15. Messaging: My experience of Learning and Teaching History in a former British Colony

Published on October 29, 2020

I was educated in New Zealand and I expect my history education was the same as for most of my contemporaries. In primary years history was included as part of Social Studies which included both geography and history. Apart from learning about Abel Tasman and Captain Cook, and a little about the whalers, sealers, missionaries and early settlers leading up to the Treaty of Waitangi history, most of what we learned was the history and geography of far off countries. I remember being read Maori myths and legends, but we knew little of post-1840 history, just the usual fare of

farming and refrigeration, gold and coal, women's emancipation and government, the settler history with few mentions of Maoridom. I was fortunate in my school in a small rural town to have a Maori teacher in Year 6 who taught us about Kupe and the Great Fleet and a little of Maori life before the white man came, but little thereafter

At secondary school the picture was little different. Our study consisted of British history, the kings and queens, famous buildings and landmarks, famous victories and heroic general and admirals were underpinned by more details of Normans and Vikings and the Blitz and Battle of Britain. It was all jolly marvellous! In our Year 11 examinations there was no New Zealand History only European and British history and the same in our Year 13 examinations. We knew so much more about British history than we did about our own, and what we did know of our own country was filtered through a prism that extolled the sterling qualities of early settlers and missionaries in turning the country into a modern nation state.

University turned out little different. I spent five years studying history and my first experience of any New Zealand History was in my 4th (post-graduate honours) course when I studied the process of early contact. Prior to that it was British history delivered through the prism of eminent Oxbridge historians, like G.O.Sayles or Christopher Brooke. It was only in the final year, in writing a Masters thesis on the Great Depression in New Zealand that I really come to grips with some part of the history of my country.

Of all the exports Britain gave its empire, its own sanatised and romanticised view of its own history is perhaps the most enduring. It was a patriotic history that wasn't only peddled for New Zealanders, but was taught in one form or another in all its former colonies. The story of Great Britain as a virtuous country with right on their side, spreading civilization throughout their empire, championing valiant leaders and explorers like Nelson and Wellington, Churchill and Cook. Britain was just a small island, like us, and had turned the world map pink not by conquest, but by civilizing. And we bought it. This indoctrination. Despite the fact that many of the colonies had their cultures, religions and languages ruthlessly stamped out and a growing suspicion that there was a darker narrative with quite different motives and that we were being told only one side of the story.

It was a narrative that ran deep. In 1917, exactly 103 years ago to the day as I write this, 843 New Zealanders died within a few hours at Passenchdale. Of a population of just over one million, 100,000 New Zealanders served overseas in a war that had its origins in European in-fighting, dynastic power struggles and fuelled by suspicion, ignorance and arrogance. We were there because of the narrative, the old links, loyalty to the 'Mother Country.' The Second World War, of course, had a different narrative, but the country was there also in Korea, in Malaysia, in Vietnam, in Iraq, just as it had been in the Boer War, driven by the narrative about serving king (or Queen) and country. And the country wasn't even ours.

Twenty years later, when I first taught history at Year 13, there was still only one course available in New Zealand; Tudor-Stuart England. I still know more about this period than any other. Then around 1993, finally, a new course was introduced - 19th Century New Zealand- and we were able to teach that our own history was something altogether different.

Coming out, as New Zealand history has done over the past fifty years, reclaiming its own narrative, has been painful and protracted. Slowly we started to take responsibility for what the European had done, what the British Government had done. We renamed the Maori Wars, first the Anglo-Maori Wars and then, the Land Wars, to describe, accurately now, the battles over the seizure of Maori land (in the same spirit of transparency as the renaming of the Indian Mutiny as the Indian War of Independence). We started to look again at battles, land claims, the Treaty and the injustices of the past. We started to see history as contested knowledge. We started to look at the other side.

It was a shock coming to England to find that the teaching of history was much the same: inward looking, a mixture of myth and narrative, focused on the highlights and topics that reflected British values and sensibilities. That was their choice. But it can be no surprise that the revisionism taking place throughout the former colonies has not been so complimentary of the trick historians from the old country played on them.

14. 'The 'empire' IS part of British history' Published on October 12, 2020

When the Head of a London secondary school made this response to a question about the importance of teaching British history before that of other countries, most historians would have concurred. The suggestion that British History does not include the history of its empire was summarily dismissed, as was the inference that schools were failing to acknowledge it. And yet, when we begin to look at what is being taught in our schools under the guise of British history, the reply starts to look a little disingenuous.

Despite all the efforts to teach about slavery in schools and historians arguing that the curriculum is wide enough to cover all aspects of empire, the reality is that the subject is failing us because of its adherence to its 'traditional' topics, mainly related to the world wars, the rise of countries defined by the cold war and the usual diet of Medieval, Tudor-Stuart, Georgian and Victorian history. In looking at the National Curriculum and the specifications and syllabi for GCSE and A Level history, the interface between the history of the United Kingdom and the Empire is actually pitifully small. Of course, it depends on the emphasis each school places on its selection of topics and how they are interpreted and taught, but taking this school as an example (and its history curriculum is quite representative) reveals that, despite protestations, history is held back by the curriculum and is too dependent on the choices made by schools and fails, at all levels, to address the outcomes of history so evident in our society today.

At this particular school, in Year Seven, the offering is four units of work: Anglo-Saxons, Vikings and Normans; Late Medieval England; Renaissance and Reformation Europe; and Tudor England. In Year Eight, the four units of work are Stuart England, Georgian Britain which includes the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the early British Empire; Enlightenment Europe and the French Revolution; and Victorian Britain and the British Empire. So there is scope in two of the four topics for the empire to be the subject of, or part of, the lessons.

Thereafter, the picture becomes a little grim. Nationally, around 44% of students take GCSE's in History. Here, the offering was partly determined by the examination board they chose, but certainly paid little attention to Empire. The four units in Year 9 (The First World War, Weimar and Nazi Germany and the holocaust; the Second World War and post-war Britain; and the Cold War) are background for the four GCSE units studied over the next two years (Superpower relations during the Cold War, 1945 – 1990;

Anglo-Saxon and Norman Britain, 1060 – 1088; Warfare and British Society 1250-2019; and Weimar and Nazi Germany, 1918 – 1939. Of course there are ways to integrate aspects of the empire into the topic on war, but how many schools for instance, made play on the huge contribution troops and resources from Africa, the West Indies and India, for example, made to the war effort. So for three key years, British History pays scant or no regard to the history of empire.

By the time we get to A Levels, only around 10% of students studying History, so already the cohort of students is severely diluted. Again, however, the pickings are slim. One of the two topics covered in Year 12, British History 1763 – 1846 of course, covers a hugely important period of European history, to be shared amongst the French revolution, Napoleon and the Industrial revolution as well as the machinations of the British Empire (the Crusades and the first Crusader States, 1095 – 1192 are the second selected topic). In Year 13, the pickings are more variable, covering China and its rulers, 1939 – 1989; and a topic-based essay (that could be directed towards some aspect of empire).

It is not as if there are any foundations laid in KS1 and KS 2 either. Apart from identifying significant individuals. (which may or may not have anything to do with empire) there is nothing that is mandatory in regards understanding the countries and experiences of empire. So, ignoring (as we should) the incidental teaching of history that may happen in other subjects such as Religious studies or Geography, the knowledge of history our students come away does little to explain the links between our country and countries of the old empire.

So what do I propose we should be teaching (for it is only fair to offer something in return for making such criticisms of the curriculum and examination boards)? What would help us move forward as a country and inform our children about who we are? What would help break down the barriers of ignorance that lie behind racism?

I would suggest that we need to focus on why people arrived in the United Kingdom in the first instance – the various push and pull factors. The scramble for Africa amongst European powers that resulted in 10 percent of Africa that that was under formal European control in 1870 increasing to almost 90 percent by 1914, leading to immigration from many of the former

British colonies and protectorates, such as Ghana, Nigeria and Zimbabwe; our role in the Middle East after World War One and the Sykes- Picot agreement that explains the historical migration from those countries that became British protectorates after World War One, including Iraq and Palestine and the creation of the state of Israel; the independence of India and the creation of Pakistan in 1947 with its own diaspora; the involvement of troops from old colonies in the world wars as well as other wars (Boer War, Malaysia) which helps explain the Windrush generation, the Gurkhas etc; the Opium Wars and our acquisition of Hong Kong with its own provenance; the slave plantations which were the historic basis for immigration from the West Indies; the whole process of decolonisation and the change from Empire to Commonwealth; and the fact that part of colonisation was an attempt to 'civilize' the colonies by imposing our own culture, language, religion and social mores; and acknowledge some of the deleterious parts of our history. History is not about pride or shame in events past, but about informing and learning lessons from the past. By not doing so where it is arguably most important, we are compounding our own national ignorance to the detriment of our children and to society as a whole.

History has a vital role to play, not only in teaching us our history as a distinct nation-state whether it be England or the United Kingdom or later, as British history, with the empire as an integral part. All of the suggested topics mentioned above would serve a much greater purpose than what is currently being taught,

For years now, we have stuck to tried and tested units of work and resources that we feel comfortable teaching, with subjects that once may have been highly relevant, but no longer. We need to do better for all our children. That way they can learn to understand the people and histories who make us who we are

13. The Michaela Effect Published on September 18, 2020

One of the most prolific users of twitter is Katharine Birbalsingh, alias Miss Snuffy, Head of the Michaela Free School and scourge of liberal, progressive teachers' unions and left-leaning educationalists. Since

addressing the Conservative party conference in 2010 where she criticized the state of education in England, her subsequent resignation from her post as a deputy head and her re-emergence as the founding head and driving force behind Michaela Free School in Brent, London, she has become synonymous with traditional values and discipline as well as an unstinting advocate of the reforms introduced by Michael Gove.

