Contents (by most recent publication):

12.   Working Together

11.   Let's Have a Conference

10.   Why we need to talk about Integrity

9.   British Schools Abroad

8.   Social Mobility? Not on this watch

7.   Too Much Choice

6.   What being an Alumni from one of the Clarendon Schools really means

5.   Girls in Charge

4.   Where is our Moral Compass?

3.   The Arms Race

2.   Cheating? Who Wins?

1.   Letting Go

Changing the Paradigm: Education for an Ethical World
Leweston Lecture Autumn 2018

Te tīmatanga o te mātauranga ko te wahangū
Te wāhanga tuarua ko te whakarongo.

The first stage of learning is silence
The second stage is listening

Education is on the cusp of very significant change – no surprise at a time when society, capitalism, western democracy is in a state of flux, a period of the most rapid social and technological change ever, of increasing

environmental concerns about sustainability and climate change, of biological and genetic engineering and increasing social inequality. Stephen Hawking wrote of the inevitability of self-designing beings, a bio-hacked super race that will transcend our biological bodies - Yuri Noah Harari's 'Homo Deus' - and already we can see the impact of the application of technology in the field of medicine: pacemakers, artificial hips and knees, 3D body parts, the artificial pancreas, use of implants to administer electric pulses and drugs, robotics, data mining and medical imaging, and yesterday the world's first genetically edited baby. Everywhere, technology is driving change at a pace that is not allowing time for the ethical decisions that should accompany it. We watch on in wonder, unsure how to make sense of all the new knowledge and uncertain of how we can prepare for what is to come and prevaricate - and nowhere is this more evident than in our schools.

The fact that we have had the same model of education for over a century isn't in itself the need to change - change for change's sake is never a good idea – but society is facing challenges that make us question the traditional school model as old jobs disappear and new ones emerge with quite different skill sets, as old values are undermined by expediency and greed as the social and economic divide widens. Education should not be complicated, but like an old anchor it is covered in barnacles which are not easily prised away.

Our response must be through education, always, but education with a different premise, not predicated on a business model, but based on a human model values and societal need.
At the end of World War Two, the sum of human knowledge was doubling every 25 years; now it is every twelve months and soon to be every 12 hours so it is pertinent to ask and keep asking if we are teaching the right knowledge? I remember finding an old exercise book of my father from the early forties and seeing a lesson on ox-bow lakes and realising I was taught the same lesson, more or less and then taught the same lesson myself. Nothing against ox-bow lakes but we increasingly have to decide

what we should teach especially when knowledge is only a google search away.

At the same time, the role of schools has shifted from imparting knowledge to taking on board the societal responsibilities to provide social, emotional, pastoral and psychological care of children. Schools are now charged with educating children – young children - about sex, gender, modern slavery, terrorism, even as recently suggested, teaching young children to recognise the symptoms of cancer – subjects that were once the prerogative of parents and to be raised when they felt appropriate according to the emotional readiness of their child - and we wonder why we have created a generation more anxious, more worried than any generation before.

As changes wrought through technology continue to threaten great swathes of employment by requiring quite a different skill set from that predicated on academic achievement, we have to return to the question, what is education for?

The challenge facing education is that it is trapped in its own paradigm. Fuelled by binary debates about how we measure progress, about formative versus summative assessment, a knowledge rich curriculum versus a skills based curriculum and so on fed by an avaricious and self-serving education industry. There are literally thousands of education publications and educational consultancies, all with their own target markets, advising parents and schools, feeding into more than 400 education conferences held each year, funded by advertisers of everything from textbooks to laptops. It is a huge business dominated by vested interests –one of our examination boards Edexcel – is owned by the education publishers, Pearsons who publish a vast array of revision textbooks to supplement their courses - and usually dominated by funding issues and money. Change to curricula happens, albeit slowly, because, as teachers know, the cost of even changing one topic to another in one GCSE course depends on being able to resource it. But that should not be

the impediment to answering the pressing question, 'what is the best education we can give to our children?'

But in asking why we need to change, there are more fundamental reasons for a new paradigm. The crisis in society is not just because of the forces of change and technology, new knowledge and a changing job market, but something far deeper.

Helen Clark, the former New Zealand Prime Minister who led the United Nations Development Programme from 2009 to 2017 recently wrote "*In designing a curriculum, start with human values + a common moral code. Stress the importance of ethics, empathy + dangers of self-interest. If we look at what's wrong with our society, it's in our failure to replace traditional codes of family / church with anything meaningful.*"

When we look at changing our education system, we assume we start by changing the pedagogy, the curriculum, the school type, by tweaking the data we use and how we measure outcomes. But this is not where we should begin. Schools are a reflection of our values, our aspirations, our communities, our society. If we don't get the premise right, if we don't have the right moral principles and know <u>why </u>we are doing something we will be hi-jacked – as has been our education system – or caught in some bureaucratic inertia.

So what do we do – how do we change our traditional school system from a pyramid predicated on university where those that fall by the wayside aren't even mentioned. On the day that the 1.5 million students who sat A Level had their achievements splashed all over the media, where were the unheralded 3.8 million who did vocational courses or others who just survived through school, unrecognised and unrewarded, because the system did not measure their intelligence or talents? How do we get away from our focus on content that is dictating the pedagogy. As exam pressure mounts we see more tutorial centres being established creating what has been labeled a *'shadow education'* that is one operating outside of schools. We already have a huge tutoring industry with an estimated 24pc of pupils in England have used a tutor over the past year, with that figure rising to

40pc in London. The market is worth £6.5bn in the UK with 2.8 million pupils being tutored at any one time. *'And parents are going for it.'* Add to that an increase in home educated pupils up 27 per cent this past year, with many more likely to be *"hidden from sight"* and the drift towards what we call surface rather than embedded learning and we can start to see what a crisis looks like. It's a system that teaches us more about memorising than learning, more about status than impact, an industrialised system of education adhering to a taxonomy of subjects designed for a 20th century job market with only a trickle going to university. A system in which 20% of our students leave school functionally illiterate & innumerate and 64% of teachers last less than five years before quitting their jobs. This is what a crisis looks like. It is a system that was criticised by one of my past students who left her senior school with outstanding grades, but felt that school's focus on examinations and '. . . *on memorization, ticking boxes and ironing out children's idiosyncracies'* had left her deeply frustrated and concerned.

As we keep turning the screw there are other unexpected costs for which our education system must take some blame. We are in the midst of a mental health epidemic in all its manifestations of self-harming, of depression, of eating disorders and isolation often bound up with the unhealthy focus on self-esteem rather than self-worth. It is a war zone with the mobile phone on the front line. Meanwhile the constraints of the Ebacc on creative subjects and pressures resulting from a slimmed down curriculum are '*fast turning the UK into the most philistine nation in Europe'* . Since 2010 entries in Design and Technology have fallen by 154,000 (57%), whilst entries in Creative Subjects have fallen by over 77,000 (20%) with 2,600 fewer drama teachers & 2,100 fewer art & design teachers since 2010 – and this, at the very time we need creative people in our workforce. The same with the numbers learning European languages that have plummeted. Mary Myatt warns us that we will '*deprive our young people of intellectual, artistic and physical nourishment'* if we don't get our curriculum principles and planning right.

Why has this happened? In the first decade of the 21st century, we doubled expenditure on education from 40 billion to 80 billion & there were no tangible improvements.

Since then, we flat-lined. Why? Because we didn't have our priorities right. What we have is a school system based on exams whose purpose is put them in rank order for their various institutions, courses, careers. How sure are we that pushing all children through a system predicated on exams is what we should be doing? Increasingly many are not. About half of university admissions officers say they do not believe that students arrive "sufficiently prepared" for higher education, that they lack independent learning skills, are *'unable to remember facts'* and have 'a *'Google-it' mentality'* unable to even manage their own time or workloads.

Employers are saying much the same. That while exams may suit a cohort of well-taught, compliant, children, intelligence and employability are something else. Recent research from Google – a company which initially hired only brilliant computer scientists – revealed in January this year, the seven top characteristics of its most successful employees were soft skills: coaching, listening well, making connections with others to solve complex problems. Raw STEM ability (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) came last. Only two weeks ago, the Headmaster of Stowe School, Dr Anthony Wallersteiner wrote

"We're working with an exam system that is not much changed from Edwardian times. The truth is, making students sit alone at their desks does little to prepare them for a world where they will be working digitally, flexibly and collaboratively. Tomorrow's school leavers and graduates will require a range of skills, not just scores: over their careers, they are likely to have an average of 17 jobs in five different fields of employment. Core skills like mathematics, writing and science will remain key but modern employers demand new ones like collaboration, coding, digital literacy, fluency in languages, critical thinking, creativity and entrepreneurial skills. The most successful schools of the future will regard preparation for work as more important than preparing pupils for A-Levels and that 'schools need to address the needs of the so-called "phigital" generation who see no distinction between physical and online worlds and will enter a rapidly changing, largely digital workplace.'

He finished with a word of warning for schools that they could find themselves cut out of the education process altogether by impatient employers offering their own online courses. All of which is almost clichéd so often do we hear it, but that doesn't make it less true. As Anthony

Seldon noted *'To prosper in the new age future, our children must not behave like robots. They must not learn like robots. Not work like robots. The real robots will do all that.'* Yet my contention is that in designing a new paradigm of education we need to focus first and foremost, not in making good employees, but in making good citizens.

A new paradigm for education has to tackle the contentious subject of measurement that dominates our schools and strangles our teaching and learning and muffles our students. Another former pupil wrote of her time at her senior school *'I have vivid memories of beginning secondary school; I was shocked at how my new peers did not seem to have the same independence as me, both inside and outside the classroom. Not only did I ask more questions than them, but if I were to respond to a teacher's request or statement asking "why?" I was perceived to be both troublesome and a disturbance to the class.'*

We have to see education as something other than just loading and measuring, especially given the narrowness of what we are measuring - in other words, we need to redefine what success looks like. Wellington College attempted to broaden its teaching by focusing on the eight intelligences: personal and social, creative and physical, moral and spiritual, logical and linguistic. The irony, however, is that schools merely pay lip service to the first six and only concentrate on the last two which are the two most easily replicated by machines as algorithms and artificial intelligence are outperforming human beings on most aspects of logical and linguistic intelligence. (So) the very skills around which we have designed our schools and our exam system are the very ones that will be rendered redundant within the next twenty years. We need to find different ways of measuring children, those that have a gift in one subject, but are failed by their singularity of purpose, those who don't respond to our traditional ways of measurement, those whose time has not yet come, but need the chance. It was that well-known dyslexic, Albert Einstein who made the point when he wrote

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

Meanwhile, schools are struggling to make sense of it all. Gordonstoun has just released a report commissioned by Edinburgh University on 'Out of classroom learning experiences' OOCLEs that extols the benefits for education in the round and of the whole child. Other schools are extending their own offerings although they are inevitably drawn back into the bottleneck that are national qualifications. Until we change the way we measure children – a truly horrible phrase– we will continue to ignore their talents and compromise their futures.

Just as the digital revolution with its fusion of technologies is rapidly changing our world, it will also inevitably change our schools. Recently, the Chief economist of the Bank of England warned that we will need a skills revolution to avoid 'large swathes' of people becoming technologically unemployed' as AI makes jobs obsolete and create widespread hollowing out of the job market, rising inequality, social tension and many people struggling to make a living. But that is all dealing in the here and now, within the current paradigm.

Which is why we need a new paradigm. It's not just because what we have may not be fit for purpose or because technology is changing us or because our curriculum is redundant, all of which may be true, but because the premise is rotten.

Recently a story was doing the rounds on social media of three men who left a restaurant without paying. A few days later the restaurant owners received a letter containing the money due and a little extra with an explanation that they had left to find an ATM machine and then realised the last train was about to leave so were unable to do so.

What is remarkable about this story is that it is 'remarkable,' as if such behaviours, such actions, don't fit with what we now perceive to be normal. As such it highlights the place where society is, that when ethical behaviour occurs, it is seen as extraordinary.

When looking at writing a new framework for education, it is evident that this is the right place to start, not with content, nor skills, but with values and behaviours. After all,

the absence of any ethical framework, and the dearth of societal values, is evident in every walk of life. We can pick any profession: law, accountancy, the pharmaceutical industry, industrial farming, property development, sport, the Church - the list is almost as long as is the list of jobs. Stripped down, we don't take long to find examples of worker exploitation, cost fixing, drug taking, sexual abuse or putting profit above people by 'using' tax loopholes. There is no moral imperative at work. We saw it when the boil was exposed (if not properly lanced), with the behaviour of politicians, bankers, fund managers and venture capitalists, whose criminal actions and self-interest were exposed through the expenses scandal and the banking crisis. The fact that so few were held to account merely reinforces the impression that we are living in an ethical wild west, a view that hasn't changed since. Recently, the founder of the parent company of Cambridge Analytica, Nigel Oakes called for more regulation admitting that he operated for years '*without much of an ethical radar*', before going on to defend his decision by saying '*It's above my pay scale to decide the ethics of this.*' Not so. Ethics are beyond the contents of the purse and should apply to all of us at every level of society.

But the fault-lines go much deeper than this. The behaviour of the big four accountancy firms who earlier this year were accused by MPs of "*feasting on what was soon to become a carcass*" as it emerged they banked £72m for work linked to collapsed government contractor Carillion in the years leading up to its financial failure highlight the rotten underbelly in which everything was alright as long as it turned a profit. One time-tested way of doing so is to strip and ravage the environment and natural resources, preferably off-shore, by over-fishing, by the ruthless destruction of forests for palm oil to shore up UK pension funds, by dumping waste, the proliferation of off-shore tax havens, car manufacturers ignoring safety concerns to boost profit; over charging and failing to honour commitments by tradesmen, by professionals rounding up their hours; misusing expense accounts; misleading advertising; child labour; zero hours contracts; mis-selling; unpaid internships, currency fraud; tax optimisation and so on. '' It is frightening that 25% of UK employees still perceive corruption to be

widespread in their businesses and 42% believe their senior management would act unethically to help a business survive.

When Artemis, (self-titled as The Profit Hunters) boasted that their 'global hunters' spend their lives carving through the atlas for opportunities for profit, we need to understand that such companies are the product of our economic model and that any subsidiary interests or concerns, environmental or moral, are subsumed by the goal to maximize profits. Self-interest rules and it can come as no surprise then if you ask children what they want to be when they grow up that the most popular answer is rich and famous for that is the model they see every day. Is this what we want our children to aspire to? And where are ethics in all of this? Worse, where is it leading us as a society?

We need, somehow, to move the Titanic. The obsession of governments with GDP – gross domestic product - as a measure of economic activity is deeply flawed as is well-known, measuring both good and bad economic activity, from farming to drug dealing and gun running, but taking no account of voluntary work or raising a family, implicitly favouring built in obsolescence and having no truck with such green-tinged schemes as recycling. Having a philosophy that relies on endless growth with no ethical boundaries continues to undo us unless we can educate the next generation about sustainability and the ethical use of our planet and looking after each other. Simon Kuznets, Nobel Prize winner who developed the measure before the war, had quite different aspirations, intending GDP to measure economic welfare and well-being, (but being ignored in the post-war US-UK plans), mitigating against the unequal distribution of gains and ensuring we were not growing at the expense of our environment. We know from the role models all around us that if we are not on our guard we will be scammed, ripped off, tricked into signing up for deals we don't want, confronted by insurance scams, by subtle changes to bank rates, pension providers, by cold calling, unethical behaviour by fuel companies, car dealers, by mobile phone companies, by small print, by the very people we should be able to trust – professional people, our leaders of industry, bankers and politicians.

With the spread of fake news, nanotechnology and artificial intelligence, ethics takes on more importance than ever before.

The need to be able to make decisions that are not based on economic or personal self-interest is compelling. Waste, such as the amount of foodstuffs thrown out by supermarkets (over 200 000 tonnes each year) is simply unacceptable on a planet with so much poverty. Recently, the big food chains have made an effort to reduce waste, increase donations of food to food-banks and cooperatives by building up partnerships with local charities, but it is the tip of an iceberg that is founded on waste and obsolescence. Nor should we excuse the fashion label, Burberry who destroyed more than £28m worth of its fashion and cosmetic products over the past year to guard against counterfeiting or mail order companies that put returns into landfills. No waste is acceptable and even planned obsolescence, deemed good for economic activity, is short-sighted and harmful. We simply cannot afford to treat our planet and our society in this way any longer or allow government, acting in our name, to behave unethically (selling our waste to Thailand, investing in dodgy environmental areas, and selling arms to countries who ignore human rights. Which is why I am a trustee of the charity Operation Future Hope which looks to address such crucial issues as conservation, sustainability and the regenerative environment through education. And throughout, we need to keep asking the question: what are our ethics and are we, and those who represent us, acting in accordance with them?

Nor is education 'clean.' We have schools gaming the system by using different exam providers; or indulging in sharp practice in school recruitment through inducements and undercutting other schools; or setting up campuses abroad to bring money back to the UK; or stopping students moving into the 6th form or from sitting exams for fear that they will negatively affect league tables (more than 20% of teachers were aware of 'off-rolling' in schools they had taught in) - all common practice and all unethical. Plagiarism is at a level where schools now feel compelled to purchase software to identify it; while cheating, by students and teachers, has risen fuelled by the drip-down pressure of league tables. Essay mills, a business reputed to earn billions of pounds worldwide has resulted in some

50,000 students being caught cheating in the last three years alone. The recent de-valuing of academic entry to university even raises the question as to whether it is be 'ethical' to encourage students to pursue a university course simply because with lowered conditional offers, they will get in, in part due to the due to the <u>rapacity</u> of universities fighting for survival (and who themselves are acting unethically?) When are schools charities and when are they businesses? How many schools see overseas students as 'cash cows?' How ethical is selective schooling knowing that it produces winners and losers with all the consequent baggage? It should concern us, all of it. For when schools lose their moral compass and their understanding of what they are here for, then we are in a moral mire. Then those things that affect the individual: selfies and the narcissism and insecurity they engender, the epidemic of loneliness amongst the young, the closing down of communities, the loss of collegiality, a society that prizes acquisition above welfare. And on this frontline we have the mobile phone that is dominating our time and attention like no other single device in history as we check our phones every 12 minutes on average and spending between two to three hours connected each day. What is that doing to us and how do we manage it? And in the debate between self-esteem and self-respect, between self awareness and empathy, between self and community too often the emphasis is on looking after yourself and taking what you can, with self-interest and avarice its drivers. A wee bit colourful? Perhaps. But if we are to change society, and to equip the next generation to make the ethical decisions that will be required of them to manage technology, to look after the environment and to counter the atomisation of society through social media, we need to act. And where better than at the very start of our education system?

