be achieved regardless of any change in content or pedagogy.
(4) We need new societal goals and a return of education to the abiding question viz. what is the best education we can offer to our children in the here and now
(4) Debates about class sizes, pedagogy, methodology, organisation will follow decisions made about the why and how. Many of these debates will be nullified or seen as redundant in a new paradigm.

(d) What will a new curriculum look like?
(1) Education will be staged. Foundation subjects such as reading, writing, spelling and numeracy (ie the numeracy and literacy that functioning adults require) would be taught in formal settings with an emphasis on memory, repetition, etc
(2) Different subject boundaries will emerge. While some subjects may remain less affected than others (English, Classics, languages) others will need to be subject to even more regular revisionism (sciences, geography etc). History and Economics will need to be recalibrated in line with ethical considerations (ie the Economic Doughnut, a history curriculum predicated more on history than national mythology – which has its own place!) while there will be a growth in life-skills, not as an add-on, as proposed with the new health curriculum, or calls for cooking to be an integral part of the curriculum, but at the heart of it. Self-management (not self-awareness) and personal outreach (empathy, charity, acceptance) will be amongst the traits embedded in the new curriculum.
Where there are new areas of knowledge (coding, artificial intelligence, Genetic engineering, nanotechnology, Climate change etc and where some issues clearly overlap (ethics pertaining to environmental issues or politics and business and ethics in AI) then decisions will need to be made about categorization. Above all, it should be a response to the world our children live in; if obesity is costing hundreds of lives, then personal fitness and exercise should be part of a new curriculum.
Apart from looking at what is currently on a school's curriculum, the new curriculum needs to look at non-university academic pathways to ensure education is relevant to a wider proportion of our youth. This in turn, would require significant changes in our traditional

measures of ability and intelligence with greater emphasis on functionality and applicability.
(3) The start to formal education will be delayed until age five. Before that the focus would be on cultivating an interest in, and joy of learning and a realisation of learning being a life-long pursuit by redefining its parameters and benefits. There should be teaching about education: what it is; what is its purpose; how do we learn; why do we learn; how do we keep learning when the walls come down.
(4) All schools should be able to deliver all current curricula by making greater use of e-learning and distant learning. Courses should be accessed worldwide according to need. It is nonsense in this day of e-courses and distance learning that all courses should not be available to all - all it needs is for schools and teachers to accept that there are different ways and that education in the future will be blended.
(5) There will be ramifications for schools and universities. With e-learning, the institution may become less important. New community institutions for community education may emerge. Schools will employ a combination of lectures, teaching, on-line providers and bespoke tutoring. Teacher training will significantly change to accommodate the new role of tutor / teacher. Other providers will enter the market place, particularly big tech companies.
(6) At 16 years or earlier, the vocational / academic divide will be redefined with university only one of several equal-status pathways for students to pursue.
(7) The future of GCSEs should be considered carefully and likely, abandoned. Ebacc would be abandoned in favour of a curriculum that favoured creative subjects including music and art
(8) Personal and Physical Health / nutrition / Life Skills / budgeting / cooking / basic first aid, CPR, etc would be incorporated into a holistic curriculum
(9) Different measures of ability will result from the use of new algorithms which will render selective schools redundant.
(10) Ideas on what a new curriculum would include are expanded in the curriculum boxes (below). These are aligned to Key Stages rather than more traditional (and useful) stages of development and individual topics (ie environmental education) which relate to more than one box are identified as such and included where they first appear or where they are most relevant. The underlying principles and purpose, established in the early years, clearly underpin what follows. An index will be included in this section in due course.

(11) The content of various subjects would be significantly reduced. Knowledge versus skills is one of the most ludicrous binary debates, but that hasn't stopped educationalists turning it into a meal ticket.
(12) The focus will be on transforming education from something that happens only in childhood and adolescence to a life-long provision that has at its heart re-education and re-training, up-skilling and enrichment.