It is as well that she can take criticism for she has had plenty. Yet she has also garnered over 72,000 followers and is an acolyte and spokesperson for traditionalists everywhere. However contrary her views might be, she deserves to be listened to.

I have at least one thing in common with Katharine – we were both born in New Zealand. Otherwise our teaching careers have had different trajectories. In the 17 years I taught in the UK it was as head of an independent school, although my teaching career included teaching in state and independent schools, at both primary and secondary and in both New Zealand and England. I continue exercising that dichotomy today as a governor of an independent school and trustee of a multi-academy trust. Like Katharine Birbalsingh I have written on education for many years although my major premise has been the imperative for a new paradigm for education, starting with its underlying purpose and ethics, and focusing on the composition and delivery of the curriculum and the way we measure children. I favour a new curriculum with new subject groups, a holistic approach to fitness and health, a greater move to blended education, shorter, more intense core lessons allied with greater breadth of subjects, later starts to the teaching day, fewer exams and a more equal emphasis on hand and heart as well as head. Yet I write this not as a platform, nor to say one approach is right, for the two are not comparable, one dealing with reality, the other at what change could look like. On paper, our two

philosophies look miles apart. Yet are they? In reading about Michaela I found that what is significant is not what is might disagree over, but what we share - in fact, what any workable system that purports to educate children, should also share.

To start with that pejorative word, discipline. To pretend that discipline, structure, order are not requisites for learning is nonsense. Of course, discipline should preferably be from the self and for that to happen, there needs to be a respect for education and a desire to learn (which suggests students should understand that what they are learning is useful in some way). It is difficult if children do not see the relevance and purpose of education other than that predicated on academic success, but that is not the debate. Most children actually like structure, rules (even if there are some at Michela I wouldn't necessarily agree with), and the opportunity to learn which is denied them at schools handicapped by weak systems and failed cultures.

A second belief we share is in expectations. I think we would agree that whatever are the highest expectations you have of a child, you should double them – better still, expect the stars. Too many children are simply bored. Most can handle difficult concepts if they are interested and motivated even if their tools for recording and interpreting them may not quite be there. High standards fuel aspirations in work as much as in manners.

A third is not being afraid to use traditional teaching methods. A teacher early in my career showed me the value of repetition by turning out Year Four classes, year on year, with copperplate writing, tables learned and all able to read – and not just the 'able' however we choose to define them. It was an impressive achievement of care, diligence and thoroughness that worked and benefited so many children and forty years, sticks in the

memory. Repetition, rote learning, memory training all have a role in learning – at the right time.

A fourth is not be swayed by prevailing trends and cultures, especially evident of late in the humanities. It would be wrong for schools to blindly follow the latest educational or societal trends without proper discussion and debate to ensure the needs of the children are being best met and, if necessary, protected.

And finally is the importance of offering the same opportunities for children of all abilities and educational always with the same high expectations. Education may still be compromised by its focus on head over hand and heart (the latter our saviours during lockdown), but with a major shake-up in the job market and a recalibration of what is actually important to society, we may be looking again at the list of jobs we give status to – including within the career departments in our schools.

Of course, I am no longer a Head and I have the time and freedom to look outside the current paradigm. And I do remember when I was running a school just how all-consuming the job was, just dealing with 'what is', never mind the 'what could be.' You simply don't have time to change the system (although some try) while doing the very best for your students. Free schools may be anathema to teaching unions and even teachers, criticised as they are for taking money and pupils from existing schools and increasing segregation and division, but to criticise their organization and their pedagogy in the face of an overwhelming vote of approval from parents and students is not only petty, but disingenuous. Michela has earned its place and rather than knock it, like any school that has a different philosophy, we can learn from it. Progressive ideology has done enough damage to children, but this does not mean accepting the status quo or the Michela way. Change

– very significant change – needs to happen, but even then, don't be surprised if the age-old foundations remain firmly in place.

12. Applying the Lessons from Lockdown * Published on September 7, 2020

'University of Bristol research revealed anxiety levels dropped nearly 10pc in girls and 8pc in boys, between October 2019 and May, 2020' Daily telegraph 24 August 2020

'Turns out not being taught for six months leads to better results. I've always said school was overrated.' (Henning Wehn about GCSE results)

Several months ago, I wrote an article on what lessons we can take from the lockdown of schools. Many of the observations were obvious at the time: the loss of social spaces for children and the deleterious effects of little or no social interaction; the flexibility of learning times with on-line learning; the growth in the use and understanding of technology by parents, teachers and students; the inadequacy our current assessment system; the issues with funding and future financial implications; and the reduction (although not the absence) in teacher-student interaction. Other lessons were less obvious and some have only become apparent more recently, including the impact on mental health and the implications of relying so heavily on summative assessment. All told, they pose a considerable challenge for our schools as they re-open.

In our rush to get schools up and running again, it will be important, therefore, for school leaders and governors to spend some time looking at the effects of lockdown on children and the implications for future planning. It would be folly to ignore what we have learned and resort to the status quo and pretend nothing has changed when it has, and irrevocably so.

There is no doubt that the job facing heads and their management teams is very considerable and they will have their hands full dealing with the regulatory requirements involved in managing their response to Covid19; yet it is crucial that strategic thinking is not lost in the rush to get students and teachers back to work. One option for Heads, in light of their own brimming in-trays, is to identify members of staff who don't necessarily

have senior responsibilities, but who think about education and enjoy blue sky thinking to would relish the opportunity to try and measure the impact of the past six months and put it to good use.. A possible start to meeting such a remit could be through a questionnaire to gather information on the students' experiences of lockdown. This could include questions on the perceived benefits (or otherwise) of learning on-line; whether it suited some subjects / students more than others; whether there are enough resources available; whether they feel safer and less stressed; and whether they felt some on-line courses suited their own learning. And then they could get their teachers to do the same.

It would be a surprise if the feedback didn't prioritise the loss felt from not being able to interact with their peers and may proffer some suggestions as to how this and their distance learning could be better managed in the future. It could be that the role of schools is subtly re-defined, with more community involvement by capitalising on better communications and links between home and school; it could be that students will want blended education to be a part of their future and are eager for more breadth in the curriculum and alternative ways to study.

The implications for schools are huge. How to tap into this enhanced network of student-parent-teacher to assist feedback, community learning, reporting and pastoral care; how to provide a better and broader on-line provision (which may involve the employment of subject tutors and facilitators as distinct from classroom teachers); how to make schools less stressful for those who struggle socially and academically; how to structure the school day (later starts, more flexible lessons); whether new skills / subjects should be prioritised and whether, at some levels, some subject boundaries should be dismantled altogether (history + geography + sociology + economics + ecology could well be linked together as social sciences); how schools can be more environmental and sustainable - and then include these lessons into the curriculum; and to examine how to improve our offering to students who, because of learning or other difficulties, struggle to access the curriculum in the classroom. These are just some of the most obvious questions. Others will be more testing and more dramatic, possibly looking at the physical settings for schools and their wider roles in the community.

All of this would help inform SMTs / governors for future planning. Yes, schools are much more than test results and the absence, with very few exceptions, of schools claiming bragging rights this year from their examination results was a godsend. Governors are right to acknowledge the hard work of teachers and schools to create new learning and teaching environments, often in the face of public and government criticism, to ensure schools can re-open on time. But in our rush to get life back to normal, we need to look at what we have learned and apply the lessons of the last eight months. We can't go back. We just need to ask again, are we still providing the best education we can for our children - and if not, what changes do we need to make.

(*'Lessons from Lockdown' 6 May, 2020
http://education.petertait.education)

Article published on line at **schoolmanagementplus.com**

11. Lighting the Fire and all that Nonsense

- Published on August 7, 2020

Education and pedagogy, it seems, only knows how to operate in binaries: summative versus formative assessment, direct/explicit instruction versus self-regulation, skills versus knowledge, formative versus summative and so on. And when educationalists and countries take sides and are held up as exemplars (Rosenshine and his proponents or Finland and Singapore come to mind as being currently fashionable), we create an industry based on polar opinions, as happened over many years with phonics and whole language, in which whole shades of grey are lost. In all these binaries, however, nothing matches the debate that has gone on for over fifty years between traditionalists and progressives.

The quote (wrongly attributed to Yeats) that education is not about the filling of the pail, but the lighting of the fire is partly to blame when clearly, the two are interdependent. Even when we turn to the etymology, it can be a matter of interpretation as to whether 'education' means to raise or bring up, to draw out or something else altogether. We know, because we read it often enough, that the word is derived from the Late Middle English to 'lead

out' or 'to train' or, depending on your source, is derived from the Latin verbs 'educare, 'educere' (each with a different meaning) or derived from educo, 'I lead forth' and duco 'I lead.'

Since the 16th century, however, education has had a meaning that is closer to how we use the word today. According to the Oxford University Dictionary, it most commonly refers to a '*process of teaching, training and learning, especially in schools, colleges or universities, to improve knowledge and develop skills'*, skipping over the fact that most deep learning, often the very best education, happens in our homes and heads, as we seek out information for our own ends.