So how to change? How do we try to instil the importance of making good ethical decisions from a young age. How do we make children think of themselves as part of a whole? How do we embed kindness and empathy, appropriate behaviours, manners and attitudes conducive to making good citizens?

How do we move away from measurement to the immeasurable?   How do we move from values into ethics, that is moral principles that govern our behaviour, that demand we make judgments about good and bad, that we see our values in the effect that have on others, on our environment and on our communities?

This isn't an issue solely for schools, but for all of us. Children need role models and particularly parental guidance as they mimic the example, language, values and behaviours of their parents (think using mobiles). As adults, we need to be more environmentally conscious, more ethical in how we act , more charitable and more community minded – we know that. Schools, likewise should not just talk their values, but walk them in their corridors, in their classrooms and on their playing fields. The answers lie in early education and developing the right attitudes to learning, about identifying children with their larger community and by encouraging them to look outwards, not inwards, to understand and look after their classmates, their community and their environment and all who inhabit it. The value of service to fulfilled lives. And this generation are up for it. They want change and they are right to question those who tell them otherwise. That's why we go back to the <u>why </u>question. Why do we teach what we do? This week Stephen Tierney argued that the debate over the *"real substance of education"* was not about having a broad and balanced curriculum or having a well-conceived set of standardised and externally assessed examinations *but "a life well lived."* He's right of course, but I fear it is a little harder for Ofsted to measure.

There are a few green shoots: the announcement of the head of Ofsted to downplay academic grades in favour of character development; the announcement by the Singapore government that from next year, exams for primary years up to age 8 years will be abolished in a series of changes aimed at discouraging comparisons between student performance.

+ So what will this new paradigm look like? How do we engender third world attitudes into first world countries.

How do we grow an education system predicated on citizenship and values rather than one driven by measurement or GDP or academic qualifications that apply to the few. How can we get cross-party consensus to give education more autonomy from political interference? How can we get governments and communities to prioritise education? How do we convince the many vested interests involved in education that change is necessary? And how do we ensure we are giving children what is required to develop and live fulfilled lives in the future?

All big questions and I suggest it is by returning to the question I asked at the start, the one I always ask: 'What is the best education we can give to our children?'   and then work out we go about it? Which is at the heart of the new paradigm.

In writing a curriculum for the first years of school, I started with four key attitudes: first, the idea of being part of a group of moving the me out of the middle of the circle and establishing the sense of belonging is so important, by extolling mutual benefit, of service and charity, of tolerance and kindness; second, of learning to have a respect for the environment and the world we live in sustainability, climate change, conservation ; third, of understanding the joy of learning, of being creative and the desire for knowledge and understanding being something they want to do rather than have to do so they grow up accepting that education is both a privilege and a joy, but also a constant in their lives, noting also the advice of Dr Tomas Ellegard that *'there is a lot of research that suggests if you want a more academic child, start academia later"*
And last, the right attitudes to self – health, well-being, fitness, understanding yourself, growing self-respect through words and actions, developing the creativity and sense of purpose to do things for a purpose.

We already know that schools take on many different roles and functions for their communities. Inevitably, as Simon Noakes observed, *''Schools will evolve into social spaces for human interaction''* –not defined by walls and buildings where education will be delivered in communities by a wide

variety of providers. Hence, while many parents might see the first function of school to get their children out of the house and with their peers for an extended part of each day - and that is important, schools will take on an ever wider brief, where pastoral and social care, health and well-being are minded; and where through a marriage of the curricular and co-curricular, of vocational and incidental education, schools will become more relevant to the society they serve. More and more, education provision will be accessed from homes as well as schools, from tutorial centres and universities. At the same time, the new players: google, amazon and Apple will seek to become new education providers, rivalling government and independent providers. There is a difference between e-learning and screen time however, and we recognise that technology is a huge social experiment on children and that according to a recent report by Nellie Bowles in the <u>New Yorker</u>, persuasive psychologists working for tech companies, such as Apple and Google, '*compete ferociously to get products into schools and target students at an early age, when brand loyalty begin to form.*' She goes on to describe these tools as '*phenomenally addictive*' designed by psychologists '*well-versed in the field of persuasive design*' that is influencing human behaviour through the screen. We should pause to consider why schools in Silicon valley are limiting or banning technology in some of their schools while child care contracts demand that nannies hide phones, tablets, computers and TVs from their charges. Or as Katharine Birbalsingh Head of Michaela Community School tweeted rathermore forcefully*: "I say this to parents at school. The fat cats make their billions off giving your children the latest tech gadget while they fill their houses with books".*

Yet while some things may change, others may stay the same. We need to root out some of the ideas that have been allowed to creep into education, even the constant changes in language, theory and terminology, so that topics become unintelligible to parents – I'm thinking of new methods of maths or such grammatical terms such as causal connectives and fronted adverbials now required for SATs - or perhaps confusion is the intention? Of all the schools I have taught in and teachers and methods I have seen, when it comes to teaching children to read, to learn their tables, spelling

and writing, nothing has compared to the rigorous and yet sensitive teaching by an exceptional teacher in the first school I ever taught at with its emphasis on practice, on developing memory, on repetition, on high expectations. She worked wonders with children who we would now label as having severe learning difficulties and by ignoring the difficulties, transcended them. Children came out of her class with the rudiments in place, with a standard of work that constantly surprised them and a self-discipline and pride that stayed with them. It is proven that direct instruction has consistent, positive effects on student achievement. While we need to change <u>what</u> and <u>how</u> we teach, discipline and rigor will remain at the heart of learning, aided and abetted by high expectations and a sense of purpose.

In the short-term we need to do away with league tables and find academic alternatives to A Levels - T Levels with teeth –and develop our vocational offering. We need to recognise that measuring and ranking students on applied intelligence to a prescribed body of knowledge is the antithesis of the fluid and flexible education our children will need in the future.

We hear so much about AI and technology, yet there has been no greater waste of resources and time over the past twenty years than the amounts schools have spent on technology - and this is unlikely to stop soon although education is the most resistant fortress of all. We know technology can embellish lessons and add to the learning experience, mill knowledge banks and gives lessons greater applicability and relevance through virtual or augmented reality. Yet for every teacher who uses it well, there are as more for whom it is a distraction, something that gets between the teacher and the learner. But change is coming as recently signalled by universities who will no longer accept hand written exams, by an increase in collaboration through cloud computing, the rise of the autonomous learner, coding and multiple learning stations,. . The state of Utah has been rolling out a <u>state-funded online-only preschool</u>, now serving around <u>10,000 children</u>.   It's happening and we should be wary. What would be more helpful would be for algorithms to allow teachers more time to teach – that is rather than being a teaching tool creating different ways to teach that they will allow more time to teach, so schools are not

tied to producing copious amounts of data and policy. With the large number of policies required to be on school websites - and for parents who don't know, most schools even have a policy on policies, the human resources of a school are under ever increasing pressure. If new algorithms can help schools to manage admissions, policies, data accumulation, reporting, with pastoral care and record keeping, then teachers will be able to get on with their teaching.

Second, as teacher shortages grow, we need to look at what alternatives there are to our traditional methods of delivery. In many countries correspondence courses have been around for half a century or more. University degrees through distance learning, and now e-learning, and links to lectures through you-tube courses are commonplace. Yet it seems incredible that we are not utilised e-learning in all schools with e-learning will be the heart of our provision delivering a broad curriculum. This may involve subtle changes in the role of teachers so they take on a role akin to that of a tutor, but that is happening already. There are a number of learning platforms driven by algorithms that promote personalized learning by analyzing students work, pinpointing gaps in their knowledge, providing precision reporting and insights into the student's learning style and identifying specific abilities and areas to improve. In the future, the ability to measure ability by sophisticated algorithms will likely be the death of exams as we know them.

We will need to cut back on content to allow for other learning, of skills and the means to access new knowledge. Traditional subjects will be assessed for the relevance of content. New subjects like sustainability, a hybrid of economics, philosophy and geography will emerge; old topics like trigonometry and glaciation will be marginalised while some subjects may be cast out altogether. Traditional subjects may not change although as in the case of History, we may decide to distinguish between the history that explains where our country is today in relation to the countries we connect with and the history that centres on our island's narrative and extolling the national mythology. Economics should take in to account the Resilience doughnut so we start to measure economic activity by assessing the cost of

its effect on diversity and the environment for we need to educate our young about the environmental ceiling that consists of nine planetary boundaries, as set out by Rockstrom et al, beyond which lies unacceptable environmental degradation and potential tipping points in Earth systems. Mathematics and the Sciences will need to constantly trawl their content to update and incorporate new knowledge. And we will need to be more flexible, ready to embrace change cautiously and always without compromise, by revisiting our question, *'what is the best education we can give our children?*

Taking into account what we know of adolescence and sleep, it may be that schools will still start at 8.30 am as they must, albeit not for learning purposes, with the first 90 minutes given over to creative arts or physical activity. Core teaching time could be restricted for no more than three hours: 10.00am to 1.00pm, with its focus on the effectiveness of engagement. In the afternoon, there may be a hybrid approach of some traditional classes delivered in classrooms augmented by a wide range of subjects available on on-line platforms including academic and vocational training depending on age. Extra-curricular should be brought inside the walls; outside of the core subjects, diversity, personalised learning will become the norm as the model evolves. And evolve it must.

There would be an emphasis on creative arts and the skills that are required for this new world – music, art, design, drama, coding – and an emphasis on imagination and enquiry in all subjects. And languages, we must encourage languages, even more so as we slip out of Europe. A new survey last week found that half of young people feel that their education has not prepared them for the world of work' – which is why we have to change the paradigm to provide the diversity and flexibility and skills required. As a counterweight, we need also to blush when we hear the label the snowflake generation for this is something we have created. Young adults, in turn, wll need to learn to be patient in their ambition, more flexible, prepared to spend time to learn, to understand the importance of loyalty,

service and hard work and personal sacrifice in a quest not to make money, but to make a difference. Even if we haven't told them so, at least not yet To achieve this, we need to make sure that education reflects our beliefs and values as a society. This is the <u>why</u> to which we return, the ethical premise and the values, behaviours and attitudes which underpin our lives. At present, we are playing catch up at the very time the glaciers are melting and technology is taking us on a white water ride. Our moral principles have been compromised by not being explicit enough and this has allowed big business to ride roughshod over the environment. With climate change and conservation marginalized by those whose profits are affected and who therefore have no truck with those who fight for environmental change and for regeneration. This is why we need a new paradigm: it is not just about integrating technology or changing a curriculum, integrating new skills or growing emotional intelligence. It is also about fighting for our future by providing our children with an ethical framework on which to build a sustainable society for the future and to give purpose and direction to their lives.

Living On-Line: Are Tech Luddites Right to Worry?

"The average person in the UK spends more than a day a week online." Ofcom Report, 2018

 "I am convinced the devil lives in our phones and is wreaking havoc on our children." Athena Chavarria, Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, former Facebook executive

"It is literally neurobiologically impossible to think deeply about things that you don't care about". If we genuinely want pupils to learn in school then we need to connect with the things they think are important – and mobile phones certainly fit that bill! "   Mary Immordino-Yang, Neuroscientist

It is hard to overstate the fear reverberating amongst many parents by recent revelations of the damage social media and the mobile phone are doing to our children. The evidence for harm is everywhere, both in the menace of cyberbullying, sexting and isolation, but also more worryingly in the biological effects of screen addiction that can lead to brain tumours or to damaged brains through premature thinning of the cerebral cortex. Add to this toxic mix, the rumours that some of the leading manufacturers of this invasive technology are withdrawing their own children from over exposure to the net while schools are struggling to control it, then we can understand why parents are feeling so concerned.

The statistics make frightening reading. Sixteen to twenty four year olds now average over 34 hours a week on the web, a figure that has grown significantly since the ubiquitious i-phone first appeared in 2007. It is not just youth that are affected, however: it is an epidemic of frightening dimensions it affects all of us, with each person, on average, checking our smartphones every twelve minutes. By mimicking their parents' behaviour with i-phones, children soon find their own virtual worlds and uses for the technology and become addicted to social media sites that parents feel can take over their lives.

It is not surprising, therefore, that in California parents are forming groups with one thing in mind: how to get their children away from their screens to counter leading brands like Apple and Google who employ psychologists to make tools highly addictive through persuasive design so as to embed brand loyalty amongst the very young.

The issue is most keenly felt in schools where the effects of addiction accompanied by falling levels of concentration and disruption are causing significant social issues although how much technology affects either sleep patterns or concentration is still debated. Meanwhile, many schools have banned use of the mobile phone outright or have severely restricted its use. A Priory poll of 1,000 parent of children aged 10 to 18 found 92 per cent of parents believed social media and the internet was having a negative impact on the mental health of young people, with 50 per cent blaming it for cyber-bullying, 43 per cent for disrupted sleep and 41 per cent for

lowering self-esteem. What was evident was that parents felt they lacked the authority to impose any controls and were therefore turning to government to legislate an appropriate age for the use of smartphones (44 per cent supported a ban on children under 16). All of which is really a case of closing the barn door after the horse has bolted, with almost 40 per cent of 8-to-11 year-olds already having a smart phone.

While their concerns are understandable, and indeed banning in some settings may be necessary for a time, it is not a sustainable long-term solution. Peter Twining, Professor of Education at the Open University, has put forward various reasons why phones should not be banned in schools: because they were more than phones, with many useful functions, as dictionaries, atlases and encyclopedias while providing each owner with a relatively expensive and powerful research tool. This is especially pertinent at a time when schools are struggling to balance their budgets. Rather than swimming against the tide, it makes sense therefore, for the focus in schools to be on education, through teaching students how to manage the use of technology, rather than banning it. Listening to the young helps also and many have spoken out to say that the problem is one of adults not understanding that the world has changed and that they live with the new technology in a way their parents cannot comprehend. Mobile phones are an integral part of life although schools and parents are right to question their impact on physical and mental health which is why the debate is so complex and has little possibility of any consensus – think 'Brexit'!.

While many families try to manage technology by removing it from their children's reach or pretending it doesn't exist, we cannot afford to become tech luddites. We are right to put controls in place until technology firms enable schools to make use of children's hardware in a more responsible and safe way – and that time is not yet. For schools and parents, educating children about ethics, social responsibility hand in hand with technology is the way forward so that children can become masters of new technology, not its servants. The more we give over to technology, the more valuable is our humanity – and that is where we should turn our attention.

Parents on Education

'The most influential of all educational factors is the conversation in a child's home ' William Temple

In the 2nd Ofsted Report that came out in November, 2018, the Head of Ofsted, Amanda Spielman issued a stern admonishment to parents for abdicating many of their responsibilities and expecting teachers and schools to pick up the pieces. At the heart of her message was an exhortation to parents to stop trying to be their children's best friends, but instead to start acting as parents by taking more responsibility for their children's upbringing and behaviour. Naturally it wasn't popular with parents who, once again, felt put upon, but the advice did resonate with many teachers who have seen their teaching role swamped by growing issues of social care and neglect.

It was interesting, therefore, to read more recently in ParentKind's Annual Parent Survey that 77% of parents would like to have more influence in their children's schooling. Admirable as was sentiment, the question left hanging in the air was just what was meant by 'influence'. While the survey identified four main areas that parents wanted more involvement in: curriculum, pupil behaviour; homework and budgets / school costs, one suspects that their requests are quite different from what schools would like parents to do to help their children's education and well-being.

In looking to identify what are the big issues – the tipping points – that influence their child's education, almost all begin at home.
Getting adequate sleep is one, often neglected, while ensuring that children have an adequate and suitable diet another (after all, it's hard to blame schools when almost a quarter of children in England start school already overweight or obese). Ensuring that children get enough exercise

and are involved in out of class activities and in their local communities, through clubs and sports groups is another. From the very outset, Spielman suggests parents must ensure children are ready for school, including being toilet trained and know how to keep themselves safe and clean.

In terms of intellectual development, reading to children is probably THE most beneficial aid to education progress while limiting of screen time is the new challenge – again, clear rules need to be laid down (no screens in bedrooms, at meal tables etc). For such rules tohave teeth, it is crucial that the parents are role models and walk the talk – the best parameters come out of round the table discussions when all agree what is acceptable or not, especially for mobile phones.

As children get older, parents need to know where their children are when not at school and who they are associating with, including on-line, and particularly at a time when knife crime is on the rise. Most important, parents need to set aside quality time with their children and enjoy the parent / child relationship that is built on communication and respect whether going to the local museum, nurturing shared family interests or kicking a ball around at the park.

Finally, parents needs to support their children's teachers and schools in the job they do and acknowledge their own responsibilities as role models, knowing that their language, behaviours and attitudes will be mirrored in the way their children will act and talk. If teachers are going to be the subject of critical comment at home, then don't expect your child to respect the teacher at school – so choose your words carefully.

Of course, I suspect none of this may what parents mean when they say they want to influence their children's schooling; yet indubitably, this is where they can have the most influence. And if they are really concerned about doing the best thing for their child, then the place to start is in the home – preferably before the age of four. While it might not seem to be that important, the difference it would make if children arrived at school

well-nourished, healthy, having had a good night's sleep and keen to learn would be immeasurable and welcomed by teachers everywhere.

Profit or Planet - our Choice

"Surely we have a responsibility to leave for future generations a planet that is healthy and habitable by all species" Sir David Attenborough

"Students need to learn what moral systems are so that they understand what makes a good society." Charles Saylan Executive Director of Ocean Conservation Society and writer of 'The Failure of Environmental Education'

Over recent years we have witnessed a quiet revolution in our schools by getting more and more children to engage with nature and the great outdoors. Many schools now have their forest schools or nature reserves which have contributed to their wider development. Teachers are more aware of environmental issues and have included them as the subject of debates and school talks. Biology and Geography, in particular, have included more conservation and environmental issues in their teaching and schools have increased the number of vegetable patches, wildflower areas, greenhouses, ponds and set up very successful recycling schemes. The Green Flag programme, the Sustainable Schools Alliance, Eco schools , even the BSA scheme to plant a tree at every boarding school help, as do in-house projects to collect waste plastic and reduce energy and our carbon footprint. We now have an army of motivated eco-warriors who have responded with the energy and optimism of youth to calls to save their planet without being given the scientific knowledge to really understand what is happening.