A New Paradigm for Education
Published on February 6, 2019

'You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.' R Buckminster Fuller

When I read a call to arms entitled 'The Fall and Rise of Educational Orthodoxy – 2018 Revisited' with its reference to an '*army of educationalists storming the barricades'* and ending in an exhortation ' *Who's up for a revolt in 2019?*' I felt a momentary stirring as if, at last, it was time to put on some armour, and make ready to sally forth. For I could see there was a lot of sense in what was written – that is before I started noticing the holes and that voice appeared in my head asking '*whose army?*' and was it same '*army'* that turned out regularly to fight on the binary battlefields of education, monopolising conferences, mythologising education by forests of jargon and acronyms, promoting books and theories on what was right and what was wrong with education offering another sliver of meaning and yet always constrained by orthodoxy and self-interest, mired by industry they are implicitly a part of. Looking further for some illumination, I came across a sentence:
"It strikes me again that the greatest leaders in education today are those who seek to change the system from within, and from the ground up, through reason, rational argument and evidence; through intellectual authority rather than positional authority."
I'm up for a seemly and justified revolution as much as the next person, of course, (although I may have used less inflammatory language,) but not on these terms. I'm with R. Buckminster Fuller in seeing the need for a new model. Change isn't going to come from within, but by stepping outside our current paradigm and by looking at education anew. That way, we can ask the fundamental questions:

what is the purpose of education, is it meeting the needs of our children all leading to that overwhelming question that should always be on our lips: what is the best education we can give to our children?

Most schools are up for it, given the chance. They KNOW change is required, that what they are being coerced into teaching is not working. Most teachers are hard-working and dedicated to their profession so this is not the question. The issue is whether they are able to teach in a way that advances children's learning or do they keep teaching a curriculum that is in large part redundant or founded on the wrong premise. To properly support our children and teachers we need to provide a new paradigm of education, however inadequate that may be, and let them grow a new curriculum.

In a world that is changing rapidly there are few constants and education, by its conservative nature in what is taught, has been one of those, not in individual subjects where new knowledge is absorbed, but in the round. The problem has come about with the pace of change but at a more basic level *'who is education designed for?*' and '*who owns education?*' These are not trivial questions and the answers to them provide the starting point for what a new paradigm could look like.

It is easy to marginalise anything that deviates from the norm: environmental issues, invasive technology, change that undermines our methods of assessment; our current methodology and approaches to learning; our provision for all learners regardless of their learning differences – which is why we need to start with the purpose of education:

<u>The Purpose of Education:</u>

1. To equip children with the necessary tools to function in today's world as literate, numerate, well-informed and well-balanced adults.
2. To equip children with the critical faculties to question knowledge based on ethical premises.
3. To look at values and belonging, both community and planetary
4. To provide depth and understanding of learning and improve personal fulfillment by embracing a wider definition of education.
5. To help them to inhabit a future society by being aware of the challenges of biodiversity, regeneration and climate change. (i)
6. To change the focus of learning from selection and primacy to community and shared values through a recognition of different talents, cultures, backgrounds.

7. To address issues of bias from a young age

The Process of creating a New Paradigm: A Step by Step Approach.

1. Promote the idea of inquiry and flexible thinking to guard against the fixed mindset
2. Changing the culture of learning by acknowledging that learning is really a state of mind. More than the skill, it's receptiveness that counts. If the mind is always open, you're always learning. And if it's closed, nothing has a real chance of sinking in.
3. We need to look at knowledge holistically, not under traditional subject headings
4. We need to establish a culture for life-long learning which means changing in the way education is presented and the idea of education operating without walls
5. We need to differentiate between education and administrative and social functions of schools in the way we staff.
6. Formal learning should not begin until age five. Prior to that, teaching should focus on social skills, attitudes, ethics and values, developing listening and communication skills and embedding appropriate havbits and behaviours.
7. Assessment models should be replaced with a single summative examination in Year 13. Testing and moderation should be carefully moderated using a greater array of measures than currently available with the emphasis on keeping options open
8. Schools should act as hubs of education in their local communities and provide education for their local communities.

The Implications for the Curriculum:

1. Education will become bespoke and personalised and will be delivered through more than one media
2. Traditional class-based education with an emphasis on disciplined learning will be integral during KS1 and KS2
3. A far greater range of subjects will be presented, in classes, lectures, tutorials aided by distant learning courses, e-learning
4. If we accept that knowledge is the backbone of any curriculum, we need to (a) make sure we identify and can justify "what knowledge" and (b) ensure we have a method of constant review as knowledge expands and changes
5. Schools need to widen their offering by providing intellectual, artistic and physical nourishment"
6. Schools and other learning institutions need to move away from a raft of traditional subjects to one or more subjects that

7.We need to do more than pay lip-service to those children whose aptitude, interests, and abilities lie in vocational education, arts, and sports or in single areas, ie coding, astronomy.