It is wrong to get hung up about a word, but there is an important distinction here and at the risk of introducing another binary, that of active and passive learning, we would do well to revisit the etymology for one more look. Just as the definition above states that knowledge and skills are interdependent, so is the apparent dichotomy between filling the pail (accumulating knowledge) and lighting the fire (learning how to use that knowledge). Education depends on a combination of factors, some of which sit in the progressive camp – for example, curiosity, imagination and student-centred learning – and some in the traditionalist camp – for example, teacher centred, knowledge rich, rote learnt), but nothing is one thing only.

Yet I come down on the side of fire, not because some knowledge (and spare me the phrase, 'rich' knowledge!) is not necessary, but because without the fire nothing happens. The pail may be full, but it is passive and learning is active. Because with all the discussion about what we should be teaching, we are still seeing education as something that is provided for children, with all its associated expectations and pressures and that if it doesn't suit a certain cohort of children, then it's the children that have to change, not the school or the curriculum. The result, for a growing number of children, is that education becomes irrelevant, adversarial in its construct and delivery, even the enemy – which is as far from the definition of education as 'drawing out' as we can get.

To engage children in education, we need to question whether what we are teaching is still relevant. How much of what we do is meeting the needs of children? Do we question what we are being asked to teach? To what degree

are schools becoming holding-pens for society's convenience? What happens to the spirit of enquiry when questions are deflected, lines of discussion shut down because the priority is to prepare for some exams? And how many teachers and parents question whether education has been more about control, about imparting conformity and about social herding than about learning?

There's a lot that progressives and traditionalists disagree on, but still plenty that is common. But this is not a debate that serves either side well. Children don't need all the theorising and arguments of educationalists trying to hone their craft on points of order. They need fundamental, cultural change in the purpose and design of education, as an abetter and an ally, not as a nonsensical obstacle course. The concerns of the young need to be listened to, for they will be more inclined to buy into education if they feel education meets their needs, and not only in pursuing various career paths or courses of study, but in giving them a richer appreciation and awareness of the world they live in. Learning always requires application and hard work; it also requires discipline, preferably self-discipline, purpose and commitment. But first and foremost, it requires ownership, a buy-in, a belief that education is serving children's needs, not just society's. In changing our culture, by turning children from being passive to active learners and by asking 'what could be?' rather than merely tweaking 'what is', change can happen. It means being honest about the purpose of education and who it serves, being willing to rebuild the citadel and change the culture as well as the content. That way, we might find more and more children who really want to come to school rather than have to.

10. Why Acknowledging Readiness is so Important in Education
Published on July 17, 2020

'He possesses, neither by experience nor talent, any managerial ability at all'

- A Glasgow Industrial Tribunal's ruling on St Mirren's sacking of Alex Fergusson

This week, the guest on Desert Island Discs was the Secretary General of NATO and former Prime Minister of Norway, Jens Stoltenberg. During

the course of the programme the listeners were told that he didn't learn to read until he was ten years old. The Secretary General explained:

"I struggled a lot. I was not able to read, I was not able to write. I had trouble with speaking. I stuttered . . . nothing indicated that he could become party leader, Prime Minister and Secretary General of NATO."

At ten, his parents moved him to a School that accepted that he was, *". . . a little bit different. And suddenly I started to learn. The first book I read was 'The 900 Days: The Siege of Leningrad.'*

This story is not that unusual. After all, we all have different stages of readiness and, given time, will find our own place in the world. So before lauding Stoltenberg's story as one against the odds, (and he was fortunate his parents worked to find the right school for him), we might consider whether that same story could happen here? Or whether by the age of ten, the die would be cast, the child already defined by data with expectations to match, held back by entrance exams, an unfortunate casualty of streaming and selection in a system that favours the early developer. It is shameful to label and segregate children on perceived or learnt ability at a young age whilst ignoring the most basic premise of human development, that it happens at different times for different children. It is a system that relies on the physical, intellectual, emotional and social maturity of children reflecting their chronological age and as such, will always fail many of them.

Our relentless drive to ensure that children begin their formal education younger and younger in order to meet some spurious targets is hugely damaging for a hidden number of children. And it's so unnecessary. We don't have to look far for other education systems, where children start school as old as seven and yet, by age sixteen, have literacy and numeracy standards that comfortably exceed ours. Nor does it take a lot of imagination to see that the same children, rather than being held back, are better adjusted, having had several years of growing up in the bosom of their families or experiencing a holistic education somewhere from where target setters are banished. These children are more likely to develop self-confidence, co-ordination and even a sense of intellectual curiosity and hunger before starting formal education.

So when do children reach their academic maturity? Some time ago, I attended a conference in which one of the speakers, a very successful army doctor spoke about his rather ordinary school career at a grammar school in Norfolk. When he was in his final year of school, several of his teachers complimented him that at last he was starting to work. His reply was telling: *'No',* he said, *'I've always worked this hard. The difference is I've only just got it.'* The lesson is we all *'get it'* at different ages.

The examples are plentiful and two that stand out are those Amanda Foreman, who won the Whitbread Prize for her biography 'Georgina: Duchess of Devonshire", based on her doctorate thesis from Oxford. At A levels she got two Cs and, disastrously, an E in English. She re-took her English at a crammer - and still got an E. Although she applied twice, not one British University made her an offer. Such is the way we measure our children. Thankfully, by going to the United States and beginning her tertiary education there, all came right, but how many others have been similarly lost to a patently flawed system? The second from a different field of endeavour is that of David Hemery who was born in Gloucestershire, but educated in the United States. As a youth, he was dyslexic and unable to read until the age of ten, and at 14 years weighed six stone and was only five feet and three inches high. Not the resume one would expect from someone who went on to win a gold medal in the 400 metres hurdles and who since has written four books and accumulated four degrees from Boston, Oxford and Harvard - and who didn't specialise in a single sport until he was twenty. How far would he have got in the rigorously selective environment of his homeland? What chance would he have had?

For some children, whose school careers are like shooting stars, they can be ablaze at twelve, but burnt out by twenty. Others have a longer fuse and their trajectory is enduring, so long as they haven't been placed away in a box of duds somewhere for failing to ignite when required. We need to be patient; we need to keep doors open; and we need to re- assess the criteria we use to determine potential and place more stead on such attributes as attitude, curiosity and a decent work ethic; and finally, we need to take on board our social responsibilities in extending children beyond academic criteria and to ensure the business plan of schools does not contradict the ethics and purpose of education. To do all of these things, we need to place readiness at the heart of our admissions policies and make our schools truly inclusive, for failing to do so is both wasteful and wrong.

N.B. Incidentally, Alex Fergusson won the 27 trophies in the ensuing 30 years after his appearance at the tribunal in Scotland. He just wasn't ready at St Mirren's.

9. 'It's not the time for schools to hunker down – they need to be bold'

October 7, 2020

As the impact of the pandemic strengthens its grip on the country, many schools are struggling to deal with its consequences. Scrambling to provide online provision and protecting students returning to school has been both expensive and time-consuming and, not surprisingly, governing bodies have found themselves under the cosh, their work often subsumed with a much simpler equation: how to survive until things get better.

In the independent sector, governance has always been first and foremost about numbers and financial viability, with each school pitching its offering in the market place. Balancing budgets, compliancy, risk management, politics, providing economic value and meeting charitable obligations are the stuff of governor meetings, usually squeezing out discussion of learning and teaching.

With more schools falling under equity groups designed to generate a profit from their schools and with the sector increasingly driven by results, Oxbridge places or some tangible measure such as sporting excellence, there has been little room for innovation or anything that might be deemed a commercial risk.

As a result, most schools became reluctant to be drawn into genuine educational debate or have responded only when pushed to do so by charitable law or public opinion. Yet governing bodies need to challenge management and staff to think more deeply about the future direction of education and, if appropriate, take a role in leading fundamental change to what and how we teach. It is not easy, acknowledging how busy they are in coping with everything being thrown at them, but igniting the blue sky section of the brain can be beneficial and restorative.

It wasn't always thus. Before league tables were introduced in 1992 and the proliferation of university places, and when schools had more autonomy about what they taught, independent schools were at the forefront of curriculum change, notably in the sciences and languages. But all that

changed with more top down direction from government and examination boards and with results being used by schools for marketing. This happened particularly after the Daily Telegraph started to rank schools by a process akin to naming and shaming without context or caveats, such as selection, off-rolling or the impact on students' mental health. Today, it is the marketing department that lies at the core of schools, flagging their achievements and implicitly drawing comparisons with their competitors. It is a dog eat dog world.

Yet we should not accept that as an excuse for the failure to challenge our current paradigm of education – and I write this in the expectation that independent schools up and down the land will protest that they are doing truly innovative things with their curriculum.

But are they? Or are they just responding within the current paradigm of education, enshrined in the national curriculum and exam syllabi with gentle tweaking here and there (even noting the welcome calls from some heads to abolish GCSEs)?

For instance, where has been the lead in stripping down the curriculum to look at its utility and functionality and not just for those going to university? Where is the questioning of the validity of specific subjects and exclusion of others – for instance, the long-overdue revision of the teaching of history which would have avoided the knee-jerk revisionism we are currently experiencing?

Where are the moves to place environmental issues, climate change and ethics at the heart of education rather than just teaching them on the fringes? Why have we not looked at what children really need to know, especially in our primary schools? Why have so many schools remained selective based on academic potential/ ability when we know all children benefit from being in a wider pool of abilities and talents?

Why are more prep schools not looking at using their freedom to adopt broader courses in humanities or social sciences? Where do subjects like economics, psychology, sociology, ecology sit in this brave new world? Why is it that when Bedales School looks at the evidence of when children learn best before deciding to start formal lessons an hour later than normal, they are seen as being trendy?