It is the adult world in which sustainability is seen as a throw back to the hippie counterculture or an encroachment on free market forces that has let them down. Economics, for instance, is still being taught without an acknowledgement of the effects on the environment in which we work, including the ozone layer, biodiversity loss, ocean acidification - the doughnut of social and planetary boundaries that will revolutionise the way we teach; and while Geography in senior schools at least has expanded its curriculum to take on more environmental studies and the importance of sustainability, at the age when we should be developing the habit and

culture of learning about the environment, at KS 1 – KS3 there is no explicit content in the curriculum to address such shortcomings. For too long, conservation and environmental issues like climate change have been the preserve of fringe groups and activists and yet unless we put the topics at the centre of the curriculum, nothing will change. Walking round schools you will see brilliant work that pupils are doing on the environment. The will and interest are clearly there on the part of the children, but attitudes and teaching about sustainability and conservation needs to be embedded into schools and the school curriculum, not left on the periphery, reliant on the interest that may – or may not – be shown by members of staff. What is the point of teaching about glaciation if glaciers are disappearing? Or species that will be extinct before they become the subject of an examination? Or our oceans unless we preserve them? It is the challenges of the environment and sustainability that is occupying us and this should be reflected in our curriculum.

Make no mistake, this young generation are brilliant at seeing the importance of recycling and conservation, and I suspect they are leading their parents at home in regards ethical behaviour about waste and conservation. Parents, of course, can be the best (or worst) role models for their own children and can do a great deal by talking up recycling, the joy of growing their vegetables and introducing their children to nature. There are so many exciting things that you can do with your children at home, including recycling clothes and toys, growing flowers and vegetables, experimenting with insulation, generating power (solar panels and wind power), reducing electricity / oil / gas usage, conserving water; even helping with grocery shopping, a task fraught with danger from avaricious front shop counters, is worth the risk as is getting them involved in reading the fine print on packaging, or in the palm oil debate and the dialogue on climate change. There is also scope for children to use their own technology if they are still interested in such things, to identify trees and flowers, take surveys or photographic records or to set up their own studies, if they have the right sort of encouragement.

Many of these tasks will have their own intrinsic benefits at home, especially if the family fuel bill falls, but more important they will galvanise children and pique their interest in the wider world and even turn them into responsible citizens who see all animals as sentient beings inhabiting an inter-dependent world.

It is the schools, however, that need to take the lead, in regards the imparting of empirical knowledge and for planting the seed. Sustainability and conservation have to be prescribed and become an implicit part of the education to have any lasting success. Children are great in joining in with research and such organisations as the Institute for Research in Schools (IRIS) are involving some of our children in cutting edge research on earth observations and our carbon footprint, but we cannot just rely on a few teachers who may be committed to such issues in every school. The curriculum needs to change in order to avert a growing crisis on land and in our oceans, to reverse the rate of extinction and reduce man-made pollution – that is our challenge.

This is no easy task. At a time when children are being pushed through hoops, defined by the data they have generated in their short lives, conservation, environmentalism, sustainability remain a bolt-on, dealt with effectively enough in clubs, assemblies and talks, but not placed at the heart of learning. We need to look at how we can influence the curriculum at a very young age so that the ethics of one of the most important issues facing this planet underpins the knowledge that follows.

In the south-west I have been involved in the setting up of a new charity www.operationfuturehope which has been established with the primary goal of educating our children about conservation and environmental issues. The website provides a stark reminder of the threats facing our planet, but also provides ways for schools to help young people address them. For we cannot ignore the threats facing our planet any longer.

Attain Magazine September, 2018

Spending Time

'They say we are better educated than our parents' generation. What they mean is that we go to school longer. They are not the same thing.' Douglas Yates

'If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it'
Rudyard Kipling

'Time is the coin of your life. Be careful how you spend it or   others will spend it for you'

In the poem 'If', (voted by the Nation as its favourite poem), Rudyard Kipling * offers us some succinct advice on how to use time. At a first reading, *'filling every minute with sixty seconds run'* seems rather excessive, but the question of how we use time is probably the most important decision we make, day on day. I don't think for a minute that Kipling meant us to keep constantly busy (an assumption, I know, from this prolific writer), but that we value time and don't waste it. Working intensively on anything, determined or incidental, is not to waste time, for the learning is often in the application; nor is relaxing with a book or tracking a passing cloud. Invariably the biggest waste of time comes from trying to multi-task with the result that nothing is completed satisfactorily.

In education, the debate over how we use time usually translates into the question of how many hours, days, weeks children need to spend at school: how much learning and teaching time is enough and what is the optimum time children should spend at school –not the same thing. It is a complex issue with the loudest respondents being parents who have to negotiate child care, finances and work commitments to provide cover for their children - and who have plenty to say on why teachers don't need such protracted holidays on the side.

When we look at how our schools compare with countries where children don't start formal learning until age six, we should be asking questions. This was brought home to me when I found that our grandson, aged four, had a longer school day than our 16 year old neice in Australia. The whole debate about longer school days and shorter holidays gets even more muddled, however, when we consider the increasing social and child-care function of schools and, if we must, exam results as well, which brings into play other factors that determine academic performance: school type, socio-economic grouping, family, work habits, tutoring, quality of teaching and resources. Yet even considering all these variables, the general consensus of government and educators is still for more of the same, and for longer. By turning school into an endurance test and equating time spent at school with outcomes, we invariably confuse the quality of time with the quantity – and therein lies the rub. Learning to use time effectively (including discretionary time) is one of the most important lessons we can give our children.

Yet how often are we told there is not enough time for something to be done or that the task (whatever it is) cannot be done when all that is needed is for more effort to be made or better use made of the hours available? Something that needs to be done in a week instead of a fortnight can usually be achieved if the effort is doubled, if a little 'can do' philosophy is applied – the idea that if you want something done, give it to a busy person. To get a job done, commitments may need to be reprioritised and time and resources re-deployed, but if the attitude is right then we shouldn't be deeming the possible, impossible, the time insufficient.

This lesson can be applied directly to education. In education, we should reconsider the amount of time children spend on 'primary' learning. Personally, would think that a maximum pf three and a half hours a day of focused learning is sufficient. Of course, there are caveats, the main one being that there needs to be an accord and shared sense of purpose and a positive attitude and shared sense of commitment between teachers and students. This is still probably more learning time than many schools achieve in a whole day where lessons are constantly interrupted or are reduced to exercises in classroom management. In the same way, we shouldn't make the mistake of measuring learning by the amount of content taught, an approach implicit in the current emphasis on content rich curricula (contrary to Yuri Haval Harari suggesting that '*most of what we teach children in schools is irrelevant'*); instead, let's be real about what children need to learn and then (because we have to) what they need to learn to pass an exam – there is a difference!

The rest of a school day could be given over to secondary learning, probably via e-learning in which tutor groups to help guide and facilitate learning, or cultural and physical activities. These need be no less rigorous, but as they will be more aligned to the students' own interests, may be practical or investigative or be delivered by an external provider (e-learning), motivation should be less of an issue. We are more likely to get more out of students if they know they have some discretion over their learning and, more important, invest in it.

Of course, there are few areas of learning where time use is so poor as in the setting of homework, where children are often cajoled against their will to work under supervision of reluctant parents to produce something set

by teacherswho sahre the sense that it is a waste of time and just something else to mark. Not all homework is like this, of course, especially as students get older and the measure should be on whether it represents an effective use of time. I always advocated at primary level, apart from some very short and specific memory work (tables, vocabulary, spelling words etc) that children should just be encouraged to read, and preferably not off a tablet. The reality is that, even at senior level, prep has often been more about filling time in an exercise teachers, parents and pupils dislike in equal part. Trying to force tired and reluctant children to do meaningless worksheets or some project work is not only futile, but can also serves to reinforce a negative attitude to learning in the round.

In looking at workloads, attitude is all-important especially in the elasticity of time with its ability to stretch or contract according to need it. As a Head I remember being asked by a sports coach if could have an extra sports practice each week. My immediate considerations was to ask if the time they already had was well-used, i.e. was everyone punctual, knew what they were doing and kept actively involved. The same in class: I would much sooner the pupils had well- planned and stimulating lessons and are completely focused rather than a tired and flabby diet of extra lessons and meaningless preps.

Of all the time children have at school, the most important is free time and the most important lesson, deciding how to use it (acknowledging that many schools still believe *'the devil makes work for idle hands'* as their justification for filling the days with extra activities. A better definition is that noted at the outset, of treating time as a coin to spend, a lesson which is applicable to all of us. It is a sad truth that too many parents and schools are scared to give children the coin and would rather spend it for them. Yet of all the lessons children need to learn, managing their own time is one of the most important. And they can only do that when they are trusted with the coin.

* Despite being tainted by the anti-empire virus spread by neo-liberal commentators and indignant university students

Positive Psychology and Positive Education: The Passmores Experience

What would persuade eighteen members of staff to undertake four days of vigorous training in the first fortnight of a new school year? That was what I asked myself when I joined the group from Passmores Academy for the final two days of their training as a SEPPT (Self-Evolving Positive Psychology Team) in late September. Clearly, they were all looking for some means to make them more effective in their role as teachers by improving their own resilience and that of their students. The question was whether they would find the answers they wanted in Positive Psychology.

It was not difficult to understand their motivation. There is currently a crisis in our schools with the retention of staff which highlights the difficult conditions that teachers operate under, especially in areas of social and economic deprivation. Even though Passmores has an excellent record of staff retention, teachers are increasingly compromised by the emotional and physical demands being placed upon them. Add to this, the failure to cater for marginalised students– at Passmores, white working class boys - the course seemed a risk worth taking. The training to be delivered by Inner Armour Psychology promised to equip them with the requisite knowledge and coaching skills to make them more resilient and self-aware and to be able to impart the same knowledge to students. The question was 'would it deliver?' The answer after four days was a resounding yes – and moreover, a belief that it would change the lives of the teachers and children at the School.

Positive Psychology is an umbrella term for work 'that investigates happiness, wellbeing, human strengths, and flourishing.' (Gable and Haidt, 2005). What distinguishes it from well-being or mindfulness is the rigour and science that underpins it and the demands it places on those who practise it. Its application in schools through Positive Education aims at building greater resilience, an ability to cope with pastoral concerns and to address issues of mental health. An immediate and far reaching benefit, however, is in helping staff to be better able to do their job, through the knowledge and tools provided, the coaching sessions and the use of positive psychological interventions (PPIs). All who participated in the SEPPT agreed that by taking a more proactive approach to mental illness, the school was better equipped to anticipate psychological distress and mental illness in their students and therefore help them through any issues or trauma.

The importance of Positive Psychology has increased with the renewed focus on the well-being and happiness. Anthony Seldon led the response to growing mental health issues with his pioneering work on happiness and well-being at Wellington College and most schools now have similar strands in their pastoral care programme. What is different with Positive Psychology is that it offers something more robust, more grounded in science, designed to prevent the incidence of mental illness through its training, coaching and interventions.

For the two days I attended, the content was demanding, focusing on such diverse yet complementary topics as self-regulation, stressors, values in action, the importance of belonging and ritual, coping strategies, dealing with stress, values and ethics and resilience. It was the coaching sessions that set the programme apart, however, and the use of interventions. This was positive psychology at its most raw which challenged a number of staff and elicited the most significant results.

From the outset, I was struck by the openness and engagement of the staff, (the fact that all had done their follow up work from the previous week was impressive enough), particularly as several admitted that before commencing the course, they were cynical about anything to do with psychology, citing the bevy of 'mental health' professional development courses they had attended that had promised much, but delivered little other than "fluff'. The course didn't disappoint and the impact was summed up by one convert who admitted 'I was sceptical about SEPPT. Now I am completely inspired to put this into practice.'

My first hours were spent observing a coaching session in which a teacher shared his response to the bereavement of a close family member: to build a wall around him which he now saw was worthless. But through the coaching he realised he could now rebuild the wall with proper values and safety valves. He was not alone. Others shared issues to do with the juggling of work and home and the myriad pressures teachers face in the workplace through the demands of the job, a lack of funding and the effects of the waning influence of family and community.

Over the next twelve months the Academy will continue working with Inner Armour. Natalie Christie, Co-Principal confirmed that "The School is committed to the principles of positive psychology" and sees the journey

they have begun as 'life transforming' and that the investment being made in staff would cascade down to the children. As one of the first state schools in the UK to embrace positive psychology in education, they take their role seriously in wanting to include Positive Psychology in every teacher's training course and for every teacher in schools.

Much of what we now understand by positive psychology stems from the work of Professor Martin Seligman from the University of Pennsylvania who designed a whole-school programme with Geelong Grammar School in Australia. This involved applying positive psychology to education which led to the creation of the Positive Education programme, with its dual purpose of 'feeling good and doing good'.

Since adopting positive education as the bedrock of their pastoral programme ten years ago, Geelong Grammar School has applied positive education across all aspects of school life: academic, pastoral and co-curricular as well as explicit instruction in years 7 and 10. The Headmaster during the time of the programme's implementation, Stephen Meek, is an unashamed advocate for positive education and says,   'I have no doubt at all that at the basic level, the school has raised the profile of wellbeing for all its students. They now have a greater understanding of the significance of wellbeing – and how it can determine so much about the quality of their lives.'

One other significant moment during the training was a tweet from Professor Lea Waters, (Founding Director of Positive Psychology Centre at the University of Melbourne) suggesting 'It would be wonderful to have a presentation on Positive Education in United Kingdom state schools' The staff at Passmores is fired with a missionary zeal and is intending to take up the challenge with two staff members set to attend the 6th World Conference on Positive Psychology in Melbourne next July to present papers on improving staff and student mental health and becoming psychologically empowered as teachers. They mean business.

What I do know from spending time in the SEPPT and with the staff at Passmores is that the course profoundly touched all of those who attended. Yes, there are challenges, foremost of those being to win over all staff members and then to impart the lessons to the children to grow their resilience. But what I heard over the two days made me realise how much we carry about in our heads that stops us doing what we need to do and

being who we want to be. Even if the benefits went no further than better equipping teachers to cope, it had huge merit, but it offers so much more. Yes, it is only the beginning of a journey as summed up by one teacher at the end of the penultimate day : 'I know what I need to do, but not sure how to do it'. That is what the school is now working on, to realise the skills and knowledge they have acquired in building up a programme of intervention and school-wide training.

Some observations at the end of the course were profound: One commented "They made me realise things I didn't realise"; another talked about how they left the SEPPT feeling uplifted and empowered with the tools to counter the epidemic of mental health issues.

My over-riding impression was of the sense of purpose and the trust and openness the participants showed each other. Like several of the group, Vic Goddard described himself at the outset as a cynic about 'the happy-clappy bandwagon of courses on happiness and well-being', but soon saw that instead of just 'fixing broken things', there was an opportunity for the School to make a significant change in the way it treats mental health through early interventions.

The programme at the School is in good hands. Led by Nat Christie and Steph Hill, Associate Assistant Principal, various initiatives have already been identified including assessing character strengths, trialling the use of coaching and random acts of kindness. Watch this space.

I came to Harlow needing to be convinced. I was. And when one teacher commented to the whole group "From the bottom of my heart, this will change my life and if it changes my life, it will change the lives of kids" - who would not be excited and want to try it?

'We're born alone, we live alone, we die alone. Only through our love and friendship can we create the illusion for the moment that we're not alone' Orson Welles

'The most stunning change for adolescents today is their aloneness. The adolescents of the 90s are more isolated and more unsupervised than their predecessors . . . not because they come from parents who don't care, or from a community that doesn't value them, but rather because there hasn't been enough time for adults to lead them through the process of growing up.' A Tribe Apart Patricia Hersch

One of the defining characteristics of the modern age, and particularly the age of the internet is the prevalence of loneliness. In a recent survey undertaken by the Red Cross and Co-op, over 9 million people in the UK

admitted they were always or often lonely, 1.2 million of whom are chronically lonely. It is a staggering statistic. One can understand it in the elderly, who find themselves cut off through failing health, mobility or a decreasing circle of friends (over half of people aged 75 and over live alone), but what is bewildering is that , according to a further study by the Office for National Statistics, young adults are more likely to feel lonely than older age groups, with almost 10% of people aged 16 to 24 "always or often" lonely - the highest proportion of any age group and more than three times higher than people aged 65 and over.
Worse, the majority of adults in the UK believe there is even less empathy in society now compared with a year ago – and it is getting worse.

Belonging
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What has happened to us? We know more about each other than ever before, our profiles are 'out there' are more connected to each other than

any generation before. We are not cut off without a telephone, communicating by the occasional letter, living in isolated communities, with poor roads and few neighbours, but instead we are the most photographed, most public generation ever. Most of us live in large towns and cities with people always around us and yet the story is the same, that people feel lonely even in their busy lives, or feeling, to appropriate a song title by Crowded house 'Together, alone'.

The idea of belonging is fundamental to human beings and yet somehow more and more of our young have become dislocated from what were once our communities, our schools, our nuclear and extended families, our neighbourhoods and our faiths. The cult of the individual embodied in 'every child matters' may have given the young a greater freedom and sense of identity, but it has come at a cost. Even in schools, the cohesion and spirit of the classroom has been subjugated to the individual needs of the individual which has taken away the sense of shared responsibility for each other and the idea of being in it together. At the very time we rail against competitive sport, we set children against each other in the classroom, fighting over marks to define them.

As a result, many of the young (and not so young) have turned to social media both for validation and self promotion, but with disastrous effect. Unlike Eliot who was happy to measure out his life in coffee spoons, the lives of many of us are now measured by the number of likes, the number of views or comments on images, often of self, on instagram, whatsapp or snap-chat, of re-tweets, of followers gained and lost, all at best vacuous measures of self, essentially superficial and meaningless. If we rely on such mirrors into our self, then our self-image will always be fragile, always waiting for someone to break it.

Yet if children do not live on social media, where do they live? Where do they belong? Because we all belong somewhere, we all need that sense of belonging and if it is not inside societal bounds, then it is outside, in gangs and organisations that are anti-social, racist or worse or in dark secluded places where the individual atrophies. If children are to connect we have to give them positive things to connect to. This is difficult when our school curriculum isolates and fails so many and for them, schools become places of confinement instead of being centres of learning. Worse, as schools are pushed into measuring children by data, by grades, they cannot see themselves for the other attributes that define them, but instead feel an overwhelming sense of failure.

How do we address this new epidemic of loneliness when parents are busier than ever, when children are dealing with a changing job market, family breakups and the relentless pressures of testing, and schools are coping with funding cuts and the absence of means to fight an epidemic of learning needs?

We can start by taking children out of the middle of the circle where they are often placed by parents, like performing seals, and talk of the group rather than the individual – the family, the form class, the neighbourhood, the sports team. We can encourage them to think outwards, not inwards, to immerse the self in thinking about other people by action – the three good deeds a day advocated in Positive Psychology. We need to find the means to get children working together more, thinking and learning collaboratively, by encouraging teamwork and focusing on self-respect, not self-esteem and certainly not self-image, but by giving.