The Currriculum Principles:

"All of our children ought to be able to tell us what they are learning about and why it is important. If they can't, we haven't taught them properly." Mary Myatt

"You ever wonder how humans learned to cope and self regulate for the roughly 199,850 years before we thought it needed to be explicitly taught?"

1. We need to look at the utilitarian value of education as well as its esoteric value. (ii)
2. That the curriculum is based on the principles that children want to learn and that learning is not, by its nature, adversarial - the issue is what they want to learn. The other guiding principle is that learning requires memory, following instructions, critical thinking, rigour, raised expectations and an ability to apply intelligence.
3. The number one skill is to be creative including extending the definition of creativity into sciences etc. Curiosity, philosophy, psychology, sociology all important idea of having a passport of skills. ResearchEd shows us just how much we underuse the resource of young minds.

The Political Agenda:

1. To advocate for more consistency among school types and greater equality of opportunity
2. To push for greater funding for schools
3. To raise the status and improve the conditions of teachers by investing in the profession
4. To minimalise the use of data and measurement to drive learning
5. To remove all testing before age five and Key Stage tests
6. To move away from selective schooling so all schools are 'mixed' abilities schools with different curricula and measurement
7. To see ability in new ways and to redefine the purpose of schools

This is, but a start and each list above, the same and over the coming weeks I will flesh this out with a mind on the pragmatic. I do not foresee AI running our classrooms or a huge shift away from past learning; I see rigour and high (but different) expectations sitting at the hub of education, but I do see the walls coming down,

the idea of institutionalised education being challenged.
(i) 'It is obvious that the real wealth of life aboard our planet is a forwardly- operative, metabolic and intellectual regenerating system. (...) Our children and their children are our future days. If we do not comprehend and realize our potential ability to support all life forever we are cosmicly bankrupt.' R Buckminster Fuller
(ii) *Half of what we do could be automated in the next 15 years Perhaps it will affect 15 – 20% of the workforce (still some 400-800 million jobs globally). There will also be tremendous growth in caring professions with aging, intechnology etc which means jobs created will exceed jobs automated. But 75 – 375 million will still have to find a new job.*

Exits and Entrances: Moving from Prep to Senior school:

The announcement late last year that Westminster, St Paul's and Wellington College were pulling out of Common Entrance once again brought into focus the subject of transfer of pupils from prep school to senior school. While the announcement could have been handled more sensitively for those prep schools that continue to see it as their raison d'être (only one senior school bothered to let their main feeders know), it should not have come as a surprise. As far back as 2009, Anthony Seldon had noted that common entrance exam was '*past its sell-by date'* and for several years, entrance into many senior schools has been through pre-tests and interviews, usually conducted in Year Six or Year Seven with Common Entrance no more than an increasingly redundant backstop.

No doubt part of the reason for the change has been attributed to the extra marking load on senior schools although senior schools have also been at pains to tell prep schools that their decision was because the exam was a '*burden children don't need*' and that it freed prep schools to teach a wider curriculum. Parents should not be fooled by such rhetoric. Senior schools have long benefited from an exam they have not had to pay for (that lot falls to parents), prepare, supervise or even justify, so there were clearly more pragmatic reasons for change. The most obvious is that by attracting and filling their rolls earlier makes good business sense. As a result, up and down the country, different arrangements are in place whereby children are tested through a series of isometric or 'pre-tests' tests usually verbal and non-verbal reasoning, Mathematics and English, usually in Year

Six or Seven, followed by school visits and interviews, after which a place is offered – or not. Add to this the spread of scholarship exams that now take place anytime from January to May in the final year, and prep schools find they are dealing with a range of tests and exams plus other interruptions for school visits, interviews and further testing spread over three years – not an ideal situation.

Parents, however, should not worry; senior schools are as keen as ever for students and to fill their schools and the earlier they can do so, the better. While there is more pressure on schools to manage the diversity and timing of tests, there is undoubtedly less pressure on children and parents than in the past, when places were not offered until June of the final year.