Why have schools been so passive in criticising the content-heavy curriculum and the dangers of teaching to the test, instead of merely starting GCSE work ever earlier? Have we lost the will to keep asking how relevant is the education we give our children? Why do we think tinkering with lesson lengths and using blended technology in order to make learning more interactive, more interesting, is enough?

Why are schools so loathe to challenge the current paradigm and lead the way in fundamental change that would benefit all by being more relevant to the changing work place and society? Schools are swimming against the tide, I hear heads say, and they are right. They are inordinately busy. Which is where governors come in. For in times of crisis, we need to be creating space, giving licence, involving more stakeholders and finding those creative minds to challenge an education curriculum that which is patently not working for all.

One of governors' core responsibilities is strategy and yet in many schools, it is the most neglected. Few have bespoke strategy committees. Yet as governors we need to question what our schools are teaching and whether the pathways to a definition of success that has worked in the past is the best we can do for our children's futures? Whether the curriculum is as challenging and as relevant as it can be or is just focused on mark accumulation.

We desperately need creative, strategic thinking from our leaders, teachers and our sector, and more deep thinking about the value of everything we teach and do. As governors, we need to free our teachers to think first and foremost about what is the best education we can give our children even if it means pushing out a few walls. It is not the time for schools to hunker down, I would suggest, but to be bold.

8. The Case against Selection

'Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life thinking it is stupid.' Albert Einstein

'The object of education is to prepare the young to educate themselves throughout their lives' Robert Maynard Hutchins

'Likely as not, the child you can do least with will do the most to make you proud.' Mignon McLauglin

In 2015, I was invited to contribute a chapter to a book being published by Civitas entitled *'The Ins and Outs of Selective Secondary Schools: A Debate. A* number of well-known educationalists and writers including Geoff Barton, Alan Smithers, Joanna Williams, Fiona Miller and Peter Hitchens and the two MPs, Nic Dakin and Graham Brady who contributed to the publication, Launched in a Committee Room in the Palace of Westminster with speeches by David Davis and Tristram Hunt, it felt like the start of a serious debate about selection in our schools.

I felt very much an outsider in the debate, being neither English nor having taught in a UK secondary school. Indeed, I assumed I was asked to contribute based solely on an article I had written several years earlier entitled 'Unnatural Selection,' the same title I used for my chapter. Then as now, I started with an apology for writing on one of educations sacred cows, acknowledging that what I wrote was 'mere rhetoric that . . . could never dent an immutable belief system' adding that '. . . I make matters even worse by using examples from off-shore thereby breaking another cardinal rule, of presuming that other countries do things better than we do.'

The debate, after a spark of interest and an exchange of views, duly fizzled out and apart from plaintive bleating about grammar schools and the iniquity of the 11+ so it remains: Unresolved, put into the too hard basket, the property of lobby groups and theorists, politicians and teaching unions. In re-visiting it, I want to return to the premise I adhere to in everything I write on education, 'what is the best education we can give our children' – that is individually and collectively.

Naturally in what I write there will be caveats, the most significant being that we shouldn't confuse a failure of discipline with a lack of ability. Like a few other educationalists (Mary Myatt being one such voice), I have always seen our approach of dumbing down to children who struggle in class or who are subject to interventions and differentiation, or even withdrawal is wrong. Rather than being unable to cope, I am convinced that many, especially those who struggle with written communication are merely bored, bored by being pandered to, bored by the irrelevance of the curriculum, and bored by having to respond in a predetermined way. Seldom is it the

complexity of the concept or information that holds back children from learning; rather it's frustration with the tedium allied to the lack of equity, understanding and opportunity for all children to flourish.

Second, I want to challenge the view that doing away with selective schools is an attack on excellence, on intellectual rigour, on catering for our brightest and most able children. Of course, that is what some people choose to see, for that is all they've ever seen. Sometimes, the alternative is incomprehensible. Yet rather than dumbing down, getting rid of selection in education can, and does, lead to a raising of standards. Children respond to challenge and to high expectations; we often fail to realise just how high we can aim and because of the paucity of our curriculum and methods of assessment, how to reach them. That is our country's loss.

I want to keep my argument to two main points. There is plenty written elsewhere on selection and I don't want to just go over well-trodden ground. Some assumptions have to be made, particularly on the importance of discipline (preferably self-discipline) in learning, and that is much more achievable when education is seen as relevant and equitable. The second is that while this applies particularly to the debate in the state sector, particularly competitive entry to grammar schools, it is also relevant to independent schools that need to look at the merits of inclusivity and the breadth of the offering.

My first is that selective schooling is unfair and wasteful, primarily because it ignores the concept of readiness, but also because it fails to properly consider other factors, such as home background, language acquisition, other learning traits, ambition, aptitudes and specific learning needs. Despite new tests designed to level up other considerations, the system by which children are 'selected', usually based on a test or series of tests, is too narrow, favouring a conformist, traditional approach to learning, discriminating against those who learn differently or who have other abilities; and second, that selective schooling fails the education of those who are the beneficiaries and, as a consequence, denies us the opportunity to produce well-rounded and socially aware students from whom they have been separated and who have different backgrounds, different ways of learning and different abilities to share.

When we ignore the whole concept of readiness, as selection inevitably does (and the younger it occurs, the greater the social and personal cost) we fail a whole cohort of children. This is not only a casualty of selection into schools, but selection within schools which is applies to both state and independent schools that adhere to an inflexible system of streaming and setting. I have seen too many children of 10, 11 and 12 who were far from capable of passing a rigorous entrance examination yet who, five years later, achieved outstanding grades – and predictably so. No-one can teach us anything in life that we are not ready to learn. Sometimes, the lightbulb moment doesn't come until university or later in life. Closing doors on our young (for that is what we do with selection) is wasteful and unfair. By using such a rigid set of tests to measure academic ability at a fixed point in time along with some predictive test to measure 'potential' we ignore all that the test doesn't measure: work ethic; mindset; ambition; opportunity and incentive; abilities other than academic; creative thinking; and so on. Now we are beginning to see children with certain learning difficulties being sought out because of bespoke skills and aptitudes they offer, offering insights and a creative mindset that isn't part of the mainstream, and essentially, conformist curriculum. What a pity we don't recognise these same abilities in our schools.

My second point is significant if we look at the other societal cost of selection, of rewarding conformity over creativity. In the Margaret Thatcher Lecture of 2013, Boris Johnson used the measure of IQ to assert that people were '*very far from equal in raw ability, if not in spiritual worth.'* The latter comment is problematic, especially if, as implied, it is linked to the first. Johnson's assertion betrays a belief in academic intelligence, that successful human beings are measurable, by their IQ which forms the basis for selection in schools. Yet it is disturbing to see how some 'intelligent' people, streamed from their peers at a very young age, become immured, believing that their academic ability entitles them to the spoils of influence and power, outside the normal conventions and values of society . We only have to look at the Bullingdon Club to see how remote many such people become. We can also look at the way intelligent people are often short on emotional intelligence and lack both common-sense and tolerance. Some leading politicians and public figures provide apt examples of people who try to intellectualise social problems. That is the way we have made them. That is the way we have indulged them. The reality is that you cannot know about

people unless you are one of them and don't live in gated communities. A reliance on academic ability at the expense of other traits and experiences, and in isolation from a cross-section of other peers with all their views, behaviours and backgrounds fails them and so long as they run this country, fails us all

In my chapter of the book, I gave examples from my own teaching practice in New Zealand where schools are not selective and yet very able children did as well as children in selective schools elsewhere, referencing two of my history students who went from their New Zealand school to Cambridge and end up with 1st class honours degrees. How much better off they were, I thought, having been in schools with other student who had a range of abilities and talents, interests and views, and not all of them academic. How much better they understood their communities and the talent that abounds in their less well-achieving classmates. I have known far too many students who achieved through dint of hard work or in fields that were immeasurable; so many who changed dramatically when they got the bit between their teeth; so many whose attitude and ambition made a mockery of their IQ. Children who had their own high expectations of themselves when their schools had told them otherwise.

We need to change. The system we have of winners and losers, of league tables, of acknowledging some talents and ignoring others; of catering one way of learning and failing to recognize its shortcomings, has to change. I'd love to see more independent schools take the lead and become properly non-selective. I'd love to see bursaries not being restricted to the brightest and the most talented students from local state schools, but the average student, even the struggling student. We have to stop placing a value on children and a level of expectation based on something we label as intelligence. Surely seeing who lines up under the banner of 'essential workers' tells us that. Selection denies both the opportunity for the vast majority of children while producing collateral damage on those who are the beneficiaries, limiting their relevance and voice. We don't have to look very far to see the consequences of seeing life as an academic exercise and people as data; we need to get the humanity and empathy back into our society and it is our schools that provide the gateway.
June 2020

7. A Sense of Entitlement

"When we replace a sense of service and gratitude with a sense of entitlement and expectation, we quickly see the demise of our relationships, society, and economy." Steve Maraboli

'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness' US Declaration of Independence

As the United States starts to unravel and governments around the world struggle to deal with Covid19 and its economic consequences, the cracks in the social fabric of society are becoming ever more pronounced. Some divisions, such as in education, social status and the distribution of wealth are transparent; others, such as gender discrimination, employment, health and white privilege, just as pernicious, are more subtle. But we should not be surprised. Entitlement, when one group of peoples or nations holds sway over others and treats them differently, is embedded in history and underpins many of the problems that beset societies today.