Community, working and belonging together is what sets us apart. As Yuval Noah Harari, author of Sapiens aid recently, *'We control the planet because we are the only mammals that can cooperate in very large numbers.'* And the way to start to doing that is to build up the pods of friendship, to become attached to something or someone whose interests you share. The Beatles once sang of all the lonely people, through the lonely window of Eleanor Rigby – the tragedy is the woman is now just a young girl, unsure and uncertain and alone. Belonging is one of the most basic of human needs and we need to satisfy it in our young by providing attachments for them and for drawing them in, by knowing them better and by finding them safe spaces to grow. For if we don't, outside our school gates, others will.

Positive Psychology: Well-Being with Teeth

For too many schools, World Mental Health Day on 10th October, with its theme of 'young people and mental health in a changing world', will serve as a stark reminder both of the unprecedented epidemic of mental health related issues facing our schools, but also of just how unprepared we are and how ill-equipped to cope. As the implenentation of the Healthy schools initiative launched in 2016 is delayed, waiting for new data on young people's mental health, daily we are confronted by the reality of what it will tell us: rises in self-harming, in childhood depression, in eating and sleeping disorders and permanent school exclusions, (up some 40% in the last three years).

Children are lost and confused, despite of, or smore often, because of their reliance on a virtual identity, lives measured in likes and followers. Is it any wonder that 10% of our 16 – 24 year olds identify as feeling "always or often" lonely - the highest proportion of any age group.

In schools, starved of funding for specialist services and the expertise to cope, there has been a scamble over recent months to improve existing provision by providing robust pastoral programmes to address the well-being and resilience of children. Many have undertaken mindfulness and well-being training and integrated aspects of them into their own schools, but often without providing the rigour and the science to change behaviours or provide the wherewithall for meaningful interventions. Which is one reason why positive psychology is gaining more attention.

The importance of Positive Psychology has increased with the renewed focus on the well-being and happiness. Anthony Seldon led the response to growing mental health issues with his pioneering work on happiness and well-being at Wellington College and most schools now have similar strands in their pastoral care programme. What is different with Positive Psychology (or Positive Education as the application of applied psychology in education Is known), is that it offers something more robust, more grounded in science, based on an understanding of the psychology of why things are happening rather than dealing with the aftermath of what had happened. Its definition, as work '*that investigates happiness, wellbeing, human strengths, and flourishing.'* (Gable and Haidt, 2005) belies the training that is required and the importance of coaching and interventions. As Stephen Meek, Headmaster of Geelong Grammar School in Australia who pioneered this work in schools, commented, *'For me, the critical factor is that science underpins Positive Psychology. It is not just wishful thinking, but is based upon scientific experiments which have been replicated by scientists from universities across the world."*

Positive Education aims at building greater resilience, an ability to cope with pastoral concerns and to address issues of mental health, both in teachers and children. By helping staff to be better able to do their job, through the knowledge and tools provided, the coaching sessions and the use of positive psychological interventions (PPIs), they are able to take a proactive approach to mental illness, anticipating psychological distress and mental illness in their students, rather than waiting to deal with its

consequences.

Much of what we now understand by positive psychology stems from the work of Professor Martin Seligman from the University of Pennsylvania who designed a whole-school programme. This involved applying positive psychology to education which led to the creation of the Positive Education programme, with its dual purpose of *'feeling good and doing good'*.

Since adopting positive education as the bedrock of their pastoral care ten years ago, Geelong Grammar School has applied positive education across all aspects of school life: academic, pastoral and co-curricular as well as explicit instruction in years 7 and 10. The Headmaster during the time of the programme's implementation, Stephen Meek, is an strong advocate : *'I have no doubt at all that at the basic level, the school has raised the profile of wellbeing for all its students. They now have a greater understanding of the significance of wellbeing – and how it can determine so much about the quality of their lives.'*

After the training in 2008, Geelong Grammar School became the first school in the world, in 2009, to have a whole school programme of Positive Education. 'Flourishing' is the central aim of the Geelong Grammar School Model for Positive Education, defined as a combination of *'feeling good and doing good'*.

Feeling good is consistent with hedonic approaches to wellbeing while doing good is aligned with an eudaimonic theory of wellbeing. Both strands focus on equipping students and staff with the skills and knowledge which help them to thrive when faced with both challenges and opportunities. At Geelong Grammar, the model comprises of six associated domains that are central to the promotion of 'flourishing': Positive Relationships, Positive Emotion, Positive Engagement, Positive Accomplishment, Positive Health and Positive Purpose, each contributing to the character strengths that underpin the GGS Model. But the importance of the model is to anticipate before the event, to build resilience as part of a school-wide programme designed to stop mental illness by empowering teachers to act.

Positive education has been slow to make inroads although there are clusters of schools around Loughborough and Gloucester have been using an adapted model for some years. Independent schools, likewise, have tended to take what they need from the science to create bespoke programmes for their schools. What is evident, however, is that few have

undertaken the training and fewer still, are able to use through coaching sessions. As the crisis in mental health continues to grow, that position is very likely to change as prevention rather than cure takes on ever greater importance.

Earlier this term, I attended the last two days of a SEPPT (self-evolving positive psychology training) at Passmores Academy in Harlow, provided by Innerarmour. What struck me first was the rigour and the content, focusing on such diverse yet complementary topics as self-regulation, stressors, values in action, the importance of belonging and ritual, coping strategies, dealing with stress, values and ethics and resilience. It was the coaching sessions that set the programme apart, however, and the use of interventions. This was positive psychology at its most raw which challenged a number of staff.

From the outset, a number admitted that they were cynical about anything to do with psychology, citing the bevy of 'mental health' professional development courses they had attended that had promised much, but delivered little other than "fluff'. The course didn't disappoint and the impact was summed up by one convert who admitted *'I was sceptical about SEPPT. Now I am completely inspired to put this into practice.'*
Over the next twelve months the Academy will continue working with Inner Armour. Natalie Christie, Co-Principal confirmed that *"The School is committed to the principles of positive psychology"* and sees the journey they have begun as *'life transforming'* and that the investment being made in staff would cascade down to the children. As one of the first state schools in the UK to embrace positive psychology in education, they take their role seriously in wanting to include Positive Psychology in every teacher's training course and for every teacher in schools.

What I do know from spending time in the SEPPT and with the staff at Passmores is that the course profoundly touched all of those who attended. Yes, there are challenges, foremost of those being to win over all staff members and then to impart the lessons to the children to grow their resilience. But what I heard over the two days made me realise how much we carry about in our heads that stops us doing what we need to do and being who we want to be. Even if the benefits went no further than better equipping teachers to cope, it had huge merit, but already the school is working on using the skills and knowledge they have acquired to

implement a programme of intervention and school-wide training. Fired with a missionary zeal, two staff members are intending to attend the 6th World Conference on Positive Psychology in Melbourne next July to present papers on improving staff and student mental health and becoming psychologically empowered as teachers. They mean business.

My over-riding impression of the training was the rigour and the impact it had on the teachers. Like several of the group, Co-Head Teacher, Vic Goddard described himself at the outset as a cynic about '*the happy-clappy bandwagon of courses on happiness and well-being'*. Now he saw that instead of just '*fixing broken things'*, there was an opportunity for the School to make a significant change in the way it treated mental health through early interventions.

The programme at the School is in good hands. Led by Nat Christie and Steph Hill, Associate Assistant Principal, various initiatives have already been identified including assessing character strengths, trialling the use of coaching and random acts of kindness. Watch this space.

I came to Harlow needing to be convinced. I was. And when one teacher commented to the whole group *"From the bottom of my heart, this will change my life and if it changes my life, it will change the lives of kids"* **- who would not be excited and want to try it?**

Where have all the teachers gone?

The statistics are stark: In the twelve months ending November 2016, 50,110 teachers left the profession, an attritional rate of 10.5% . Of those being recruited to replace them, 64% are no longer teaching five years on. On current estimates, we need 47,000 new teachers by 2020 and yet no one, including the government knows where they are coming from. What has made teaching so unattractive, so toxic that teachers are queuing up to leave? And what is putting off those who had the calling only to find that the profession that have invested in is not what is says on the packet, that instead of teaching, the core part of their job turns out to be managing and

provide structure and care to children from families and communities that lack both and who come with their own disparate needs and behaviours, without the resources and support to properly do so?

It is not only a problem in the UK. France is in a similar crisis as teachers strike because of declining standards of behaviour and worsening conditions of employment. New Zealand, also, is facing a similarly acute teacher shortage for much the same reasons as the UK: inadequate funding and the failings of politicians, families and communities to properly support them.

There, almost half of secondary school students are being taught by teachers who don't specialise in the subjects they're teaching and about a third of advertised teaching jobs have no suitable applicants. As a portent to the future of e-learning here, one in five schools had to cancel classes or transfer to distance learning because a suitable specialist teacher could not be found.

This week, a roundtable discussion hosted by 'Engage for Success' an education thought and action group gathered together a panel of five outstanding educationalists for an on-line discussion on stopping teacher dis-engagement. The panel that consisted of Dr Emma Kell, Stephanie Hill, Sharon Gray OBE and Kay Sidebottom chaired by Cathy Brown addressed three key issues: 'What does teacher disengagement look like to you, based on your experience?; 'What are the potential consequences of us not taking action to engage teachers now?'; and 'If you had a magic wand, what would you to engage teachers in teaching?' before taking other questions from the floor.

At the outset, it was difficult not to be feel depressed about the current state of affairs as described and anecdotes of why teachers are leaving the profession; of how anger has now turned into cynicism with teachers worn down and disengaged from the politics of Education. Workload, a lack of resources, a lack of trust and autonomy, government policies, inadequate funding, negative school cultures and mental health were all cited as factors affecting both retention and recruitment. Also significant was the growing dissonance between school leaders and teachers which was equally concerning as schools struggled for credibility in order to recruit.

The main focus of the discussions, however, were tilted to the positive: just what can be done to reverse the situation to improve the lot of

teachers to better serve the needs of society and children; and how to get the ear of the DfE and Government. What emerged were some great examples of schools (and leaders) being courageous, listening and responding to families and students; schools where staff were trusted and treated professionally and responded accordingly; schools looking after their teachers' mental health by sending them on courses to improve their own resilience. But however commendable, as a response, it was too little, too scattered, because the reality is otherwise.

Most teachers who had taken up teaching as a vocation were now faced with the reality of adversarial classrooms, less creative thinking and not being trusted or allowed to create inspiring learning environments. One finding was that teacher training needed to be more realistic to better prepare trainee teachers for the world they are entering as on tweet identified by '*sharing the importance of developing values driven teacher identity and having conversations about what it means to be a teacher focusing on our vulnerabilities and how to deal with adversity and trauma - supported by coaching and positive psychology.*' One argued that it was '*time for a system reset and to go back to the purpose of education - don't just value what we measure but start with what we value first*'. After listening to the disucssion, the idea of reinventing the education paradigm resounded louder than ever.

None of this is easy, but it is both possible and vital if we are to avert a growing crisis in our schools. Not to do so risks the future of our children; nor does it make economic sense, (the cost of supply teachers per school averaged £58,699 last year, increasingly for reasons of teacher stress), but there are all the other costs down the road, of unemployment, of reduced aspirations and associated social and health issues. Now is the time to invest in our young, rather than bailing them out down the track because we have failed them.

The most important part of the conference was that it was a beginning as those in attendance pledged to make it a start of something bigger - and louder. Rather than writing on such issues as silent corridors and isolation rooms, we need teachers to unite to save their profession. Time to start shouting!

The Empire Strikes Back

In the course of this year we have seen another flare up in the battle about the legacy of Empire following the publication of an article entitled 'Don't feel Guilty about our Colonial History'. On one side of the ring, we had

Nigel Biggar, Regius Professor of Moral and Pastoral Theology at Oxford, the author of the article who is leading a five year project entitled *'Ethics and Empire'* to reappraise colonialism. In his corner were Professor Bruce Gilley a political scientist at Portland State University who started the whole debate with his earlier article, 'The Case for Colonialism', Trevor Phillips, former Chairman of Equality and Human Rights Commission, author Mary Kenny, Indian Historian, Dr Kartar Lalvani and a list of journalists and historians paraded in the Daily Mail including Tony Adler and Robert Hardman. In the other corner, we have 58 Oxford academics who wrote an open letter of protest to the professor, the National Archives, various historians of the old Empire (Shashi Karoor being the most prominent in 2017) and a clutch of Oxford students who have accused him of 'whitewashing the British Empire' and dismissed him as an inappropriate person to lead such a project.

Of course, nothing is as it seems, and the cases made by the protagonists are as selective as they are biased towards promoting their respective points of view. Instead of dialogue and discussion, we are faced, yet again, with a flood of diatribe and denunciation. Any attempt to plough a middle path or debate an issue in the current social climate seems doomed to failure. To claim that the Empire was a power for good is as naïve as it would be to damn it, when it is evident is that the empire is a collective noun that hides many truths, both palatable and unpalatable.

What is unacceptable, however, is that children in our schools are being raised without any proper education on the most important part of their island story. Instead of allowing our history teaching to be dominated by the Tudors and Stuarts, the six wives, Hitler, the Russian Revolution, the Second World War and other such topics, let's get our children looking at the intersection of Britain and its former colonies. Had we done so already, and been aware of the anger of Indian nationalists like Sashi Tharoor, who suggests India owes nothing to the British, we would at least understand their viewpoint, even if we didn't agree with it, as we set out to try and foster trade with them. Perhaps if students knew more about China other than the disastrous years under Mao (which after all, are no more than a sliver in China's history, albeit a painful one), we might stop wracking up the rhetoric about China's aggression. We should be aware that every Chinese schoolchild is taught the opposite – that we are the aggressors – through the teaching of the Opium Wars and the looting and torching of

the Summer Palace and be sensitive to the national shame that was, and still is, engendered. To understand the countries we are trying to build relationships with, we must look back at our mutual history and learn from it – and such a process must start in our schools.

It would also be useful for children to know how successfully the Westminster model of government was implemented in many countries or how the humanitarian reformists of the early 19th century sought to change colonial policy. It would help them understand today's world if they knew more about why the modern world is blighted by the lines on the maps, drawn across cultural and ethnic boundaries by 19th and 20th century cartographers. It would be helpful for them to know about shared history, about trade and about emigration and immigration to and from the empire in order to understand the background to our own multi-cultural society. At present, we are witnessing a struggle between the left and right, in the main between academics and historians, before an audience that has been badly let down by the teaching of our own history, of Britain's global history. In order for all of us to be at the centre of the debate and not marooned on the periphery, that needs to change.

Time for a Revolution

"If I live in an area where there is gang warfare among my peers, why would I care about Pythagoras's theorem?" Akala

"Indeed, when did we just roll over and accept that there is nothing to be done about the way things are? Why do we fret over a Progress 8 score that will always put certain demographics to the back of the table? Why is it now commonplace for some schools to refuse to admit children with SEND (especially the more difficult types) because of the cost implications and the impact on outcomes? Why have some schools steadfastly refused to consider that flexible working may be one solution for the recruitment and retention crisis, or that going part-time is something you can do as an effective leader?   Keziah Featherstone

It is difficult not to feel angry at what is happening in education. Whether it is in the paucity of Government funding, falling morale and teacher shortages, especially felt in comprehensive schools, the pledge to increase places in grammar schools and the inequity of provision in all sectors; or

whether it is in the excessive amount of testing, the lack of appropriate pathways for school leavers, the lack of resources; the overload of bureaucracy and data or all the endless proselytising by experts, treading an endless cycle of conferences promoting their books and research, I often wonder where are the children in all of this?

I wonder also how stark the mental health figures have to be to make government sit up and take notice. How many more suicides does it take for someone other than those offering palliative care to acknowledge that its obsession with testing may be a contributing factor and that while sitting 20 – 30 examinations spread over a month that have been upgraded in difficulty over a month may be fine for one section of the population, it is not so for others. Moreover, to argue, as one Minister did recently that exams were as stressful 'back then' is to completely miss the point, which is that we have made exams toxic by the language we now use and the importance we have given them whose drip-down stress from schools to teachers burns our children. The fact that 35 children are being excluded from school each day and others are being turned away because they will damage schools' results at the end of GCSE (an estimated 19,000 "disappeared" just prior to GCSEs) is abhorrent or that schools spend time seeking out the easiest examination boards or are caught inappropriately helping their charges should tell us something about the pressure they are under. The business model that extols the value of Social Darwinism, that puts a price on success, that makes every educational institution scramble for children, for money using whatever inducement in their power (including the awarding of 1st class degrees) is not one serving children.

This is not the fault of teachers - far from it. They are the ones having to carry the load for family breakdowns, a dysfunctional care system, failed government initiatives, an examination system run by private providers and held to account by league tables and examination boards and universities vying with each other for custom. Rather, the fault lies elsewhere, with politicians and educationalists who have forgotten to ask themselves the simple question, 'what is the best education we can give our children?'

The fall-out of our focus on examination results can be seen everywhere as is our obsession with raw marks. It is a scandal that we openly court doctors and teachers from the third world to staff our schools and hospitals. The fact that 40% of our doctors only last in practice for more than five years tells us many things, one of which is that our measure of entry may be wrong. In our obsession to cream the top performing students, we are missing those other students that would (a) be quite able to handle the academic requirements and (b) have a better range of skills, (listening, empathy, observational, recording) and who would make better doctors without compromising their professional standard skills. Our first past the post system has a lot to answer for.

We know the fierce competition in London for school places has little to do with what is the best education for our children and everything to do with how do we filter these children for the convenience of schools. It is no wonder that the tutor industry is thriving on the back of selective schools trying to get the students through the door of the most selective schools and hypocritical indeed for the same schools to criticise parents for seeking extra help. Tutors are responding to a demand when they would no doubt rather be helping students in different ways. Selective education, and the need to attract children to schools and to universities has resulted in a push to achieve academic results at whatever cost, to fill places and courses, however inappropriate, to survive as educational institutions, even at the cost of the children's well-being

And where are the children in all this? Where indeed!   Mere pawns in a game, I fear.

Empire? What Empire?

One of my regrets in recent years is not being able to get to the Chalke Valley History Festival which for some years now has been a wonderful celebration of Britain's history. Of course, I have always realised that such

festivals are commonly used to flog books or wares and that the commercial element is an essential part of running such an event, but as a way of engendering enthusiasm amongst the young it is unparalleled and hugely commendable.

My enthusiasm was somewhat dampened, however, when I read the programme and did a quick survey of the more than 120 sessions. The results make disappointing reading for those like me who want to see the Festival, as with our teaching of history, reflect our full history, not just parts thereof . While no doubt there are reasons for the programme being as it was (and speakers with something to sell are the easiest group to attract), it is time to consider a little social engineering.