So where does this leave Common Entrance and the Independent Schools Examination Board (ISEB) that offers Common Entrance at 11+ and 13+, the Academic Scholarship used by a number of senior schools and the Common Pre-Test? The headline in one national newspaper '*Requiem for the Common Entrance Exam'* was rather premature considering that there are still many schools who use it for its original purpose, including Eton, Harrow and Radley, and many more who use it for streaming and setting. As always, it is sensible for prospective parents to ask prep school heads about their school's transfer arrangements for moving on at 11+ or 13+ (and many schools will have information evenings on this subject), but they should feel reassured that if anything, the process will be less stressful for children and parents, based as it is on a range of tests of ability and potential rather than prior learning and extensive revision that traditionally took place over the final summer half-term in Year Eight.

The move away from Common Entrance as an entrance exam offers a challenge to ISEB to re-engage with prep schools by introducing new courses, modifying their curriculum or repositioning Common Entrance as an exit exam. Even when faced with options such as the Prep School Baccalaureate, it may be that the Common Entrance curriculum is still the one many schools will feel most comfortable with.

For prep schools, however, it is an opportunity to move from their initial premise of being 'preparatory' to being 'independent', able to develop their curriculum in a way that senior schools can not. After

all, these are the years (and can be the whole of their early education) when good work habits are formed and the foundations put in place for life-long learning. If the prep school has done its job properly, children will leave secure in the knowledge that by 13 years of age, they have learned how to learn and more important, are capable of taking responsibility for their own education. As with everything (even Brexit we're told) change offers opportunity and emboldened prep schools are looking much more expansively at what they teach and the opportunities open to them for the betterment of their pupils. Life is full of entrances and exits – the important thing is usually what happens in-between.

Funding Crisis – what can we do better?

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There is little doubt that schools are in a funding crisis. Despite the fact that £43.5 billion is planned to be spent on pupils aged 0-16 years in 2018-2019 – up from about £30.5 billion in 2010-2011, the reality, according to the Institute of Fiscal Studies is that, over the same period, per pupil funding has decreased by 8%. This anomaly hasn't stopped Government arguing that spending has gone up, leading to a charge of misrepresentation by the Chair of the UK Statistics authority, Sir David Norgrove, widening the breech between the DfEE and the profession is purports to represent. Nor was the government's credibility improved when its claim that the UK was the third highest spender on education amongst the 36 developed countries that make up the OECD, was later exposed as having included university fees (paid for by students) and the independent sector in their calculations and that the country's 'true' position was between 12thand 15th. Rather than being properly funded, the reality is that almost a third of local authority secondary schools are in debt, a situation that is getting steadily worse, exacerbated by the ever-increasing demands placed on schools to cater for the growing number of SEND children and incidence of mental health problems. Worse still, increased school rolls in the aftermath of the baby boom of the early 2000s, more compliance and fixed costs, such as energy and pensions, have added further to the financial pressures faced by the sector, even spilling over into independent schools, many of which are under the same

financial cosh.
When the relationship between government, charged with the funding of schools, and schools, charged with delivering a curriculum, enters meltdown, we are in a parlous state indeed. Clearly government needs to address funding issues to avoid further damage to the profession. Yet there is another view, not surprisingly, that suggests schools can do rather better with the funding they currently receive. It is a moot point considering the growing societal demands placed on schools and no defence against the abject failure of government to meet its obligations; however, much as schools may not agree, there are areas where savings can be made, where more judicious spending can happen including a redistribution of the education grant, some taking from Peter to give to Paul, can benefit schools.
The ways that schools could make better use of current levels of funding include better management by governors, trustees and schools; a redistribution of funds from areas of little impact or waste to areas of importance; and by campaigning for changes in government policy which cost schools unduly through duplication, through unnecessary requirements in the area of data collection and through compliance and policy decisions that impact on all or part of the sector.
In measuring the school spend, the most logical place to start is where the greatest costs are incurred, namely staffing (after all, this accounts for around 70% of a school's budget), to ensure that it compares with similar sized schools. It may be that schools have an unacceptably high staffing profile (too many positions of responsibility), with an excessive percentage of funds going to the school leader or on the leadership team. Class sizes and teacher-pupil ratios, badly managed, can also lead to funding shortfalls as can poor financial and strategic planning. A good school development plan, an annual review of service contracts that assesses value for money and joining with other schools for bulk-buying of essential services, (ie fuel and the internet) can help maximise existing funds, although good schools will have walked this road already.
The second approach is to look at the school's operations. Continual Professional Development, for instance, with its ever-growing number of offerings can cost schools large sums of money unless carefully monitored. teachers are often tempted in buying into courses and programmes that look and sound attractive often in niche areas or dealing with current issues (well-being and mental health the most recent) which have unfortunately attracted a number