Apart from its contractual meaning, that is where money is paid or services given in exchange for goods and services, entitlement is broadly understood to be the belief held by someone or some group that they are inherently deserving of privileges or special treatment. While not always visible, especially in race and gender issues where well-meaning people struggle to get it right, the whole concept of entitlement starts in early childhood and manifests itself in our schools and families. In addressing it, that is where we need to start.

This week, a group of 190 former students of independent schools in the United Kingdom wrote to the Independent Schools Council to highlight racism in independent schools and recounting the experiences of racism that they had experienced. Of course, racism is not restricted to any one section of society or school type, but what was pertinent was their implication that there was a responsibility on those who were endowed with the benefits of a good education and support in their careers to get it right. The degree to which a sense of entitlement can be used to explain some of the comments alluded to in the report is not made clear; nor does the letter address the implication that they are any worse than their state school counterparts. What was explicit, however, was the comment that ' . . . *in a country where two-*

thirds of the cabinet attended private school, along with 65 per cent of Supreme Court judges and 26 per cent of FTSE 100 chief executives, independent schools have a clear responsibility to produce balanced, unbiased individuals'

While independent schools may feel unfairly singled out, the message is, broadly, that the more advantages you have in life, the greater responsibility you have to use such privilege with tolerance and empathy. Sadly, entitlement is as alive and well in many of our schools as ever and despite promoting British values and starting, at last, to teach more of our history as a multi-racial nation, there is much more work to do with our children and adults to counter bias – not just racial, but personal, social and economic. And that for those with the most advantage, whatever the education, need to be taught to act with humility and balance and to acknowledge the advantages they have (and that applies to most of us in this country). After all, nothing is more cringeworthy than the comment 'Do you know who I am?' often reported in the press by entitled persons with its implication that 'who you are' is more important than your abilities and what you have achieved.

At a grassroots level, entitlement shows itself in the way children treat each other. Young children are always more likely to interact with other children as innocents, not because of an accident of birth, family, nationality, wealth or religion. As with prejudice that has its origins in the bosom of the family, the same applies to a sense of entitlement that results from whatever messages, explicitly or implicitly are received by the child. Of course, as children grow up, personalities, temperament, interests all play a part in classroom interactions, but too often children growing up believing they are entitled to a life they have been gifted, one they haven't paid for, children who are made to feel they have a higher value than others and are therefore entitled to more – respect, protection, healthcare, lifestyle – than their peers and, as they get older, a greater right to be lead, to be noticed and listened to.

All schools need to challenge these presumptions for they lie at the heart of so much of the misery and division in our society, manifested in our schools through bullying, teasing and exclusion. There are various examples in the media that point out such inequalities and why the question to ask children and young adults is 'what is the difference between what you have been given and what you done for yourself.' Any sense of entitlement based on

the family you were born into, inherited wealth or social rank, school attended, possessions owned, race, culture or religion, is no entitlement at all. Too many children, coming from stable homes and supportive families and who don't have to worry about food or material comforts need to learn why they shouldn't make disparaging comments about those who have less, the wrong clothes, the wrong accent or the wrong colour of skin. Children can be cruel as we know, but so is the workplace with job discrimination for anything from accent, height, perceived attractiveness or even tattoos.

While this issue is societal, it is in schools that we can temper such bias. This is where children should learn that they are what they are by dint of their own personalities, character traits, labours, not from any hand me down entitlement. Too often people who have had a leg up, an advantageous internship, backing to pursue a particular interest, forget that without that support, they would not have succeeded. Children need to be taught that treating other students as less worthy because of their own academic abilities or sporting prowess, again often the result of advantages they have inherited, is not only disingenuous, but wrong. Only by learning that lesson will they be able to weigh any imagined 'entitlement' they may feel in a global context, ie what is this lifestyle I aspire to and feel I deserve costing my fellow man or woman? They may come to realise that what they think they are entitled to is unsustainable and unrealistic, and that other factors such as the rights and freedoms of others, poverty, wide-scale mining, over-cropping, soil erosion come into the equation. Viewing people, or other races, critically or somehow inferior is even more unacceptable if you have achieved nothing more than a fortunate marriage or been born into a stable and supportive family. While we should encourage aspiration in our young, we should ensure it doesn't trip over into expectation. The old adages that 'life doesn't owe you anything' and 'life isn't always fair' are important for children in order to build resilience and to help them become more empathetic adults. Realising that a sense of entitlement reinforces social division, in schools and in the workplace and leads to bullying between individuals as well as amongst nations, is a very important lesson to learn.

We need a systematic approach in our schools to counter entitlement at a grass roots level, by teaching children to look at the contributing factors that make successful lives and to show empathy towards those not so advantaged - selflessness rather than self. We need a little more modesty and humility from parents and children. We need to teach our children to look

at the way people or countries feel entitled, whether it is taking the resources they need to maintain their standard of living or by abusing privilege. Of course, we will still get celebrities or authors trying to distance themselves from their backgrounds (Dominic Cumberbatch is one such person) and we can sympathise with him. Julie Birchill once wrote that the answer was to be born working class as '*the struggle, prejudice and stupidity we have to face, only we are ever really sure of our own worth'* so you don't have to wonder whether you, '*could have made it if they had started from the same place as I did*', an argument that merely serves as another form of entitlement.

At a global level, many well-off countries accept as their right, the access to pursuing a certain standard of living and level of material comfort. The argument is that if we have the money then we should be able to have what we can afford, that spending benefits the economy, regardless of whether our appetites and desires negatively affect the lives of others. Such an expectation which is present in most of our lives, often subconsciously fuels an almost insatiable demand for foods and transport, for products and services. Palm oil plantations in Central America, sweat shops in Bangladesh, landscapes laid waste by mining, oceans from over-fishing, all to provide a lifestyle we aspire to, but to which we are not entitled. Particularly now, knowing what we know of climate change and increasing social inequality, we need to pull our heads in and think more modestly and with a collective conscience about what is necessary and appropriate. At present, we consume significantly more than we consume and end up wasting large amounts of what we do produce. We even expect the waste of our extravagance and over-consumption will be collected from our doors and become someone else's problem – perhaps even another countries that buys our rubbish. We expect this. We even think it is our right. We may acknowledge how criminal is the whole idea of planned obsolescence just to keep the wheels of industry turning, but we're removed from the damage it causes elsewhere. Our desire to pursue a certain standard of living sometimes makes us forget that someone else is paying the cost. That while we can afford it, we are not entitled to it. That the earth's resources are for all of us, not just a selected few. That the entitlement to certain unalienable rights applies to us all equally – and to the planet. That is a lesson we need to teach our children. That is a lesson we all have to learn.
June 2020

6. Service or Self-Service: What we are teaching our Children

Each Thursday during lockdown the people of England have stood on their doorsteps and clapped for the NHS. What started as a heartfelt expression of appreciation to those on the front line in the fight against Covid19 has become a ritual, a weekly coming together. And yet, as I have clapped I have wondered at the injustice of it all, how poorly so many of these people we clap for are treated by our society.

I am not alone. Each week, it seems, more and more NHS workers are finding the occasion deeply ironic. How long since the pay rise for nurses was turned down by government? And how little do we pay carers? How little do we value those who look after us?

In the Low Pay Commission Report published on 21 May, 2020, it was reported that 420,000 workers were illegally paid below the minimum wage last year – including in *'sectors where the government is the primary source of funding.'* One of those sectors was that of social care where 40% were paid below the national living age. Perhaps it is only when you have a parent in care and see the wonderful and heart-breaking work done by carers that we come to appreciate how poorly we care for our carers.

It is time we reflected on what we mean by essential or key workers, those we cannot operate without, and just how we see them and reward them as a society – not just in monetary terms, but in according them and their occupations, respect and appreciation other than at times of crisis. And to so, we need to return to the whole concept of service and how we promote it in our schools. Not just values. Whether in our vocational or career guidance, we ever distinguish between jobs that are about service and those that are more about self-service and projected income. For if so, we do a rather poor job of it.

Forgetting the idea, deeply entrenched and jealously protected, that academic ability has an entitlement to greater financial recognition, that profession is worth more than occupation. Forget the arcane idea that those who deal in money should be paid in money and those who deal in humanity get their thanks elsewhere. It is a serious issue that goes to the heart of every school, its ethos and its core values.

In referencing Eton College, I do so reluctantly because they are so often the public whipping boy and also because the School has just started on a

new social mission driven by The Headmaster, Simon Henderson who takes his social responsibilities seriously as is evident by their new social agenda and the way that Eton has significantly contributed by helping the NHS in a number of practical ways during the crisis. So we should not echo the clamour stirred up by former Headmaster Tony Little, who criticised Tory Old Boys and 'a certain bunch of people'(appearing to single out David Cameron, Boris Johnson and Jacob Rees-Mogg) for giving the school a bad name. Instead, we should be focusing on the culture of our schools, our alma mater, what they give back to society and how they nurture aspiration and define success. If we were to refer to the groups that Tony Little alluded to , we can see what some of our best educated and most privileged students from twenty or thirty years went on to do: Corporate lawyers (several), bankers, investment wealth managers, research analysts, venture capitalists, managing directors of their own private equity companies,publishers and journalists, yacht brokers, entrepreneurs, an occasional artist or musician, actor or producer, dabbling in alternative life styles such as scuba instructing or running a meditation centre, working in the wine industry, army (via Sandhurst invariably), perhaps someone working for the Animal Health Trust and even, pray, a teacher in a comprehensive school.