The most popular subject was, inevitably, the two world wars with the number of talks on the subject totalling some thirty four. General studies of war and warfare accounted for another sixteen sessions while social history (trees, clothes, bread and magazines) accounted for another sixteen talks. English History up until to 1485 accounted for twelve sessions, 1485 – 1689 accounted for a mere three (the Tudors apparently being given a year off) and the period from 1689 to 1900 another two sessions . Twentieth century UK accounted for another six talks, (including three on Brexit), the ancient civilizations of Rome, Greece and Egypt six also; the histories of other countries (nine) biographies (sixteen) which completed the list apart from those that I lumped into a section called 'General.' (A History of Birds, Wine and War etc) numbered eight.

Oh, there was one other section. The British Empire from 1600 until the present day. Let's see. Yes, I found one. Lizzie Collingham's 'The Hungry Empire: How Britain's Quest for Food Shaped the Modern World.' A wide-ranging culinary journey explaining how some of the food we crave reached our plates and satiated our palettes.

I don't want to detract from the value of the Festival or the work of the organizers; nor do I want to ignore the fact that a very significant number of contributors were there selling their books (as we do). But what worries me is the balance. The list of topics reads like a white man's History

Festival. Very little on suffrage and women; very little on trade, exploration or migration. Very little on diversification, on the Windrush generation, on how Britain became so diverse; Most distressing of all, however, was the absence of anything on the relationship between Britain and its vast empire or its individual histories with China, India, the Middle East, Africa, the Americas or the Pacific, nothing that would help us learn about our historic relationships with those countries. It is said too often that we are uncomfortable talking about Empire, but that it is no reason not to do so. Quite the opposite. Perhaps in the absence of writers, the organisers could organise a few academics, specialists in Empire History to address the balance. Surely we have heard enough of the two world wars (and too little of their consequences in the redrawing of the world map, the depression and all that followed). Perhaps our children need to be offered a more balanced view of history than they are being served at the moment.
A last word for the Festival. It is an excellent celebration of this wonderful subject. They may well respond by saying they are in the market looking for speakers and have to take who is available or simply that they don't mind the imbalance of subject matter for that is not the point of the festival. Perhaps the challenge is for some of our historians to take on the more contentious and problematic part of our history, the subject that sits right at the heart of this island's story and address it

Creating a New Curriculum – Answers on a Postcard

Posted 6 July 2018

'All major systems in the world are experiencing disequilibrium. The challenge of the times we live in is being felt everywhere; but education seems to be faring worse than most, and is responding very slowly to the challenges.' Dr Lesley Murrihy

'The emergence of the digital age, the growth of artificial intelligence, and the huge social disruption that these entail have had fundamental effects both on our relationship with knowledge and on the world of work. Yet school-based education has hardly acknowledged this disruptive change.' GlobalNet21

Last October, Ofsted's Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman, wrote a paper which discussed findings from recent research on the curriculum. In it, she provided her own definition viz 'at the very heart of education sits the vast accumulated wealth of human knowledge and what we choose to impart to the next generation: the curriculum.' Later, she alluded to a number of related issues - vocational education; teaching to the test; the narrowing of the curriculum, especially in Key Stage 3; and the importance of the Ebacc before ending with the observation that 'expertise in and focus on the curriculum had waned.'

The response was not slow in coming and debate has waxed ever since. Initially, her attack on the culture of teaching to the test and encouraging schools to show initiative by interpreting the curriculum was welcomed, but there were soon rumbles. It was noted, for instance, that her definition of the curriculum was not consistent with that given by her deputy, Sean Harford last year with its three stages of intent, implementation and impact / achievement. Crispin

Weston joined the debate with a paper entitled 'Why Curriculum Matters' (sub-titled a response to Tim Oates, Dylan William and Daisy Christodoulou) in which he criticised their views of the curriculum while offering his own, a process being undertaken in three articles under the heading of 'Untangling the Curriculum.' Apart from wrestling with the definition, Weston was sceptical of the call for teachers to be more involved in helping shape the curriculum stating 'If the experts cannot sort out what curriculum means, there is not a cat-in-hell's chance that thousands of isolated schools will be able to succeed.'

All of which is a long-winded way of suggesting that it may be time to introduce some fresh thinking on the curriculum without the risk of being drawn into debates over data and definition in some naval-gazing twitter feed. Perhaps it is time to approach the curriculum anew, even if it involves dismantling and rebuilding the education paradigm we are comfortable with. We have waited long enough for experts to sort out a workable model moving forward, but too much research and data has been focused on improving the current paradigm, rather than looking at ways of reinventing it in a form that may better meet the needs of children here and now. Dr Lesley Murrihy, in advocating such a change, recently wrote 'It is time for those of us in education to stop simply commenting and to

start creating proposals, to test models and to look to hybrid solutions that take account of the complex nature of the 21st century and of education and create positive sum outcomes' asking the question 'If we, ourselves, cannot demonstrate this very same creativity by creating solutions, how can we model this for our students?

How indeed? When we follow the education debate on social media, it is hard to escape the view that a great deal of energy is being wasted along the binary spectrum of skills vs. knowledge, growth mindset vs. fixed mindset, STEM subjects vs. the arts or numerous similar debates, or by mining down into cognitive bias, the place of technology in assessment, parenting and so on, each thesis invariably accompanied by a new book for the exhausted teacher to read at their leisure. Perhaps, just perhaps, it is time to stop dealing in the finer points of interpretation, with nuances of meaning, shifting stances and arguments about what is research and what is opinion sidestep the jargon and hyperbole with such clichés as 'smashing glass ceilings' or 'levelled playing fields' inhabited by helicopter parents and the snowflake generation. Perhaps it is time for a more imaginative vision.

Does much of the current education debate we find in social media help? In filling in the detail, yes, but in the larger sense, not so much. I am not alone in hearing the fingernails on the chalkboards as teachers scream for something more than endless analysis and proselytising? Something that recognises why our curriculum is not working for too many of our children, why its obsession with data and grades is distorting our teaching and why the numbers of teachers leaving the profession keep increasing for reasons that seem obvious, but for elucidation include ever-expanding workloads; more bureaucracy; more pressure for results and assessment targets; greater social and pastoral roles; the failure of successive governments to offer sufficient separation between education and the state; and the lack of support and status accorded to the profession.

So what am I suggesting? Not another curriculum review, or more think tanks and debate over definition and degree, but a return to the essential question, 'what is the best education we can give our children'. It should not be an exercise in semantics where we get hung up on debating what is 'best' (or ideal), in the first instance, but it should challenge us to risk suspending, even abandoning our views on whether our curriculum works or not. It may be that we need to establish some fresh foundations, thereby

embedding a different attitude towards education, towards the environment, towards community, perhaps a whole new ethical framework or paradigm, that identifies the impediments to change (which includes funding, inevitably, as well as vested interests of the sector, inertia and uncertainty brought about by the advances in nanotechology, brain research and technology; social stratification (as pernicious as ever); and political will). We need to address the inequality of opportunity, the shortcomings in teacher training and the adversarial nature and irrelevance of education to too many children. What is needed is not merely a bank of ideas to dip in and out of, but the answer to the question, 'what values, knowledge, understanding, and skills do we want for our children? ' Putting our prejudices about selection and what constitues a good education to one side and uncoupling the carriages of curriculum and assessment may help us see just what works and what doesn't.

At the risk of sounding philodoxical, in looking for answers to some very elemental questions, it is always better to put something down for others to flay. There are too many raised voices for us to do otherwise. We should rightly be concerned about the decline in the influence of the family and church and commensurate lack of values and ethics exhibited by many of our 'well-educated' leaders (it is shameful they can still talk about 'good schools and bad schools' without blushing). We should recognise the needs of the increasing number of children for whom school is a holding bay because it isn't giving them the courses, the skills and knowledge or the future they need. Citizenship, values, attitudes, environmental awareness - what we would broadly see as constituting ethical behaviour should be an implicit part of learning from the first day of school, so that they come to the more formal part of learning better prepared. Instead of the push for longer schools days, we could look at shorter and more targeted teaching time (I often wonder at those who advocate longer school days when so little classroom time we have is used effectively). We need discipline in our classrooms and schools, preferably greater self-discipline and higher expectations, but conversely less pressure and fewer parents and adults over-complicating their world by too much information. Children don't eschew hard work, but they tend to avoid it when they see it has little relevance to their lives or is done at the behest of the teacher and school rather than in their evident best-interests.

We all accept technology will play an ever greater part in teaching and assessment, and that all courses will soon be available to students on-line and that with more blended education, teaching may be shared between teachers and facilitators or specialist tutors. We

should examine what we mean by a knowledge rich curriculum in subjects such as History where the selection of what history we choose to teach is hugely significant. We should even question the value in dividing learning into subjects at all levels of schooling. We should push for the end of academic selection (nothing is more irritating than those who equate selection with academic rigour) and provide for more opportunities for SEND children by recognising and meeting their specific needs. We should recognise such attributes as a sense of purpose, manners, good communication skills and a good work ethic as trumping the data that sometimes sits on children like a straightjacket. And we should focus on the cause of issues such as the current mental health epidemic and address them at their roots rather than just offering aftercare.

Six years ago, Laura McInerney suggested a rolling curriculum review, an idea which might be worth revisiting, but before we even get that far we need to ensure we have in place a new philosophy of education that can sweep children up and inspire them, that will help them see education as useful and relevant and help make better citizens. We have dumped so much on our children - stress, ambition, guilt, pressure. Now, we need to change the goals which centre around money, jobs and individual achievement to recognise the diversity of human types, qualities and abilities and extol the value of living well in a new world in which 'every person matters.'

What of the Children?

 "If I live in an area where there is gang warfare among my peers, why would I care about Pythagoras's theorem?" Akala

"Indeed, when did we just roll over and accept that there is nothing to be done about the way things are? Why do we fret over a Progress 8 score that will always put certain demographics to the back of the table? Why is it now commonplace for some schools to refuse to admit children with SEND (especially the more difficult types) because of the

cost implications and the impact on outcomes? Why have some schools steadfastly refused to consider that flexible working may be one solution for the recruitment and retention crisis, or that going part-time is something you can do as an effective leader?

There is a hegemonic dialogue that too many have bought into. It suggests that school leadership is more about winning battles rather than considering what the battle is about."
Keziah Featherstone

It is difficult not to feel angry at what is happening in education. Whether it is in the paucity of Government funding, falling morale and teacher shortages, especially felt in comprehensive schools, the pledge to increase places in grammar schools and the inequity of provision in all sectors; or whether it is in the excessive amount of testing, the lack of appropriate pathways for school leavers, the lack of resources; the overload of bureaucracy and data or all the endless proselytising by experts, treading an endless cycle of conferences promoting their books and research, I often wonder where are the children in all of this?

I wonder how stark the mental health figures have to be to make government sit up and take notice. How many more suicides does it take for someone other than those offering palliative care to acknowledge that its obsession with testing may be a contributing factor and that while sitting 20 – 30 examinations that have been upgraded in difficulty over a month may be fine for one section of the population, it is not so for others. Moreover, to argue, as one Minister did recently that exams were as stressful 'back then' is to completely miss the point, which is that we have made exams toxic by the language we now use the importance we have given them for schools and teachers whose drip-down stress burns our children. The fact that 35 children are being excluded from school each day and others are being turned away because they will damage schools' results at the end of GCSE or before is abhorrent or that schools spend time seeking out the easiest examination boards or are caught inappropriately helping their charges should tell us something about the pressure they are under. The business model that extols the value of Social Darwinism, that puts a price on success, that makes every educational institution scramble for children, for money using whatever inducement in their power (including the awarding of 1st class degrees) is not one serving children.

This is not the fault of teachers - far from it. They are the ones having to carry the load for family breakdowns, a dysfunctional care system, failed government initiatives, an examination system run by private providers and held to account by league tables and examination boards and universities vying with each other for custom. Rather, the fault lies elsewhere, with politicians and educationalists who have forgotten to continually ask themselves 'what is the best education we can give our children?'

The fall-out of our focus on examination results is everywhere. Even the fact that 40% of our doctors only last in practice for more than five years tells us many things, one of which is that our measure of entry may be wrong. In our obsession to cream the top we are missing so much other students that would (a) be able to handle the academic requirements and (b) have a better range of skills, (listening, empathy, observational, recording) that would make them better doctors without compromising their professional standard skills. Our first past the post system has a lot to answer for.

When we look at the fierce competition in London for school places, we instinctively know that this has little to do with what is the best education for our children and more to do with how do we filter these children so only the most able get through to the top performing schools.. It is no wonder that the tutor industry is thriving on the back of selective schools trying to get the students through the door of the most selective schools and hypocritical indeed for the same schools to criticise parents for seeking extra help. Tutors are responding to a demand when they would rather be helping students in different ways. When one looks at the impact of selection, there is a lot to be said for having a lottery for school places.

And where are the children in all this? Where indeed! Mere pawns in a game, I fear.

When did Exams Become so Toxic?

Exam season was never meant to be easy, but reading social media and talking to teachers and students, it feels like the pressures have recently got a whole lot worse. The new GCSEs have increased the pressure on teachers and students alike as has summative assessment for A Levels. In primary schools, likewise, SATS have been criticised for placing undue pressure on younger children, especially in the requirement to learn

grammatical terms (do they really need to know about relative pronouns relative clauses cohesion, ambiguity, the active and passive voice, ellipsis etc when an unacceptable number are still struggling to read and write?)

While the various threshold tests and assessments provide for those students who have both the ability and specific instruction on how to pass exams, they offer little to those children who struggle to get their information / thoughts onto the page, those whose abilities are not measured in exams or who are simply not ready for this step. For them, SATS, GCSEs and A Levels must feel like mountains and hardly relevant to their worlds.

Making education relevant to all is crucial to the success of our education system: after all, the outcomes of schools are recorded in knife crime, in mental health statistics as much as in grades. Schools are not just for able, motivated and well-supported children, but also for the deprived, the angry and the abandoned, those children struggling for acceptance because of poverty, race, language or learning and behavioural difficulties.

Yet when we look at what is happening to our youth, most graphically in mental health figures, it is not the just the raised bar that is causing so much angst, but the ways in which tests are presented. For a long time now, our <u>language</u> when talking education and examinations has been little short of scare-mongering One response has been to survey schools to find the best ways of allaying stress (knitting being a popular suggestion) which seems to rather miss the point.

What is not considered often enough from the vantage of middle-age is how the parameters have changed, how <u>tuition fees and a shortage of jobs, extra competition for university places and the fear of debt</u> have ratcheted up the pressure – and once can understand why they have affected students and contributed to such tragedies as youth suicide. In talking of a snowflake generation, (and I believe they are more focused and hard-working than most of the generations who have gone before), too many adults conveniently forget that the pressures are quite unlike those of thirty years ago

Inevitably, while we can tell children that doing their best is all you can ask for, that these tests will mean little in the run of things, each is given disproportionate importance because of the pressure placed on schools

and teachers, inevitably drip-fed to students. <u>League tables</u> have been used by governments to measure progress and to hold schools accountable, but what they have done to students is often ignored, as the best interests of children are subsumed by those of the State. The increase in cheating, higher incidence of depression and mental illness in young children are indirect consequences of league tables and their toxic influence continues to have a profound effect on the mental health of students and teachers.

It is not hard work that students fear, but the great beyond, the shame and despair of failing and seeing doors closing, the pigeon-holing, often before childhood is over. That sort of rhetoric has no place in today's world

There is a compelling argument that exams are not about so much about education, but about selection and economic convenience. After all, exams only test part of student's abilities and cannot be fully cognizant of attitudes, intuition, intelligence, work ethic and purpose, traits that determine success. University is not for everyone, and the expectations of parents and schools regarding university as their end goal needs to be challenged.

The government's response has been to promote technical education to sit alongside A Levels as happens in many European countries. Sadly, it is just another instance of government arriving too late to the party. While that would have been welcomed some years ago, what is needed are not academic and vocational strands, but university and non-university strands, both 'academic', both signalling different pathways, both with similar status and both having their own strands, based on specific career options . BTecs have been gaining favour, even at academic schools, but times are changing and these need to be promoted and enhanced for what they are: pathways for different aptitudes, interests, careers, every bit as academic and demanding, and not the default position. The idea of technical qualifications being essentially mechanical is long past as is the idea of education being fixed in time. Instead of more students being steered into university courses because that is what their school's DNA provides, often ending up with huge debts, useless degrees and mental health issues, we need a new mind-set that recognises the new world of work and an acknowledgement that we do not yet have the tools to properly measure children and assuming exams on their own are enough, is woefully inadequate.

The New Education

'What does education do? It makes a straight-cut ditch of a free, meandering brook.' Henry David Thoreau

At a time when the function and role of schools is under the cosh like never before, it is somewhat sobering to reflect upon those that avoided school, in part or in whole, those self-taught, creative and unfettered thinkers who lacked the benefit of a formal education, and still came good. A list of such autodidacts may include **Benjamin Franklin,** Mark Twain, George Bernard Shaw, Albert Einstein, Charles Darwin, **Stanley Kubrick,** Thomas Edison and Margaret Mead - all highly talented and successful in their respective fields who had the opportunity to work creatively and imaginatively without the shackles of a formal education. And of course, to this list we can add a vast array of women who were both denied a formal education and a credible platform, and who still triumphed, women such as the Bronte sisters, Mary Wollstonecraft and Flora Tristan. And they knew how lucky they were, speaking up against the limitations of formal education, with Bertrand Russell arguing that *"men are born ignorant, not stupid; they are made stupid by education"* and author and autodidact Helen Beatrix Potter being even more explicit in her criticism noting, *'Thank goodness I was never sent to school; it would have rubbed off some of my originality.'*

It is possible to see similar disdain for traditional education today amongst some parents although usually for quite different reasons. As schools move further to the left, and become narrower in their breadth of curriculum and assessment in an effort to standardize educational outcomes, we see more and more parents who have the means to do so, voting with their feet, to draw on the best resources in themselves, in their communities and off the web, to go it alone.

There are many reasons for choosing to do so. These include concerns about behavior (bullying, disruptive classmates); how technology is being used (or not being used); and the shrinking of the curriculum through the EBacc, in particular, reducing time for the creative subjects. Families also have more personal reasons, founded in religion or culture, (or exclusions), or from a growing number of parents who just want to protect their

children from the world and all its horrors, however naïve this may sound. More recently, parental concern has reacted to the changes in the function of education from the pursuit of academic and social outcomes to societal ends, pushing a liberal social agenda which many parents do not want foisted on their children. Nor may they agree with government moves to 'educate the whole child' even in matters that deeply concern them such as teaching children about relationships, especially sex and gender, at a young age. While not all reasons are logical or even excusable, they are symptomatic of a growing disillusionment with the current school system and a belief that there are other, better ways of educating children.