of charlatans. The reality is that CPD can usually be done more effectively by making use of the resources already within schools, particularly the staffroom, augmented by discretionary whole-school training and / or shared training, and by the careful selection of proven courses that can be proven to add value to the teacher's own development and to the school.

Technology is another black hole that has grown on the back of education funding and is proving both highly competitive and market driven as technology companies seek to compete with each other to get their footprint in schools. Over the past twenty years there is scant evidence of technology improving outcomes in schools (which, in itself, is no reason not to use it), but when we consider the amounts spent on technology, the question we need to keep asking is whether such spending is advancing learning or merely enhancing learning. When we are looking at virtual reality and such products as clever-touch screens, we should, at the very minimum, ensure that appropriate staff training is in place, but even so, careful assessments need to be made as to the value and purpose of hardware and software before entering into often very expensive contracts. Schools should also be wary in competing with competitor schools in technology (as in all else) and following trends instead of researching and making their own decisions on behalf of their students.

The same caveat can be applied to the resources purchased by teachers who are often attracted by the lure of new textbooks, new schemes of work or qualifications, novel approaches to learning and teaching and teaching aids, each with their acolytes and many representing a rapacious education industry that is preying relentlessly on schools. Not all are what they purport to be.

Schools need to be clear in their philosophy of learning, how they are going to deliver it and not be tempted to change their stance without reasonable grounds for doing so. Nothing unsettles children so much as constant change by subsequent teachers that have different ways in approaching such primary subjects as handwriting, mathematics and reading. There is an argument that suggests we have gone far too far in placing distractions in the way of our children, that our classrooms are too cluttered, with too many by-roads, over resourced with 'stuff' that over-stimulates our children who grow up expecting to be entertained when an environment that demands more of them, is less distracting and conducive to growing individual levels of concentration would likely be more beneficial.

The third category of reducing costs is in the gift of government. One

way would be to reduce the excessive amount of testing that currently costs the country £2billion per annum, the benefits of which would be educational as well as monetary. Another would be to ensure that schools are properly supported in their maintenance and essential supplies and that spending on school buildings and school contracts are better monitored. Government could also address some of the budgetary pressures placed on schools to manage and manipulate data and produce bespoke school policies by developing algorithms that could be used across schools. It is patently nonsense that schools are charged with constantly reinventing the wheel when the government has it in its gift to assist them by providing better templates.

Most important of all in today's climate is the task of raising the profile of teachers by increasing their remuneration and improving their conditions of employment. Teacher absences – the main reason for overspend in the state sector –last year totaled 56.7 million school days costing the country more than £1 billion. Whereas previously the causes were largely physical illness, now stress and mental health issues, childcare and changes in the workplace are cited as major reasons. And while maintaining a healthy and safe teaching environment, improving staff motivation and putting management tools in place can make a significant impact on attendance levels, the issue of teacher absences is not so easily dismissed. The Government, as a matter of urgency, needs to raise the profile of teachers, and acknowledge the pressures the profession is under and the way to do so is by supporting them with better funding and conditions. Surely, it is much better to improve teacher well-being so they can get on with their job and remain in post than continue funding the on-going costs of absences and the commensurate costs of attracting a new cohort into teaching? Ensuring that teachers are offered training in such areas as positive psychology and addressing their welfare, work-life balance and workplace conditions can have significant benefits to schools and ensure that their teachers remain where they are needed most, in front of the children.

Schools do need to find ways in which to use current levels of funding more effectively, and the above are just a few ways they can do this, but this is no mitigation for the government's failure to fund schools properly. The pressures schools are under are immense, especially as they are increasingly being asked to address the failings of society at large. To succeed, the profession needs to be acknowledged and supported in the role it is playing to prepare children for tomorrow's

brave new world and for that to happen, it needs government to get off the fence and support them.