I am not suggesting these are not creditable careers on their own, but as a reflection of what our best educated contribute to our society, it is frightening. Until the end of the list there was little evidence of anyone looking to give make choices based on serving others, in medicine, in public health, in education or working with communities although some may have subsequently contributed to society through philanthropic or charitable work. It highlighted how far we have drifted from the belief of Thomas Arnold when he was Headmaster of Rugby School that education was not just about instilling learning, but forming character. This became the ethos behind schools such as Haileybury, Cheltenham and Wellington College, set up to provide cadets for the Indian Civil Service, full of integrity and the willingness to serve (those who were chosen to serve in India were known by the epithet, the 'Incorruptibles') in contrast to the shameful exploits of the East India Company. But as a society we have forgotten the value of service and how to acknowledge and promote it. How many schools teach civic responsibility, talk about paying your dues and self-sacrifice? How many schools teach the difference between what you should

do and how that is not the same as what you can get legally away with; between a life in service and a life of self-service.

It is an indictment of where we are as a society that so many of our essential workers come from abroad, from countries far poorer and more in need than ours in order to staff our hospitals and social care. We need to increase the numbers of nurses, doctors and carers from within our own population and encourage them to do so by improving their conditions so they are not made to feel an afterthought in a list of government priorities, rather than relying on highly trained medical helpers from countries that can ill afford to educate them for our benefit. We need these people, for their skills and all they bring to our workforce so should not look to replace our current workforce who have served us so loyally and with great sacrifice, but simply because we should, given our resources. That way we will be able to reciprocate with those countries abroad who have supported us, by providing more medical help or even by paying back the medical fees of doctors who have emigrated to the UK. Suspending tax rules on those NHS workers who have returned to serve during the crisis is one way of doing so, albeit even that move took far too long and, as yet, is only temporary. It is a sad reflection on our values that we are learning how to provide the love and care for our elderly not from family, but often from migrant workers who have often been treated shamefully.

Of course, there are many reasons for this state of affairs, some of which can be attributed to selective education and the stereotypes it creates. Yet a large part of the responsibility lies within the schools and the values and ethos they are instilling into their students. When we rank an institution by the number of bankers and lawyers it produces above one that produces nurses and carers, cleaners and drivers, we are not talking about academic apartheid, but social apartheid. Both groups need each other to learn from and to grow rounded citizens. In the same way that we should be asking if using Gross Domestic Product as a measure of a country's success instead of well-being is still appropriate, we need to teach children to think differently about their choices they make in our post-pandemic world so their journeys are not determined by the accumulation of wealth, but by having meaningful lives. In the meantime, as a government and as a society, we need to look after those who look after us rather better than we do.

5. Lessons from Lockdown

'Those old, derided classrooms, with ordered desks and a teacher at the front, now resemble for many the warm embrace of the familiar. Let's look forward to returning to what we know, and what our students value. Let's work tirelessly towards the day when the laptop is shut down, the face mask is taken off, to reveal a very human smile. Today, the personal is radical. The revolution can wait.' David James TES

The last six weeks have been an extraordinary period in our history, fraught with challenges and no more so than for children. As lockdown has continued, schools have been challenged like never before to find different ways to educate their pupils and students. What never seemed possible before, in terms of moving lessons from the classroom, quickly became so with a remarkable increase in teacher (and parent) training, on-line programmes and curricula and a rapidly growing number of providers. The pity was it took a virus to force us to look at what is possible and how technology can make a difference to learning after twenty years tip-toeing round the edges.

Of course, it has not been straight-forward. There has been justifiable concern of growing inequality during the lockdown, especially for those who respond best to the discipline of a classroom and the presence of a teacher or whose home circumstances mitigate against learning. Schools up and down the country compelled to go on-line have been forced to re-invent the wheel or to choose from the smorgasbord of courses on line – or both. New courses like EtonX and an extended BBC bitesize (delivered through the Oak National Academy) have changed the landscape. Parents have struggled through their own limited knowledge of technology and especially when space and the number of children have restricted learning opportunities. And many students, no doubt, used to education being about push factors, about imposed structure and discipline, find they are rudderless without the means to motivate themselves. That said, I suspect that most parents and guardians have used the time locked up at home to consciously or unconsciously rethink what they understand by education and, in passing, will have developed a grudging admiration for their children's teachers. Possibly their children will be learning about getting on with parents and siblings or other family dynamics and be better able to discuss what's happening about them; VE day and Captain Moore, or climate change and the connectedness of the world. Or perhaps there will be making fresh observations from their daily walk, seeing old things anew –

and all of that will have immeasurable benefits. Through all of this, there have been lessons we can learn, a few of which I touch on below:

1. Schools are, first and foremost, social communities where children grow up and experience that journey with their peers – and teachers. It is the social experience that dominates their day; in their minds, education is what is happening when they're making other plans – to paraphrase John Lennon.

2. The importance of education out of the classroom, through families or friendship groups, in growing values, attitudes, tastes, habits, passions has been more evident than ever before.

3. Schools are not just in the business of educating children, but their parents and communities also. By building better links with parents through technology, we have changed the relationship between home and school and the idea of schools being their for the whole family is something we should build on. Many parents are now much better connected to their children's schools and may even understand what their children are learning. Better communication and explanation can only help take this further so parents feel better informed and involved and don't just exist as critical outsiders.

4. Parents and children will have experienced the realisation that education isn't bound by four walls. Many children and families will have experienced education without the limits of a curriculum, whether by pursuing creative activities, through walks, banter, debates and a reappraisal of what they feel is important in their lives.

5. We have a curriculum that needs reforming which may involve changes to the way we teach. Lockdown as led to questions about why we teach the way we do and why do we teach what we do, ie who selects. The changes need be dramatic, but in the wake of the failures of national and international responses to the pandemic and the inevitable changes in our economic activity that will follow, we need to reassess what we teach children. This need for an appraisal of our curriculum is long overdue even before covid19, but debating the cost of human lives in when to end the lockdown (which is really what the debate is about) is focusing minds.

6. Eton College's pledge to raise £100 million to improve equality of opportunity was an initiative that received a lot of publicity and rightly so.

However, we need to do more about challenging selective education and understand that students can become better rounded people as well as high achievers in non-selective schools (something we seem as a country to be set against despite it working well in many other countries). We need to weigh up what is gained and lost by selective schooling and not muddle the issue by factors such as poor discipline or class sizes.

7. We have found out that there are other ways of assessing students, even if not yet that reliable or desirable. But we shouldn't just revert to the norm. Simon Henderson made that point when he wrote, '*If teacher-assessed grades are broadly considered to have worked then we should look again at our national exams and see if they are really necessary.'* Maybe the time isn't right, but the school closures have asked the question whether we are making any concessions to the way children live and learn and whether there is a better, more accurate and more inclusive way of assessing learning.

8. This has been an opportunity for schools to look at when they start teaching in the morning. Many schools in lockdown have shifted their school day; others realised that students were accessing lessons much later in the day and well into the evenings and have adapted their programmes so students can work to their own timetables. Some schools have indicated that they are going to keep to this when schools re-open. Evidence is growing that children would benefit from an hour of exercises / yoga , music or other cultural / sporting activity before starting formal lessons at 10.00am

9. Schools are run on the basis of minimum hours / days in class. Students learn at different paces / times and perhaps (another lesson from lockdown) so we should stop measuring time by the number of hours spent in a classroom rather than by the quality of learning. Three focused hours of core learning each day could be enough to allow time for a more diverse personalised curriculum, other on-line or on-site lessons, vocational training or a range of cultural and recreational activities.

10. As we begin using i-phones to track the spread of coronavirus, we should accept that i-phones are here to stay until they are replaced with even more sophisticated technology - and start to teach children to work with them, to use them as teaching aids and not set against them

11. Most children will be pleased to get back to school, even if only for social reasons. But there will be a significant number who will not welcome a return. There could be a variety of reasons, but three main ones I would suggest will be (a) social acceptance, bullying, learning difficulties, issues with mental health exacerbated by classmates, discipline issues and the camaraderie of the peers. (b) The relevance of the curriculum and what they are learning, especially for those who learn differently or have learning issues and (c) the feeling that they can achieve much better without classroom distractions and discipline issues. 'Disruptive learning' isn't a fad; it's a reality in many classrooms as group work is defined by the attitude and behaviour of the worst member of the group Some students have stated how they have enjoyed lessons from their teachers on google classroom more than the same lessons delivered by the same teacher in the classroom. Many feel they can learn better without interruptions and at the best times for them. We cannot change classrooms just for the few, (and nor should we), but we can listen, learn and adapt.

12. We have learned a good deal more about how children learn when the content is relevant, interesting and personalised. So many children have been learning so many things, from learning a musical instrument to gardening woodcraft, astronomy and cooking skills - and enjoying it.

13. This is the time for other ideas such as Kate Raworth's economic doughnut, decolonising the curriculum and the recent activities of extinction rebellion to be considered. Our curriculum is overloaded – perhaps it is time to revert to cross-subject groupings such as sciences / social sciences / humanities, even a modified trivium? Whatever we choose, we may need to move away from some subject boxes (should Geography and History exist as separate entities without Economics, should Philosophy and Ethics play a more central role in schools? We have learned that schools can operate off-line and some very well indeed. Rather than throw this advantage away, we have the ideal situation for bringing in more blended learning, where a greater range of subjects can be offered in all schools. To say that *'teaching remotely is a pale imitation of what we do'* is to dismiss how useful distant learning has been for those who struggle with school. By using remote learning flexibly as an integral part of teaching, schools can be more inclusive – surely an important aim of education. The role of teachers has broadened with some showing they are better producing on-line lessons that they are in

the classroom. This could be the time to allow teachers to become on-line providers and tutors, providing the personal support for on-line courses

14. We have learnt that there are many in the forefront of education who would choose to ignore all the above. They are ideologically resistant to change, using the club of professed excellence to snuff out new ideas often driven by self-interest. They do not welcome debate and speak in binaries. That is not how change will happen.Their bubbles have contracted the longer the lockdown has gone on.