The effects of this loss of confidence can be seen in the growth of home schooling. While not the same as being 'self-taught', there is no doubt that the freedom home schooling affords, allows children to follow passions and interests. It can cater for the increasing numbers of families taking gap years and wanting education for their children in-transit. While we might question the premises, the reality is that the trend is accelerating and that in the last school year, some 30,000 were home schooled in England and Wales, double the number of six years before.

Undoubtedly, it has also got easier to opt out of formal schooling with the advent of the internet. Technology is a driving force with so many courses and resources available on-line that parents can access almost all they need anywhere in the world. By opting out, they find the extra time to devote to the development of special talents in music, drama, sport, or specialist interests from coding to chess. With whole university courses available on-line and blended education becoming a reality in many countries, the means are there for children to gain a first class academic education without ever attending school. What is not so clear is how the social and cultural education, which is compromised from not being part of a community of peers, is managed and compensated for. Nor is it easy for government to monitor the children who are flying under the radar, largely unmonitored and unchecked, and in danger of becoming isolated from their peers and communities or worse, radicalised.

Allied with the growth in home-schooling is the increase in tutoring. The proportion of pupils who have had a private tutor at some stage in their education went up from 18% in 2005 to 25% in 2016 (42% in London). While there are many firms offering bespoke tutoring services, to the

dismay of many head teachers, a survey of more than 1,600 state school teachers found that 43% of them have earned money as private tutors outside school, which considering the pressures currently on teachers, is a substantial 'extra' workload, probably indicative of their relatively low pay and the satisfaction derived from one to one tutoring.

Tutors were once seen as anathema by many schools and you do not have to dig deep to find criticism of the industry with schools suggesting that agencies 'trade on insecurity' or worse, that after-school tutoring is a 'form of child abuse,' as Gail Larkin, President of the National Association of Head Teachers said in 2014 - an interesting comment when schools still demand entrance tests for children as young as three and who eject students who might damage their performances in league tables. The truth is the world is changing and tutoring for exams is only one part of an industry that is moving into the mainstream of education, where tutors support parents who want a different form of education by working in a more holistic way, assisting learning, by helping developing good study habits, pointing the child in the right direction and engendering the confidence that comes from 1:1 support.

Home schooling is not an ideal alternative to state education in any country, despite its suitability for the few. What we need is a system that caters for a wider range of abilities using a wider range of providers. New Zealand has begun to allow students to construct their own curriculum, which often involves accessing some subjects from home. As blended education proliferates in different forms and guises and the role of the teacher changes from classroom teacher to mentor and facilitator, it is likely we are seeing the future, in which the responsibility of education is shared, when education without walls becomes a reality. We are entering a time when, to paraphrase Yeats, things are falling apart because the centre cannot hold and that is not altogether a bad thing. We should not be frightened of the prospect, but instead prepare for it and embrace it.

Growing up slowly is good for mental health

Natasha Devon, one-time Children's Mental Health Tsar, began Mental Health Awareness Week in fine fettle, beginning the week by introducing a petition to get a mental health first aider into every workplace and ending it

by launching her new book 'A Beginner's Guide to Being Mental'. Feisty and straight talking, Natasha has often been a thorn in the government's side by drawing their attention to what is the greatest crisis facing our young, that of mental health.

We only have to look at the statistics to see how serious this crisis is: the 700 young people who kill themselves every year; the fact that the number with eating disorders and self-harming has doubled in the last three years; the drop of the average age for depression from forty five years in the 1960s to fourteen years today; and this week, the news that the number of children under eleven being referred for specialist support has increased by a third over the past four years. Over the poast decade, when funding for mental health was decreasing, the proportion of GP consultations relating to mental health grew to one third and yet many children suffering with depression and mental illness are still not being offered the help they desperately need.

The Government's response has been cautious. Their recent announcement of a further £300 million to be added to their mental health budget over the next five years is scant relief to a system that is already straining to cope with the increase in referrals in our schools. What is more, only part of this sum is to be set aside to help schools, specifically by providing mental health leads and support teams, which in the view of its loudest critics, will do little to stop the growing epidemic.

What is being overlooked in the race to get more trained staff into schools and to provide better training and systems of referral are any clear responses to the questions 'why this is happening?' What has led to this crisis that is afflicting so many of the young? And, pertinently, what are we doing to addressing the causes of this epidemic?

There are a number of areas where parents and schools can make a significant difference. By way of an answer, Matthew Walker in his best-selling book 'Why We Sleep' argues that a significant cause of mental illnesses in our young is the result of a lack of sleep, noting in passing that they are sleeping two hours less than their counterparts of a century ago . By ignoring the fact the all children need at least eight hours of sleep a night and that the circadian rhythm of teenagers means they need to sleep later, he argues we are placing them at considerable risk of depression, anxiety and schizophrenia. Compounding this, is the desire to start schools

earlier and the belief that the most effective learning takes place in the morning. More regular sleep, including insistence on bedtimes for the young and structured routines for teenagers (including a down time for blue screens) would help; as would schools acknowledging what neuroscience tells us, that sleep deprivation is a major causal factor in the onset of mental illness.

Another cause that is in our gift to fix is the number and language of examinations. As SATS begins this week (no coincidence, surely) we read on numerous websites of advice being given to primary children on how to handle the stress of exams, 'being prepared not scared' or the ominously named "survival guides" for GCSE. If students weren't worried beforehand, they certainly couldn't avoid a degree of concern on hearing a former head telling them that seven hours of revision a day was required over the Easter holidays if they wanted to do well. That primary children are experiencing stress and anxiety because of the 11+ tests is unforgiveable, (and the presence of the guide 'Five ways to safeguard children's wellbeing during Sats week' should make us all feel queasy), not simply because the omnipresence of the testing process, which is bad enough, but because we have hyped up the importance of tests, dragged them into the public arena through league tables and then used them to measure schools and teachers according to the performance of the pupils. This generation are not afraid of hard work, but with exam stress listed as one of the leading causes of youth suicide, we need to respond to the impact of too much testing and the aggressive language that promotes the primacy of examinations which is contributing to the increase in mental illness

A third cause is our conversations with children and the encouragement to tell them everything about everything, thinking they have the emotional and intellectual maturity to cope. I don't know how I would have coped at age eleven with all the information young children have to deal with today, often about grim topics or adult themes. Of course, with the internet the walls are partly down although good parenting can delay and / or modify the impact of social media, but perhaps we just need to make more effort to protect childhood and childish things and not abrogate some of the responsibilities of parenting to the internet. Yes, there are other factors that have a very significant effect on the mental health of the young, including the well-documented impact of technology on mental health and systemic drug use, but many of the causes are to do with lifestyle: lack of routine,

lack of sleep, an absence of family nurturing and too much emphasis on exams and the language of testing.

Our schools do need more funding, urgently so, and the provision of trained staff, but as the crisis deepens and children's mental health continues to deteriorate, perhaps, just perhaps, a closer look at the causes, (and not just the those noted here), may pay dividends - and even save lives.

Turning the Tables

The announcement by the Schools Minister, Nick Gibbs, that some 290 schools are about to trial new on-screen tables tests for 7 and 8 year olds is just another example of the State getting involved in areas where it doesn't belong. The accompanying comment that the tests will "*help teachers identify those pupils who require extra support*" is patronizing at best and once again shows that the government does not trust teachers to do their job, even in this most fundamental way.

His comments have already received a predictable response from teaching unions and from the Minister's acolytes. Mark Lehain, a strong advocate for regular national testing, has already given his support, labeling anyone who might deign to disagree as '*the usual suspects*' who previously '*have decried the introduction of what they see as another infringement on childhood innocence and teachers' freedom*'.

Apart from the sneer, the issue is not one of freedoms or raising standards or the value of teaching times tables; it is about the role of the state in education as is clear when he goes on to note that the test '*should also be stress-free for kids: it won't be used to judge them or their school, and will provide information that will be really powerful for all those who are involved in education.*'

Really? Try telling that to teachers who for too long now have been held to account by such data accumulation, even when the process is patently flawed. How long before it is used to pass judgment? Who is taking bets?

The question is not about learning tables. Most, (I hope all) teachers believe children should learn their tables, as the benefits are undisputed. It should be an implicit part of mathematics. Tables charts, table trains were always the norm in primary schools, most using stars on a chart to signify

progress with children supporting each other through the journey. Schools were given the responsibility to ensure children learned their tables and took their progress charts with them, year on year, so that in time, depending on their level of readiness, almost all children acquired the requisite knowledge.

The joy of learning tables and having teachers who introduced the ideas of number or even, as in my case, simple things, like the sum of any numbers multiplied by 9 always equal nine (9x3 -= 27, 2+9 etc). Some of us were lucky in got to test the methods the Jewish Mathematician Jakow Trachtenberg devised while he was in a German concentration camp. Of all the rote learning that goes on in school, nothing is more useful in life, or more regularly used, as tables, and the ability to be able to make quick and accurate computations is something almost every child is capable of.

However, I believe every school does so already. Moreover the teachers would argue that they already know who needs support and don't need another measure that can in the future, be used against them. By gathering data the nature of the test is changed, for the teachers and schools, and becomes yet another pressure point.

The issue is with the belief that national benchmarking is the way forward or is merely a giant political straitjacket that ties teachers down to yet another measure. As Mark Lehain wrote in an earlier article defending the 11+,

'. . . *If we took SATs away there would be no formal testing between Year Two and Year Eleven – so how could we reliably ensure that children are actually on track and which schools are effective?*

How indeed. Possibly by the same methods we used before the introduction of centralized testing. After all, teachers have always been expected to teach tables and were accountable in their own schools for doing so. We should trust the professionalism of our teachers and stop interfering. The dependence of national data gathering is what really undermines the morale of teachers and the belief that '*having a national check means every single child will be assessed in the same way'* is a good thing when in reality, it is anything but! In many countries, governments are now devolving more power to teachers, learning to trust their judgment and realizing the accumulation of screeds of national data may be useful for

turning children into algorithms, but actually just distract from learning. To do that, of course, we need to raise the standard of teaching and invest more in recruiting the most committed and able people into the profession. Sadly, that, as the Minister knows, costs rather more money.

Morals and Ethics in our Schools

"Freedom consists not in doing what we like, but in having the right to do what we ought." Pope Paul II

As the Government continues its crusade to enforce the teaching of British values and character in our schools, there is a much more urgent issue that needs to be addressed. Daily, we read of actions and behaviours that show an absence of self-regulation and a lack of integrity, morality or any sense of social responsibility.

As the old social groupings of nuclear families, extended families, church and local communities are replaced by imagined communities and the State, we have a generation that includes many who are rudderless, isolated and lonely, drifting without any moral anchor or structure to their lives.

Laudable as it may be to promote the values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, faced with an endemic focus on self and the self-made, both in our society and in our schools, there is an urgent need to dig deeper, to ensure that children first grow up with a proper understanding of right and wrong through a study of morals and ethics.

While we celebrate the freedom embodied in the Magna Carta, the consequence of rapid social change over several decades has resulted in a society where many children and adults are struggling to cope. Inevitably, it is not about freedom, but about the exercise of free will and the absence of a moral construct.

If we are looking for examples, we need go no further than the recent press about tax evasion and tax avoidance – one illegal, one not, although both raise moral issues, especially when laws are manipulated by large companies and the very rich for their own ends.

Yet while the wealthy may have recourse to financial advisers and use tax havens because they can afford to, they are not alone in making choices without moral recourse, for we can all be guilty of it to some lesser degree, even if just by supporting those multinationals engaged in large- scale tax avoidance. In such instances, there is rarely any consideration of community or other people's welfare, or any expectation to make decisions on any other basis other than 'what's in it for me?'

If we expect our children to grow up with a respect for the rule of law, (which needs to be seen as fair and equitable for all), then we need to teach them about making moral choices and having a value system as a basis for their decision-making.

Part of this requires a change in the mindset that is prevalent in society, one that says 'if it is legal and if you can get away with it, then it is acceptable.'

In order to make this change requires us to make time in our curriculum, through assemblies and other school activities in order to teach our children to consider issues and behaviour by a moral yardstick rather than more usual measures of success. For without proper ethical considerations, we are in danger of society becoming increasingly fragmented and unstable as self-interest overshadows the public good.

The other, powerful change in our society that adds to the ethical imperative is the unprecedented and largely unregulated advances in science and technology that are happening across the globe.

Many of the projects may appear inconceivable – as did mapping the human genome a decade ago – and as implausible as the Gilgamesh Project seems today. The pace of change and innovation is bewildering. Instead of going hand in hand with ethical considerations, scientists working in the fields of nanotechnology, intelligent design, cyborg engineering or engineering of inorganic life are largely operating outside of any moral construct.

The dangers of unregulated technology, of not grounding decision- making on futures in ethics are potentially catastrophic. In order for adults to begin to make the appropriate political and ethical decisions on using new technologies, we need first to start training our children to ask salient and

responsible questions, based on a resolute moral and ethical framework. We need to train them to think differently.

In the first instance, it is up to those leaders in society, the wealthy, the leaders of industry and public figures to lead the way. And yet, our experience is that their example is often a poor one, highlighted recently by yet another chapter in the cash for access scandal.

It was Teddy Roosevelt who said: "*A man who has never gone to school may steal from a freight car; but if he has a university education, he may steal the whole railroad*." What he didn't add was "*and get away with it*". Sadly, that is the popular perception of many of our financial traders and politicians. If we look at the banking crisis and expenses scandals, those guilty came predominantly from the well-educated, from leading schools and universities.

When we talk of someone in such terms of 'well-educated', we are defining the term in a very narrow and inadequate way, usually measured by their performance in tests. Clearly, there is something missing in their education, call it humility, empathy, honesty or some similar values. Too often they leave school compromised, half-cooked, despite their academic achievements. Somehow, their otherwise excellent education has let them – and society, down.

We live in an age of everyone for themselves to lesser or greater degree and we're not going to change that while the public conscience is unregulated, at least not without a significant moral shift.

The current focus on mindfulness on happiness, on well-being and on character is all very well, but there is a more fundamental challenge for our schools. British values aside, we don't seem to be challenging our children enough with the really fundamental questions about how they should live their lives.

We cannot put everyone in a single moral universe but we can teach them about cause and consequence, about the value of charity and community and about having values that are not able to be measured in material terms alone.

Before talking of developing grit and resilience, we should be offering the children in our schools an education in morals and values for that would underpin their lives like nothing else.

Working Together

At the inaugural Pressburst Conference which set out to look at ways to improve the communications and marketing in independent schools, much was made of the threats to the sector and how to respond to them. The list focused on a number of external issues including rising staff and energy costs, political ambivalence, public antipathy or even hostility towards independent schools and the increasing social divide, but there was mention also of how we can help ourselves. To the larger political and financial issues, we rely on the associations to respond on our behalf or should do (there are a number of heads of leading schools who are regularly asked for comments by the media whose responses sometimes place the interests of their own schools over those of the sector). There is a danger that their messages will be misconstrued to represent the flavour of the sector as a whole and if too brash, boastful or patronising, can do considerable damage to our public image. To ensure we are all pulling together, there are a number of steps schools can follow.

First, manage your social media and know where your comments and images are going to end up – which is often not where they are intended: Photographs of students studying glaciers in Iceland or volcanology in Hawaii, Michelin star plates of food or playing polo may be popular with parents, but not helpful in the wider milieu.

In the drive to award more bursaries – itself, a most commendable and necessary initiative –ask what you can do for a child you are admitting to your school, not what they can do for you. Asset stripping from local schools can engender ill-feeling. Why not take an average student and offer him or her the opportunity to improve themselves without expecting something in return.

Work together. Heads who attack other school types (and a recent attack on single-sex girls schools by an HMC Head comes to mind) do nothing for the sector. This can be seen in the unseemly scramble for publicity after league table results reflects badly on schools and are meaningless especially

when schools obfuscate and select their own interpretations and misleading when so many schools are often highly selective. A more dignified response would be to make no response at all - or better, pull out of the tables.

Take time to work with schools in your local area, especially those you draw from. Prep schools, in particular, need to be treated respectfully and not taken for granted. Invading their historic patch by dropping down to Year 7 entry or going Co-ed at Years 7&8 or making unreasonable demands in terms of scholarship exams does not help and could well lead to more preparatory schools feeling alienated and directing parental traffic elsewhere including towards local grammar and new academies.

Don't fill your websites with lists of the places your students travel to (I counted 24 different countries plus 'North and South America' listed on one website) or on facilities. Focus on student achievements, not things that cost money or simply flaunt the resources and buildings. Eschew the arms race and be more responsible with fees which in terms of social image and parental appreciation eager a bit less profligacy is a win-win.

Use social twitter to promote your school's values and ethos, not just its successes. Some heads can make a significant impression by doing so (and at the risk of embarrassing them, Mark Mortimer at Warminster and Shaun Fenton at Reigate Grammar do this very well indeed) and by using social media to emphasis what their schools stand for, and what they do rather than what they have.

Highlight the achievements who have done well in the charitable sector or in service fields rather than in sport, media or business.

Work with your local community even if it means trimming back your traditional fixture lists to be more involved with local schools and look for ways to ensure your students are part of. and not living apart from, other local schools and students.

And last, remember that your best marketing tools are your parents, teachers and students. Ask, how well to they serve and represent your values and ethos whether on the side-lines of matches (parents), in the way they present themselves when in the public eye (students) or in their loyalty

and advocacy in the community (staff). That's where the greatest effort should be directed.

All little things, but they might just make a difference in helping dissipate some of the ill-feeling that prevails at present towards the sector.

Let's Have a Conference

'I urge educators to focus on "conversations" about education that build rather than simply pull down. Let's not saw sawdust.' Dr Lesley Murrihy

As a society, we so often decry the failure of schools to meet the needs of our children by highlighting all the impediments and problems that beset modern education. Our bespoke response to such concerns has often been to gather like-minded persons around us and call a meeting or better still, a conference. That way, we reason, we can settle in the comfort of the long grass and get to grips with the issues that confront us at our leisure, by providing platforms for more discussion, more analysis, more research culminating in some practical suggestions about how we can improve the status quo. Over recent years, we have seen a proliferation of conferences, each with its own mantra and purpose or engaged with the sliding spectrum of binary debate: skills vs. knowledge, growth mind-sets vs. fixed mind-sets, comprehensive vs. selective, STEM vs. the Arts etc. The danger, of course, is that by honing down our definitions and subjects and by introducing new variables and new fields of data we unravel yet more layers and that as a consequence, more committees, think tanks, and policy groups will be set up, commissioning more research papers, more data, more analysis and interpretation until we end up so far away from our original tenet or the heart of education, there is no way back.

If we want to see evidence of such drilling down, we need go no further than the merry- go-round of conferences that currently exist to discuss almost any educational issue, theme or subject you can think of. Democratising education is a good thing, especially when it brings teachers together, as long as it serves a purpose, but it is possible that with so many conferences happening now (one website had a list of 490 upcoming

Education conferences in the United Kingdom for 2018 – 2019), we are in danger in losing sight of the whole and more importantly, of the child who sits firmly in the middle of any such conversation, often hungry and dispirited.

For school associations and their teachers, the annual conference has become the great ideas market place, the showpiece of their schools and an important shop window for its suppliers and sponsors. The format is fairly predictable: a mix of keynote speakers (many of whom go from one venue to another delivering their same message dressed up appropriately), other invited speakers, an array of discussion groups and panels all of whom set out to share ideas and stimulate thinking, followed occasionally by a Conference dinner with a guest speaker who can make witty observations about their own school days – or not!.

The larger and better known conferences representing the teaching unions and associations: NUT, NSWUA, ISC, BSA, HMC, IAPS, GSA etc. tend to generate the most publicity and have the important function of representing and promoting their sector and its interests in the public eye as well as the lesser, yet vitally important aim of encouraging networking and branding. Beneath their umbrellas, other conferences, dealing with specific issues of education, with themes of race or gender, issues of mental health or learning difficulties all tending to focus on sharing latest research and good practice and call attention to their cause. As well, there are those conferences hosted by the various subject associations or for levels of education (such as the Early Years Conference); conferences with important names like the Higher Education Strategic Planners Association Conference (HESPA) or as specific as MIC, the Mock Interview Conference. Finally, in what is by no means a definitive list, there are those conferences run by a number of leading public schools, including Wellington, Brighton and Bryanston that focus on a range of topics united under a central theme, but which also serve to showcase their hosts and their place in the world of education.

Conferences contribute considerably to the spread of ideas amongst teachers and stakeholders in the on-going education debate. Of course, there are questions, the most pertinent being how much conferences cost the sectors, directly or indirectly, especially in a time of funding shortfalls; there are questions, also, about their value in advancing the education

debate, albeit that may never be an intention. Most conferences end with a session looking forward, at how schools might change or what education will look like in twenty years time, but too seldom have there been any helium balloons released that say, here's some original ideas, ideas fuelled by discussion and imagination, not ground out of research and data, ideas that could just change the paradigm. That's what we'd really want, I suspect, some speech bubble to rise above our confusion and obfuscation and throw up something creative that would really benefit our children.

Why we need to talk about Integrity

First published on the William Clarence website, 5th April, 2018 under the headline '*When do we start teaching Integrity?*'

The fall out over ball-tampering by members of the Australian team in South Africa serves as a warning that not is all well in the world of sport. While Steve Smith has been left to hang out to dry as critics, a number verging on the hypercritical throw proverbial darts at him, we read daily of such infractions: of doping in cycling and athletics, Olympic bans for systemic drug abuse; rugby's blood-gate scandal; the incidence of diving and match-fixing in football all of which should remind us that in the effort to gain a competitive edge, players, teams and even countries have always twisted the laws to gain an advantage.

We would be foolish to think it is only sport that is beset by such problems. Tax avoidance schemes, the recent behavior of asset strippers and hedge fund managers in the CKN deal, the propaganda of both the leave and remain camps in the Brexit referendum should give us pause to ask whether there are any other considerations affecting corporate behavior apart from making money. After all, when companies like Melrose behave as they do, or Artemis, (self-titled as The Profit Hunters) can boast that their 'global hunters' spend their lives carving through the atlas' we can understand that any other interests or concerns, environmental or moral, are subsumed by the desire to maximize profits.

It is not as if we have not been aware of the problem. In 2013, Cricket Australia established a dedicated body, the Integrity Unit headed by a

'Senior Manager – Integrity' whose job was to ensure that cricket Australia was run on ethical grounds. Positions overseeing integrity are now part of many government bodies and corporations, but they are never going to be enough to turn back the tide. The lack of integrity is also embedded in our education system, in helping children get an advantage by cheating, in improving a school's profile by excluding poor performers at GCSE or SEND pupils, even in the choice of courses suggested by schools most likely to get the best results for school and student while disregarding whether it is in the long-term interest of the students.

The problem is deeply rooted in our society and requires us to look at what we are teaching our children. If we accept that our education system is defined to reflect the mores of society, free enterprise and capitalism, the importance of profit and profile, then in the long term, as a society we are in for a beating, as the inequality divide moves us towards social implosion. If, however, we can teach children from the very start of school about the importance of being part of a group, which involves compromise and co-existence, about behavior that benefits all and the individual's responsibility to others, about our responsibilities to the planet and to the whole community, then we have a chance.

It is not impossible to achieve if we set our mind to it, but it requires a change in mind-set from an education system aligned to a narrow and essentially selfish definition of success based on money, academic achievement and status. At the same time, the benefits of looking outwards, away from an obsession with image and self, can only be healthy. Appointing heads of integrity is to shut the barn door after the horse has bolted. Surely the actions of many of our politicians, investment bankers, hedge-fund managers, unscrupulous lawyers touting for business and tax avoiders who dominate our society and who act solely in their own self-interest should tell us that.

British Schools Abroad
February 2018   *Published by William Clarence*

The decision of Jim Hawkins to take on a senior management role in a global education initiative after seven years as Head Master of Harrow

School follows a similar decision made by the retiring headmaster of Eton three years ago to become Chief Academic Officer of Global Education Management Systems (GEMS), an international education company that is the largest operator of kindergarten-to-grade-12 schools in the world, with a network of over 70 schools in over a dozen countries. The fact that both headmasters have been employed by large corporate enterprises highlights the way that education is increasingly seen as a commodity for those that can afford it, led by the new corporates led by proven leaders of independent education in the United Kingdom.

What is interesting with Harrow is that it was one of the pioneers in the international schools market setting up Bangkok International school in 1998 followed by branches in Beijing, Hong Kong and Shanghai. Other schools, including Shrewsbury, Brighton, Dulwich (which has schools in Beijing, Shanghai, Suzhou, Seoul and – as of next year – Singapore) and Wellington College have also been busy establishing franchise schools in the Middle East and Far East and the growth looks like expanding exponentially as others see the opportunities for increasing profits at home.

What is fundamentally different about the schools run by GEMS and those established by British public schools is that the independent schools are invariably charities, not businesses, which prompts the question – how is setting up franchise schools abroad discharging their charitable function?

Their response would be that, having been set up under Charity law for educational advancement, with their mission defined by their own company's memorandum and articles of association (which contains the charity's objects) allows for such enterprise. Setting up franchise schools abroad, therefore, can be deemed charitable under charity law that allows activities to fulfill the objects to be carried out in the UK or overseas. Such schools, it is argued, help the charity at home by using overseas profits to help pay for bursaries to give children from less advantaged backgrounds in the UK.

This raises a number of issues. The first is that the product, a British education has become just that - a luxury commodity based on the British public school model, an ideal starkly different to the model employed in the education of most children in Britain.

Pete Tait

The second issue is whether, by selling the product abroad, and encouraging educational elitism in other countries for the benefits of schools in the UK is ethical and charitable to the other country. If the argument is to reduce fees, provide more bursaries and therefore, increase public benefit, a counter argument would be to call a truce in the arms race, scaling back the excessive building costs and reduce the amount of profligate spending that goes on in many schools, which would have a similar effect.

Maybe we are reaching that point where a number of leading British schools should be allowed to give up their charitable status and become what they ostensibly are – businesses catering for a top-end market. This, of course, is easier said than done under charitable law as it stands. One suspects, though, that there would little opposition from a number of the schools who would welcome being released from the constraints of public benefit and government policy. The second tier of independent schools could remain as they are, doing what they can to keep their fees lower while offering an independent choice for parents. At present, the big education companies do what they say on the packet; not, alas, many leading public schools who increasingly see themselves as entrepreneurs exporting their own form of education to whoever can afford it. I am not sure whether in today's climate that is ethical or in the spirit of being a charity.

Social Mobility? Not on this watch!   February 2018

Sean Fenton, Headmaster of Reigate Grammar School (confusingly an independent school) and Chairman designate of HMC for 2018 – 2019 has recently been in the news reiterating the offer made by the private schools sector that it will provide 10,000 places for disadvantaged children to assist with social mobility. So far the offer has been studiously ignored by the Social Mobility Commission and by Government.

Nothing is quite that straightforward it seems (the places, for instance would be part-funded by state funding allocated to that child of circa £5,500, the amount it costs the state to educate a pupil), but Fenton is right

in presuming that the stony silence which this offer has been met is not economic, but ideological.

Even though independent schools are cajoled into offering more bursaries, entering into more partnerships and sponsoring more academies than ever, all commendable initiatives themselves, they are never likely to make a significant difference to the social mix in society. In the face of constant criticism for monopolising the top jobs in Britain as well as giving pupils a head start in such diverse activities as dance, music drama and sport, it is not beholden on independent schools to solve England's social divide.

Nor boarding schools, state and independent, despite the commendable steps to place children in care in their schools so as to offer them some stability and opportunity. Moving people between social groups doesn't address the historic and institutionalized stratification of our society - shuffling the pack will not change that.

Rather than focus on increasing social mobility, the focus should be on breaking down the stratification of society by addressing key areas of social inequality. This is no easy task in a country where people are defined by their wealth, accents, social groupings and family backgrounds. Most countries have a system of privilege, but few, if any, are as deeply embedded and institutionalized as ours, where social and political influence is limited to those with wealth or social rank and is often passed down the generations.

Education is, of course, the key, but change cannot only be driven through schools and universities alone without the political will to do so. A good place to start would be to mount a concerted drive to improve the bad schools we are constantly being told about by a considerable weighting of resources in their favour. We should look look at the minutae of education, the ability to access extra time, tutors, psychological assessments re-marks and all those resources that can make the difference.

In short, we need to take the issue of cost out of education. Personal statements, for instance, are often the deciding factor between students at many universities and yet disadvantaged students receive less parental support and can provide fewer examples of work and life experience than their richer peers. Recently the Sutton Trust went even further stating that the current university admissions system is systematically biased against

disadvantaged students' and that ' reliance on 'predicted grades' facilitates systematic bias.'

There is much to do, but haranguing schools to do more is mere tinkering. To facilitate social mobility, we need to change society - and with all the vested interests working for the status quo, that isn't happening any time soon.

Too Much Choice
Published on the William Clarence website 13th February 2018

From a young age the journey of my life was not a matter of discussion or conjecture. On my fifth birthday, I started school, the primary that was closest to where I lived. That was how it was. Our meals were traditional fare, a mixture of what you could grow or buy at the local butchers, greengrocers or corner store. Our diet was limited, but judging by the almost complete absence of obesity amongst my friends at school, everyone seemed healthy enough. There was a limited range of clothes to choose from which made us dull, but homogeneous, while entertainment, games and schooling was pretty much the same for everybody. Nobody lauded it over others. Parents had few decisions to make and trusted teachers to teach just as they trusted policemen to keep order and banks to look after your money.

Not now. The explosion in choice has meant that we are confronted with a constant stream of decisions about anything from the colour of your i-phone to the foods you eat. It begins early: pre-natal advice, choosing a nursery, what type of school (private or state, church school, free school, comprehensive or academy, faith school, specialist schools) and continues in everything we do. Even the simple act of having a cup of coffee or tea (black? white?) is now a burgeoning smorgasbord of ever more exotic beans / leaves and numerous classifications to find the taste that best suits our palate.

Through judicious use of i-player, downloads and streaming we are no longer restricted to the collections of records, tapes, CDs we could afford

or half a dozen television channels. We can have whatever entertainment we want at our fingertips. Choice is everywhere and our lives at much richer as a result. At least, for some.

For children who thrive on security and stability, too much choice can be debilitating. Children thrive when life is simple and guidelines are clear. No more. It is not unreasonable to speculate that one of the reasons for the epidemic in mental health amongst the young has its root, at least in part, in the fact that they a faced with too many options and pressures to choose when they are not ready to do so

The wider problem with choice (and yes, there is a problem) is that choice can also be divisive. If you've ever worried about the obesity problem that has exploded in recent years, look no further than the foods that are available for the upper and lower incomes. Healthy food – free range and organic and the leaner cuts, better vegetables and breads are there, but often out of reach of those on lower incomes. What is cheaper are the fast foods, full of calories and sugar, cheap bread and cakes, cheap drink, all aimed at a very specific market. The recent headline that children in poor areas are exposed to five times as many fast food takeaways should come as a surprise to no-one. And somehow such exploitation is permitted by councils and government.

It doesn't stop there. Being able to afford hybrid or electric cars over diesel, choosing private health providers or private education, means that our already polarised society is widening even further. Options are available in every sphere of life if you can afford them. Of course, this was always the case to some degree, but the increase choice has allowed for a two-tier society to take root and exacerbate social fracture. How unfortunate, for instance, that we have a succession of governments that has allowed the sale of patently unhealthy food to those who cannot afford otherwise, even while knowing the damage that results by doing so.

 If you want to see the dark side of capitalism, look at how it treats the poor. If you want to ask about the ethics of those who rule us, look at how they justify choice, from turning a blind eye to tax evasion by large

companies or by the duplicity of the very significant numbers of MPs with interests in private health providers.

Choice sounds fine in principle, but it is gradually dividing us, degree by painful degree, as the ability to make such choices are unevenly distributed and inevitably allow one section of our society to make choices which make them healthier, better educated and able to perpetuate their wealth. Is that a good thing? I doubt it.

What being an Alumni from one of the Clarendon Schools really means

Published on the William Clarence website, 29th January 2018

News that the dominance of the Clarendon Schools has diminished in recent years needs to be taken with a pinch of salt– after all, as the report says, alumni of the nine schools: Eton, Harrow, Westminster, Winchester, St Paul's, Merchant Taylor's, Shrewsbury, Rugby and Charterhouse are still 94 times more likely to be included in the 'British elite' than are those who attended any other school. The same nine schools have traditionally educated around 0.15 per cent of all people aged 13 to 18 yet still account for almost 10 per cent of all 'Who's Who' entrants.

The Clarendon schools are seen as the gold standard of independent education, (a claim that Brighton and Wellington Colleges amongst others would dispute), and evidence that independent education, especially in the home counties, is in rude good health. Most are guided by financially astute and powerful boards of governors and based on slick business models with long term strategic plans, supported in turn by well-staffed foundations and sophisticated marketing teams, often part-funded from franchises abroad.

Over the years, these schools have continued raised academic standards, aided by small classes and well-qualified staff, only to find that parents are now wanting more. After all, the attraction of leading schools is increasingly linked to the reasons implicit in the analysis of 'Who's Who' – that such schools are the conduit to power and influence. Parents, especially those coming from overseas, are often hell-bent on getting places at schools that have an international reputation, even where those schools

are hugely over-subscribed, because the world they open up is a more important consideration than locality, cost, academic results - or even, sometimes, the interests of their children.

Over recent years we have seen a subtle change in offerings from leading independent schools. While still dominating traditional professions including the judiciary, medicine, politics and law as well as being significantly over-represented in the media, amongst senior officers in the armed services and members of the diplomatic corps, the channeling of money into different areas of school life has resulted in a widening of their appeal. As a result, sport, music and drama have been revitalized through new facilities and specialised coaches and tutors, an investment that has met with considerable success.

Yet an independent education has always been about more than academic results - or even cultural and sporting success. It is rooted in the confidence that comes from belonging, from knowing that failing at school does not necessarily lead to a life of penury. There are many examples of successful people who had the benefit of an independent school education and failed to do as well as expected at A Levels (or didn't get that far!) yet went on to carve out distinguished careers in a wide range of fields of endeavor. Any list is arbitrary, but could include Amanda Foreman (academic / writer); Richard Branson (businessman); Jeremy Irons (actor); James Dyson (inventor); Ben Fogle (explorer) and Jon Snow (broadcaster). It is wrong to suppose that they would necessarily credit their independent school education as being a factor in their later success (indeed, in the instance of Jeremy Clarkson, most definitely not), but part of having been to an independent school is the confidence it engenders, the suggestion that one is capable of better things. This is a crucial part of the DNA of independent schools, often described, disparagingly as a sense of entitlement or more kindly, as the self-confidence and determination to succeed, and helps explain the success of such diverse creative talents as James Dyson or Terence Conran.

Neither are schools adverse in seeking out talented individuals from state schools - which is why so many unlikely rugby players become members of some of the most academic independent schools, albeit often just for the 6th form years. If there is a talent, then there is a course or school that will cater and develop it, especially if it will help build the school's profile. That

is often where scholarships and bursary money are targeted. And for those willing to pay the fees, opportunities are everywhere.

Academic success, social confidence and opportunities in a wide range of sporting and cultural activities is part of what parents pay for at independent schools; the other part, however, more important in the eyes of many parents, is that independent schools, and especially the Clarendon schools, provide a way into an old boys network whose influence shows no sign of abating anytime soon.

Girls in Charge

Published by William Clarence 29 January 2018

In light of the row about gender specific language, The Girls' School Association has become the latest body under fire for its use of nomenclature. Its response from Cheryl Giovanni, chief executive of the Girls' Day School Trust, has been to suggest that rather than focusing on the words girls and women, girls schools – and society - have more pressing matters to contend with – and they are right to do so.

I recently chaired a discussion about single-sex education at the Independent Schools Show in London. The questions put to the Headmistress (yes, it is always the girls' schools who end up defending single-sex education) gave many of the expected answers: how well girls do academically when educated on their own; how much more confident and relaxed girls are without the presence of boys; how they are able to excel in a wide range of sports and activities tailored to their interests and aptitudes; how they feel more encouraged to contribute to debate in the classroom; and how much better they do in the sciences and mathematics than in co-educational schools (remarkably, one in four A* grades in physics at A Level were achieved by girls from independent girls schools).

The arguments for co-ed being 'normal' were raised and were responded to by reference to the changes that have taken place in single-sex schools that have largely removed the fences (aided by technology) and allowed social

partnerships to be built with single sex boys' schools. Boarding, in particular, has changed enormously, and the advantages of single-sex schooling, even if restricted to certain levels (the diamond model) were all given a good airing.

It was when the dual issues of the sexual harassment and gender equality were raised that the whole discussion livened up – and not surprisingly. The various disclosures on the plight of women has thrown into sharp relief the inequities of the workplace and questions of power. Despite all the changes in legislation, despite all the revelations about the appalling behavior of men towards women, as a society we are still shockingly male-centric, in terms of attitudes, employment, pay and opportunities.