15. Lurking beneath this pandemic is a far greater crisis with potentially far greater consequences: climate change. We need to change our behaviours, our ambitions, our idea of co-existence if we are to survive this – and this needs to be reflected in our schools. We have to stop thinking about education as creaming off the top so schools can boast about their clutch of Oxbridge places and start teaching children to value jobs that have social worth: nurses, carers, cleaners, fire and ambulance workers, drivers, teachers and doctors. Schools need to be for all, not for a diminishing minority who profit from an out-dated curriculum and inadvertently contribute to growing inequality.

And, no, the revolution cannot wait. Despite the siren call of the classroom desperately awaited by many children and even more parents, we will be all the poorer if we have not learned some lessons from the lockdown. What is exciting is that a growing number of schools are changing. Despite all the debates and articles that deal with education only in binary terms, we have to accommodate new ideas for the sake of our children. Going back now to how we did things before would be both wasteful and retrograde.

4. Are we getting it right? Selective Entry and Measuring Intelligence

(published in the Spring edition of Angels and Urchins under the heading 'Measuring Intelligence')

As the pressure for places at selective schools is ramped up year on year, ever more parents are questioning the wisdom, let alone the humanity, of casting their children into a machine driven by data and numbers. The mere suggestion of entry tests is enough to cause usually sane and sensible parents

to panic, move house in search of a more helpful postcode or join a church simply in order to better their child's chances of securing a place. It is all rather desperate.

The problem with entry tests is that they are designed for one purpose – to select and place children in rank order for the offer of places. Traditionally, the most reliable method was through a battery of entry tests with a focus on prior knowledge and rote learning based on a tightly prescribed curriculum. Today, while some schools still favour the traditional route, a much wider array of assessment tools are used, including more rigorous interviews, bespoke standardised tests and the measure of other talents and abilities. The issue, however, remains the same. In areas where demand outstrips supply, parents behave as parents do, striving to do the very best for their children by encouraging extra-curricular pursuits and employing tutors to assist with learning, exam preparation and interview practice. And who can blame them? More than a quarter of children in England are now receiving some form of extra tutoring (in London that figure was 47% in 2018) and rising. The questions we should be asking might be 'are tutors being employed to help build understanding or just to help them pass tests?' and more specifically 'is this the best education we can give our children?'

Not surprisingly, in a world where politicians celebrate the international league tables produced by PISA, such tables still hold sway in measuring schools and children. This is what selective education does. It is not defined by the best interests of the child, which is why we hear of many schools 'hiding' students who threaten their profile come exam season. Measuring ability has long been a challenge in a country where the provision of education is anything but equal and where definitions and interpretations of intelligence and ability are constantly being skewed by politicians and academics. Many 'intelligent' children, often those with SEN or those whose particular talents are neglected, slip through the net. Others just think differently and struggle to meet the straitjacketed requirements of 'one size fits all' exams. The abilities of too many are unrecognized, their work ethic, attitude, ambition, creativity ignored and their individual learning needs placed in the too hard basket.

The mistake is to confuse tests with intelligence. Most tests are based on assessing a prescribed body of knowledge with all the associated bias. We

should not confuse them with intelligence, simply defined as the ability to learn and apply knowledge and skills. If we take a wider definition to include the capacity for logic, understanding, self-awareness, learning, emotional knowledge, reasoning, planning, creativity, critical thinking, and problem solving, even members of MENSA may be found wanting. And in a system designed to devote large swathes of time and energy to passing tests based on a single premise, that cannot be a surprise. IQ tests (and there are many different tests used to measure IQ) would never claim to be infallible or without bias, or to be the only measure of intelligence. It is others who make that claim for them.

The battery of tests and examinations that schools and children are subject to in order to advance through 'the system' that we call education are as rigorous and numerous as anywhere in the world. Rote learning, constant testing and re-testing sits at the heart of SATS and 11+ particularly where there is a prescribed syllabus to cover. Common Entrance, for long the entry exam favoured by senior independent schools has now been overtaken by standardised pre-tests to measure ability and attainment two or three years before entry points although in many schools, the formal written examinations still hold sway.
Despite calls for GCSEs to be abandoned (St Edwards in Oxford and Bedales School, for instance, have already limited the number of GCSEs to allow for courses in practical disciplines or in the humanities), they are still the way schools are measured and how they measure themselves. More difficult exams and greater content in the exam prescriptions have resulted in schools starting preparation for GCSEs as early as Year Nine to the detriment of a broader education and, in particular the languages and arts. The results may provide more data by which to assess teachers and schools, but they also shape expectations and conceal an archaic and rigid system of education that does the young few favours by failing to develop the skills and knowledge they need for their futures.

While selective schooling remains at the heart of our school system, parents are in an invidious position, particular in the quest for places at grammar places or independent schools. We need to look anew at the purpose of education as we enter the second quintile of the 21st century with the job market, climate, and society undergoing a period of dramatic change. Schools should be able to offer a broader, more relevant curriculum; there should be a better understanding of the pros and cons of selective

schooling; a more trusting and honest parent -teacher accord; more funding to lessen the gap between 'good schools' and 'bad schools'; a much wider definition and understanding of what is intelligence and a greater focus on how schools, even highly selective schools, can improve their decision making. The latter will possibly be achieved in the future through the better use of aIgorithms, making the process of selection more equitable and inclusive of other talents and characteristics. The argument will be that you cannot prepare for such tests, but where schools lead, parents will surely follow so long as selective entry tests are the only way into our most sought after schools.

3. The New Education: Where we are Heading

This follows on from the New Education: The First Five Years

In five years, education may well be dictated by factors other than academic and pastoral measures, including considerations of the environment, health, cultural and economic factors. Change will be exacerbated by the current pandemic that is altering the social and economic landscape as I write. And yet while it is hard to see education out of the shadow of Covid19, we must do so. What is paramount is that we change the culture so people think of community above self (as already happening) and we look at how to make education available to all, either as blended education or, as a default position, to all children via the internet. The list below is predictive and general, but looks to draw together some of the best thinking out there and to provide a basis for debate.

o Schools will continue to visit and re-visit the central question: 'what is the best education we can give our children?'

o The shape of the school day will be modified and compartmentalised according to societal / community need. School timetables will be more fluid and could be significantly different as may school terms and teaching spaces.

o The role and function of educators will change to accommodate a greater degree of separation of roles into tutors, facilitators, classroom, assistants, auxiliary, specialists roles each with more specific defined roles.

o Ofsted will be closed down and different measures used for employing worth based on human values / attitudes and behaviours and environmental as well as academic goals

o The status and well-being of teachers to be raised / prioritised by Government thereby encouraging more teachers to train for, and remain in the profession.

o All education curricula will be available remotely for all students. While the emphasis will be on classroom teaching, individual programmes will be the norm and all school programmes will be blended as required. Courses offered by schools will include courses offered by all sectors and all providers, as deemed appropriate

o A national virtual school that offers all academic and vocational courses will be established, particularly to promote marginal subjects (languages, etc)

o Education will be geared to need and will be pared down to a required core before any specialisation (similar to the Trivium). Functional skills will be honed before specialisation

o Creative subjects and general health will be prioritised

o STEM subjects and digital learning will be implicit (cf explicit) parts of learning

o Assessment will be on-line. By the use of better algorithms, summative assessment will be greatly reduced and national testing confined to the final years of school. Assessment will change from measuring learning peaks to assessing deeper understanding

o The rationale of education will change from a level of academic achievement to a utilitarian measure and inclusion. Through acknowledging readiness and better data, doors to career choice will remain open longer.

o At present around 15% of the population are diagnosed with special needs. By 2025, it will be accepted that all students have 'special needs' and that the delivery of education will be tailored accordingly, both in mainstream and on-line classes. Labelling of children will no longer mean removal from classrooms, but more remote teaching

- The most important and fundamental change will be in the culture of education which will be a shift from a premise of education based on individual achievement to a much wider interpretation based on societal well-being and of what makes a good citizen and a fulfilled human being. This will mean a shift from a 'me' culture to a 'we' culture.

- The doughnut economy will lie at the heart of our curriculum with its emphasis on regeneration, conservation, and a redefinition of economic value. The concept of schools as businesses will be rejected and that state will take more responsibility for the funding of schools

- GDP will be widely discredited as THE tool to measure national prosperity and growth. Planned obsolescence will be seen as both redundant and wasteful.

- Only external exams will be at the top of secondary schools (nb GCSEs will no longer exist)

- Further curriculum development to ensure creativity and thinking is at the heart of learning and that curriculum subjects are stripped of the extraneous for initial level courses, ie mathematics would remove most algebra, calculus and some trigonometry up until age 14

- An adherence to what has worked in education: rote-learning, memory work, communication skills (written and spoken) will still underpin education at set times and in set subjects, but learning for learning's sake will be reduced.

- League tables will be banned along with any competitive cross-school advertising based on examination results

- The curriculum will focus on key skill – oral and verbal communication, digital skills, reading and mathematics up until end of Year 6.