Much of it starts in our schools. When we read this week of boys performing better when there are a majority of girls in their class or that boys perform better in co-ed schools, everything is slanted towards what is in the best interests of boys. When single-sex schools decide to go co-educational (and it is almost always boys' schools that make that decision), the reasons are invariably financial or else to lift their school's results in the league tables – or both - and seldom for social reasons as the schools would suggest.

When we look at how well all girls schools achieve at GCSE (in 2015 75% of pupils in all-girl secondaries received five good GCSEs compared with 55% going to mixed schools) , we have to ask why they need boys at all – which may be a more frightening question than it appears on first reading. Last week, Charles Moore made a beleaguered plea for clemency in an article headlined 'This scandal shows that women are now on top. I pray they share power with men, not crush us'. While statistics on power and equality in the workplace indicate there is some way to go yet before any such judgment might be visited upon men, there is a growing awareness of how appallingly women have been, and are still being treated in our society.

The Fawcett Society, a charity working for women's interests continues to make representations on gender equality in the workplace. Recent research found that in some UK cities the gender pay gap is still more than 50% in favour of men and that we are decades away from equal pay for men and

women. In the aftermath or Weinstein and his ilk, there is a lot of sound and fury being generated about harassment, but that needs to be translated into more action on addressing issues of power and equality for the current imbalance between the sexes is unacceptable.

Society need to change. 'Dads for Daughters' is an outstanding organization working towards changing attitudes in the home and workplace, while there is some excellent work being done by such partnerships as the initiative between the Girls' Schools Association (GSA) and Siemens UK to inspire more girls to pursue science and engineering careers, but there is a long way to go.

Schooling should be about choice and not all children suit either a co-ed or a single-sex school while there are social issues particular to each. In the meantime, who can blame single-sex girls' schools for not only holding out, but trumpeting the fact that this is where many of tomorrow's leaders, freed from the testosterone and swaggering insouciance of teenage boys during the crucial years of their education, will come from.

Where is our Moral Compass?
Published by William Clarence 29th January 2018

Over the past few years over 400 million people in China have been lifted out of poverty, a social and economic movement unparalleled in modern history. The collapse of communism and the impact of capitalism has led to the unprecedented growth of a new middle class, with all the associated expectations, aspirations and trappings of wealth.

Yet despite this new found affluence, one of the more startling facts coming of China today is that neither communism nor capitalism are proving to be satisfying a deeper need of the Chinese people who are either going back to their spiritual roots or embracing one of the major religions which had been banished under communism. Christianity, for instance, which had around one million adherents in 1949 when it was banned, has more than 80 million followers today while the 'three teachings' (Buddhism and Taoism and the philosophy of Confucianism) have also seen a huge

upsurge in numbers of middle class Chinese returning to their traditional teachings and values.

In the neo-liberal west, the search for a deeper meaning to life, some sense of spiritual purpose that political systems do not provide on their own, (apologies momentum), seems to have passed us by. Actually, it is hard to establish just what, if anything, has replaced the influence of family values and church in the west. Outsiders asked to describe our behavior and lifestyle would likely describe us as hedonistic and narcissistic and once we had got over the shock of being so labeled, we would probably have to agree. And the same traits are reflected in our children who increasingly see fame and money above a vocation, which mirrors the received values they are getting from home.

The consequences are all around us, with the homeless, the abandoned, elderly, the mentally troubled and the economically disempowered, frustrated by inequality and the growing gap between rich and poor, leading to a growing sense of disillusionment with our democratic system. Addressing this is a challenge for society and to manage it requires parents and schools to work together to provide a moral compass for our children by agreeing an accord between school and home and for parents to become better role models by getting a grip on what values and guidance they are giving their children.

Yet when we look to parents for a moral lead, to establishing rules and routines in their own families and guidelines for their children to live by, we are constantly disappointed. One of the most disconcerting surveys was that done in the past two years on discipline from a poll of 2000 parents. When asked of their relationships with their children, 55% considered themselves to be a friend rather than a parent to their child. Moreover, 25% of parents expressed themselves as too worried to discipline their own children while, contradictorily, 85% of the same sample thought children today were poorly disciplined.

All of which passes a huge responsibility over to schools to try and establish expectations of behavior, of dress standards, of discipline –for parents too weak to discipline their own children. Ironically, schools are then faced with parental backlash over anything from haircuts to uniform

of criticism from parents, however hypocritical, is very real, and yet when it comes to teaching values and ethics, it is implicit on schools to provide the lead and try to take parents with them.

We need to promote the idea of community, of living a life outside of ourselves, of championing the motto 'non nobis solum' ('not for ourselves alone'). We need to ensure that students don't approach all their learning without ever looking at the ethics of the choices they make, including the subjects and careers they choose; we need to celebrate charity and philanthropy more and stop nurturing selfishness. More than ever, we need to give children a moral code to live by. While ensuring such teaching happens in our schools, we need to pressure government to ensure that decisions being made, in medicine, in technology, in areas that impact on the environment such as fracking or nuclear power, are undertaken with ethical considerations to the fore.

Tenets of a common moral code are implicit in all religions, all faiths, and usually revolve on how well we look after each and treat each other. Many of the most fundamental values such as the Law of Reciprocity, honoring parents, speaking the truth, the importance of charity, peace, forgiveness and love underpin all the major religions. We can add our shared guardianship of the planet as well as, more than ever, homo sapiens has a responsibility to the world of the future. British values with their overt political purpose would not be necessary if we had a moral code that was relevant to today's world and kept to the common belief. Imagine democracy and capitalism if they adhered to ethical codes of behaviour?

What price freedom without the free will to make choices that would benefit everyone? If I was asked to produce a list of core values I would start with empathy, kindness, charity, an acceptance of mutual interdependence and the obligations of being part of a community, whether that be a school or a country or even earth itself. We need to give children a sense of purpose in their education so they can be measured, not just how much they earn, for that way leads to the spiritual desert and will never be enough, but by how well they learn to live useful lives.

The Arms Race

Over recent years there has been a change in the demography of parents accessing independent school education. The professional classes, once the backbone of such schools, have found that their old school has now been priced out of their range and only available to those who have family money or new money. Since 2004, independent school fees have risen by over 70%, due in part to the extra bureaucratic demands placed on schools for extra staffing for human resources, compliance and health and safety as well as teachers' salaries, but much more significantly because of the arms race for better facilities and offerings in order to compete with their neighbours.

Ralph Lucas, editor of The Good Schools Guide warned last year that in their efforts to attract the international super-rich who are attracted to a British public-school education, "Schools used to show off their swimming pool, now they show off their theatres, fitness studios and recording suites."

With fees for boarders at many schools now around £1000 per school week (and that out of net income), it is evident that the pendulum has swung too far, leading to the warning by Lord Lucas that "These schools will soon be solely populated by fee-assisted pupils from low-income families and the offspring of the super-rich"

Traditionally, our view of boarding schools was that they were rather Spartan with cold, draughty dormitories and austere classrooms, focused on providing a classical education and games. All that has changed in recent years as boarding houses have been modernised to the point where individual rooms are the norm in senior years, often with en-suites attached. All of which is understandable. However, while still maintaining their traditional advantage in securing places at the Russell group of universities, in the judiciary, the military, Civil Service and politics in the independent schools have also seen a boom in independent school alumni succeeding in a whole raft of new areas of endeavour.

We have seen the headlines: 'Private schools upstage the West End with cutting-edge theatres' A survey by the Sunday Times earlier this year found that of the 236 private schools in London, 59 have theatres compared with the West End's 42. The theatre at the Godolphin and Latymer School has a converted grade II listed church featuring "overhead rigging, horizontal adjustable acoustic sails, performance lighting and sound and varying floor platforms" for concerts, dramas and musicals; nearby Notting Hill and Ealing High, has a 100-seat theatre "complete with state-of-the-art lighting and sound" as part of £15m renovations in 2013; while Eton "has a professional-standard 400-seat theatre with a fly tower – the Farrer – and two studio theatres, capable of mounting 30 productions a year." So for parents with children with thespian ambitions, they are now spoilt for choice. Small wonder that such schools can boast amongst their alumni such luminaries as Tom Hiddleston, Eddie Redmayne, Benedict Cumberbatch, Damian Lewis and Dominic West.

In music, many schools now boast state of the art recording studios and music schools. This year's Glastonbury Festival was notable for the number of artists with public school backgrounds who were on stage: artists such as Laura Marling and Grace Chatto joining such well-known artists like Jamie Callum and Ed Sherrin. Recently 50% of the top acts on the charts were from independent schools, a far cry from the music of the sixties and seventies.

Sport has always been an area of advantage. Millfield has traditionally led the way with an all-weather athletics track, Olympic size pool and indoor tennis centre as well as a significant number of nationally ranked sportsmen and women as well as a stellar list of sporting alumni. A look at the sporting amenities that Wellington College advertise on their website gives some idea of the scale of the enterprise. 'With 16 rugby and football pitches; 2 floodlit AstroTurf pitches; a modern, well-equipped Sports Hall; indoor and outdoor swimming pools; 22 hard tennis courts; 9 cricket pitches; 2 lacrosse pitches; 8 netball courts; a gym; a dance studio; basketball/volleyball courts; a newly refurbished rackets court; squash and badminton courts; a brand-new Real Tennis court; a climbing wall; a shooting range and a nationally acclaimed nine-hole golf course all within our 400-acre campus, provision for sport at Wellington is truly second to none."

The effects of this investment in infrastructure in sporting facilities is very evident in the results it achieves and when Sally Jones commented last year, 'It is no coincidence that a third of Britain's medalists in the last two Olympic Games were educated in independent schools' it is not surprising that there was an outcry from the Sutton Trust that more and more areas of public life were falling victim to the superior facilities and opportunities afforded children in public schools. Most of these medals were in sports that required first-rate facilities: yachting, rowing, equestrian, hockey and swimming which many leading schools now provide . (the fact that 2012 Olympic rowing events were conducted on Eton's own rowing course being a good marker).

Many schools have invested in extra specialist staff, often of national standing: drama producers, musicians, artists or writers in residents, national sports coaches and the like. The attraction of such specialisation is reinforced by trips abroad or links with professional companies or associations and many a school prospectus or magazine reads like a travel brochure with numerous trips flying off to distant climes in search of opportunities for performance or sport that they could just possibly get at home, even 'up north'.

Of course, ISC is right to argue, through their Chairman, Barnaby Lenon , that many of the facilities are "designed to host assemblies, plays, lectures, concerts — they are not used solely as theatres," and that "Hundreds of ISC schools are involved in music, art and drama partnerships with state schools' citing the latest ISC census which noted that 590 schools are engaged in drama partnerships and 641 in music partnerships with local schools."

However, this is scant consolation for those many families for whom independent education is now more out of reach than ever. Thankfully not all independent schools have been caught up in this race for advantage – some, no doubt, because they want to remain true to their traditional constituency and others simply because they do not have the wherewithal to do so. It all feeds into what we are seeing at present: a revolution in our schooling with a number of leading independent schools belying their charitable status by becoming commodities, dictated by financial and business considerations, with students increasingly being seen as pawns in a

giant publicity machine, delivering excellence by providing a leg-up in whatever area is open to them.

Perhaps the last word should go to Tony Little, past headmaster of Eton, who suggested that less well-off parents might consider "no-frills" alternatives to the top-tier boarding schools.' And, one assumes, with that warning, to leave the traditional independent schools to harvest new seas by providing facilities unparalleled anywhere else in the world to those who can afford them.

Cheating? Who wins?

Published 15 January 2018 in the Daily Telegraph under the heading 'Pupils and teachers are cheating in greater numbers - and league tables are to blame'

In 2004, Francis Gilbert wrote a book called '*I'm a Teacher, Get me out of Here*' in which he wrote of the epidemic of cheating in schools, laying the blame firmly at the teachers' doorstep. His assertion that 'any experienced teacher knows that cheating at coursework is rife' was duly supported by several examples from his own teaching experience of students being 'helped' by teachers, who were themselves under the cosh, usually driven by stressed heads of department hell-bent on improving their results.

Fourteen years on, few things have changed. Coursework is no longer at the centre of assessment although extended essays and the like still offer opportunities for cheating. Using the internet to get an expert to write essays has been partially addressed by more sophisticated software employed by universities and schools and yet the problem has only got worse.

Rather than exclusively blaming teachers, (although the increase in teachers charged with malpractice was up 150% last year), the focus has turned more on the students themselves. Last year, the numbers caught cheating in GCSE and A-level exams in England was up by a quarter on the previous year, mainly through the use of ever more sophisticated

technology, notably mobile phones. Schools and examination boards need to be more rigorous, but that alone won't stop cheating, especially as technology evolves. To make any significant change requires some changes to both our moral code and the primacy of the exam as represented through league tables.

Perhaps it is time to look at the causes including the abiding philosophy that it's all about what you can get away with. Putting ethical considerations to one side, students have always tested the boundaries and even, historically, boasted about the fact afterwards. But there is something else at play here and that is the pressure that is placed on students, and teachers to succeed. Not only has it affected the way schools teach as well as measuring teacher performance, but it has contributed to the epidemic of mental illness amongst students and staff and the droves of teachers leaving the profession. The present culture is toxic and while there is never any excuse for teachers helping students cheat, at any point on the spectrum, we need to ask why a vocation that has idealism and fairness at its heart, has led to some teachers' judgements failing them so badly.

Clearly, the system needs to be fairer, so money that buys all sorts of legitimate advantage, from the ability to access extra time, tutors, psychological assessments and re-marks doesn't provide an unfair advantage. The primacy of league tables needs to be addressed for they have contributed little to raising standards, but hugely to the demonization of the profession. We shouldn't be surprised at students pushing the boundaries, as they have always done, nor should we surprised at teachers wanting the best for their students. We need to do more to look at the issues of bullying of staff in schools and do more to help beleaguered teachers often caught in a no-man's land. The problem is while 'the best' is defined by an examination mark and while exams are for such high-stakes, for teachers as well as students, then without any significant moral shift, the numbers cheating will likely continue to increase.

Letting Go

"There are only two lasting bequests we can hope to give our children. One of these is roots; the other wings.'

There is nothing that can prepare you for having a child. Suddenly, your life is turned upside down and the order and normality you once had are banished forever. And it doesn't matter how much you know that having children is a universal experience, or how many you know who have been through the same experience, having your own is somehow different. They become, for a time at least, a possession, and you are their protector as well as their champion. On the spectrum from subjectivity to objectivity you are anchored on the left, with your own child inhabiting, at least for a time, the centre of your universe.

Which is all as it should be, at least for a while. Lord Halifax once said that "Men love their children not because they are promising plants but because they are theirs" and he was right. Children are our future as well as our present and in them we invest more love, time and money than anything else we have – including our own adult relationships.

The problem (and it is often a problem) comes with the letting go. When do your see your son or daughter as their own person, no longer wholly dependent upon you? When do you start handing over responsibility, moving them along another spectrum from dependence to independence and at what pace?

It is a difficult path for parents to walk and many find it inordinately hard – and no wonder. While you have some control in your own home about your child's language and behaviour, once children go off to nursery or to school, the reins are no longer in your hands. Your children are now learning from those about them and at times you will be shocked with a word or behaviour they bring home. They will continue to do so. By adolescence you might even feel they live on a different planet and wonder why you were reluctant to let them go in the first place.

The task for parents is to give their children a good foundation – the "roots" (the values, manners and behaviours that the parents feel are

important for life) as well as wings (the ability for their children to become independent and find their own way in the world).

The challenge is to see your child as someone distinct from you, someone with their own feelings, ideas, thoughts. One of the most suffocating, damaging (and ultimately selfish) emotions that parents can be guilty of is that of unconditional love, when you take upon yourself any slight or hurt your child suffers and don't want to accept that they can manage without you – and have to. Yes, they need love and support and encouragement, but increasingly they will need their own space to grow.

In these early years, it is crucial that parents work at being good models for children – after all, most children first learn by mimicking their parents. Comments about the home and family often get repeated at school by children who have no social filters. More important, don't assume your child is going to grow up without some guidance and discipline. On this subject there are many worthy pieces of pithy advice: 'The surest way to make it hard for children is to make it easy for them' is one such; 'The ability to say no is perhaps the greatest gift a parent has' another. But there is also too much information out there on the subject of parenting that serves to confuse when all that is needed is common-sense. In essence, it is important for parents to consciously do less for their children as time passes while equipping them to do more for themselves.

It is crucial that parents show trust and confidence in the schools when handing their children over. Over my many years as a Head, it was almost always the parent who needed consoling at the moment of dropping their child off for the first time and seeing them run off with their classmates without a backward glance. No doubt it feels like rejection, but if the foundations are in place, it should be a moment of pride. You will find criticism of your child when it comes (as it usually does at some stage) hard to take, but support those who support your child and remember that on that same spectrum, teachers can see your child rather more objectively, but no less compassionately.

There should be a sense of sadness, but also great joy when seeing your child start out on their journey. It will be difficult; it will have its challenges;

there will be times when you will just want to wrap your arms around them to protect them. But the best protection of all will come from preparing them well. Yes, there is a risk in walking to school, in taking part in various activities, in and out of school, in friends they meet and situations they find themselves in; it is unnerving when they are out of sight for the first time, and you don't know what they will be saying or doing; but risk is part of life and they need to learn to manage it, as we all do. For mums and dads to gather in the nearest coffee shop after drop-off and air their worries and anxieties is a normal response. But if you have prepared your child well and have given them a taste of independence and responsibility, then they are ready for the next stage in their lives. Love, support, encourage, care, but most important let them fly and celebrate their flight with them.

In his wonderfully reflective poem 'Walking Away' about his son's first day at school, C Day Lewis ends with the verse:

 "I have had worse partings, but none that so
Gnaws at my mind still. Perhaps it is roughly
Saying what God alone could perfectly show –
How selfhood begins with a walking away,
And love is proved in the letting go.

WALKING AWAY - Cecil Day Lewis

It is eighteen years ago, almost to the day –
A sunny day with leaves just turning,
The touch-lines new-ruled – since I watched you play
Your first game of football, then, like a satellite
Wrenched from its orbit, go drifting away

Behind a scatter of boys. I can see
You walking away from me towards the school
With the pathos of a half-fledged thing set free
Into a wilderness, the gait of one
Who finds no path where the path should be.

Pete Tait

That hesitant figure, eddying away
Like a winged seed loosened from its parent stem,
Has something I never quite grasp to convey
About nature's give-and-take – the small, the scorching
Ordeals which fire one's irresolute clay.

I have had worse partings, but none that so
Gnaws at my mind still. Perhaps it is roughly
Saying what God alone could perfectly show –
How selfhood begins with a walking away,
And love is proved in the letting go.