- Broad subjects to be integrated into broad groups: Humanities, Sciences and Social Sciences up until the end of Year 10.

- Pathways from Year 11 onwards

- End of selective schools

o Funding heavily apportioned on decile point based on areas and intake (10 = best areas / schools / minimal funding) 1 = most deprived areas maximum funding)

o No private funding of education. A focus on the integrity of schools, curriculum and purpose. Which means increased national funding.

o Part of the cultural change (linked to careers and choices made at Age 16) is an emphasis on service occupations over self-service, value measured in other than monetary terms (a redefinition of value and worth)

o There will be much more emphasis on community teaching and providing more assistance and courses for parents

o There will be a change in the way education is perceived by the young: no longer adversarial, but useful, and having a purpose by being challenging, relevant and tailored to their needs

This is, of course, predictive and rather pie in the sky - and inevitably full of holes! But it is an attempt to add flesh to the words of all those that write 'time for change' or 'we cannot go back to how things were' etc. While these are sentiments I agree with wholeheartedly (and sad it has taken a world pandemic to get here), we cannot simply dismantle a system of education without proposing what can take its place. This involves looking anew at our system, and preferably from without rather than from within, with all its vested interests and roadblocks. This has been a significant part of my work on the curriculum page of my website at petertait.education.

Once again, I am aware many areas (pastoral and careers for instance) have only been alluded to, but rather than point out what's missing, help me fill in the gaps. I am happy to footnote any points and apologise for any omissions / errors that are herein.

2. Clearing out the Curriculum: Finding the Blank Page

You don't have to look far to find advice on reshaping the curriculum. Out there, in the edu-marketplace, are literally thousands of educationalists, academics and consultants explaining, interpreting and defining the national

curriculum by delivering courses and workshops, each offering nuanced opinions about content, planning and delivery, resources and assessment. Behind them exists a subsidiary industry producing text-books, apps, journals and resources, tweeking pedagogy as they go. And that is before we move from the generic onto the specific, the subject domains, each undergoing its own process of revisionism and development as they must, justifying change along the way. For defending your subject in the battleground of choice is no easy task. Sexing up your subject, at school, at university, is part of the game. Enter 'curriculum' into twitter and you will see how widespread the industry is. And it is an industry.

Curricula should always be dynamic, subject to discussion and change. But the problem with the plethora of new theories, research, vocabulary and advances in neuroscience is that they feed into our current paradigm that is, itself, increasingly redundant. It is this paradigm, after all, that acts as a huge anchor on the imagination, an impediment to the transformative thinking that is necessary. We can liken the curriculum to a pond that is struggling for food and oxygen as more and more subjects and ideas are added (so many lessons a week; so many hours in the timetable, so many different demands, pressure, distraction), by seeing both as finite spaces. So at the very time that more and more is being asked of schools and teachers by the curriculum, the pond is being choked by blanket weed and algae that are slowly suffocating the life out of it.

In looking at where we are going with education, we need to abandon this model. We need to forget about its premise and content and ignore what we have always done, even the building blocks and subject domains. We need to stop tinkering with a model that is at the whim of political and societal expectation and accept it is redundant. And for many reasons that is not easy.

Forgetting what we know of education we should ask a single question, 'what is the best education we can give our children in the here and now? What do they need to know? What should they know? Forget subject domains. Forget topics and material that are taught because they've always been taught and schools have the resources and the qualified staff to teach them. Forget the cries of industry who call for the primacy of vocational skills; forget the classicists and historians who argue that only by understanding the events of the past can we plot our onward journey; forget

what we know of technology and traditional teaching pedagogy; forget grammaticians who argue for the terms children need to know for KS2; ignore the mathematicans who feel algrebra and calculus are necessary for all. Forget what schools look like and how they work. Ask that question 'What is the best education we can give our children in the here and now?' - and keep asking it. Put everything we think and know to one side and ask what are the skills and knowledge, the values and ideas children need, now, today? Forget about assessment which for too long has drained the life from learning. Forget the adversarial nature of education, the role society has given it, the way children and parents view it. Forget about the idea of university being the natural outcome, towards which schools are skewered; forget all that.

And ask instead not only what could be done to make our curriculum more relevant, more applicable to a world that is dynamic yet increasingly rootless. Maybe some for the change will not be so drastic, that some blocks will remain, perhaps even knowledge and skills like rote learning and tables, but only by asking (and then answering) the question will we know.

Everyone has something to say on education. There is much good work that is going on in educational research telling us more about how children learn that is crucial in shaping our understanding. But teachers are in danger of not knowing where to turn as the pressures of their job are compounded by ambiguities including to fundamental questions like 'what is it we are trying to achieve through education' and 'what is the appropriate pedagogy to deliver it?' Within the current paradigm, ways have been found to clean the pond and restock it, but it's still a pond. Perhaps a better analogy would be that of an ox-bow lake, left behind as the river has passed by with its different channels and meanders. We need to get out of the stagnant waters and back into the river to make our curriculum more dynamic. I have suggested some thoughts for a transitional stage in a previous blog, but as to what happens after that it is difficult to predict other than change is likely to be slow and laborious – which could be calamitous, not only for children, but for society. Nevertheless, predict and plan we must and turn our focus forwards, rather than holding true to the direction of travel taken so far. Self-interest, inertia, issues with funding will not be easily overcome. Nor will be the interests of an expansive and profitable education industry: the producers of teaching aids, books and resources; those who run conferences, sell CPD, organise subject associations, print journals and

whose opinions on social media hold undue sway. They are not just going to step aside unless they buy into in a new model. But they should pause, and take a step outside the pond, clear their heads and think more about what they are contributing to and whether they truly believe it is the best education we can provide. They will know that many of our children are not happy, nor are they always well-provided for in terms of choice. If we ignore the need for change, we will be guilty of sacrificing our them for a curriculum that has less and less relevance to them, that has built-in pressures and is driven by often irrelevant outcomes, a system that ignores their personal needs, their mental health and well-being and even the need of society for good citizens. We owe them more than that

1. The New Education

Phase One: The Next Five Years

It is almost impossible to summarise what a changed education landscape should look without writing a book on the subject - which is no way to debate something as dynamic and ever-changing as education. We are mired down by educational research, dealing with theory and practice, through book and conference, without any discussion as to whether we're operating in the right paradigm - and what follows below suggests not. It may be that every point is a provocation, but perhaps that is the point because if we don't get the debate moving along, and discussion fired up we will continue losing teachers and fail our children.

Hence a list of bullet points:

* The school day keeps its current shape

* A change is instigated in school culture: behaviour, aspiration, ethics, expectations.

* Children are taught to see the relevance of education –hence, ipso facto, it must be relevant

* Music and physical education, drama and fitness/ sport activities, including pilates, dance etc are offered at the start of day music

* Formal lessons of core subjects start at 10.00am

* No external assessment until 11

* Move away from selective education – some setting allowed within Years 11 – 13

* Gradual move away from GCSEs

* Use of external providers for remote learning to cater for a wide a range of interests and abilities as practicable (universities, vocational, freelance providers, sharing amongst schools)

* Obstacles, such as excessive accountability for pupils' performance, classroom disruption, loss of teachers addressed with more focus on classroom management and pedagogy.

* Gradual separation of societal and educative functions of schools (also be reflected in staffing)

* Blended education offered between internal and external providers in the afternoon sessions including arts, music, sports, languages (on-line classrooms), etc

* Staff to include teaching, tutors and facilitators with a commensurate reduction in the number of teacher assistants above Year 5

* Core subjects (especially English and Mathematics) stripped down to utility value, ie less focus on peripheral grammatical terms, (determiners, fronted adverbial phrases, ellipsis), less emphasis on written comprehension, text analysis, more on interpretation, writing skills, accuracy of written language, oral language; in Mathematics, less focus on algebra and calculus in KS 1 - 3, more on practical mathematical skills, tables, measurement, money.

* Significant curriculum change outside of the core subjects with less focus on teaching for assessment (more practical science, practical geography, ecology, more music, art)

* Main homework up to Year 5 should be reading (only other homework should be retentive work, spelling, languages, tables, formulae)

* Ethical underpinning of the curriculum - an understanding of the anthropocene, re-wilding, climate change, ecology and regeneration

* Absorption of History and Geography into Social Studies up until age 14 years

* A root and branch review of what a school should look like (including how to incorporate technology – and the mobile phone – into teaching

* An overhaul / reduction of PD / CPD and new terminology to provide a period of continuity with a focus on pedagogy.

* Focus on classroom management, growing expectations, improving engagement with a focus on relevance and ownership.

* Extra funding required, but schools should also work towards a reductionist approach to education to ensure the process of teaching and learning is not cluttered by distractions. Too often the tools used to deliver lessons get in the way.

* Less focus on cognitive load theory, knowledge rich curriculum, learning and retrieval practice, modes of assessment etc. We need to ignore the trimmings, go back to the core

* More focus on intellectual risk taking, innovation and problem solving.

* Homogenising of school types (grammar, state, independent)

* A re-evaluation of the impact the economic model and business aspect of schools is having on education

* In all things, schools need to visit and re-visit the central question: 'what is the best education we can give our children – here and now?'

This is to fuel discussion and debate. It can do little more. There will be glaring gaps so don't bother looking for they will be everywhere – for instance, there is nothing on careers, EYFS, phonics, pastoral care, vocational qualifications etc, (although they are covered in the debate on www.petertait.education). I am happy to footnote any points and to apologise for any serious omissions which will be both personal and numerous.