Rethinking Education in an Era of Globalisation

Terry Wrigley

University of Edinburgh, Scotland, UK

Abstract

This article reflects on the historic tensions of education under capitalism, arguing that they have been exacerbated in our era of neo-liberal globalisation. Government drives for greater 'accountability' and 'effectiveness' are a blinkered response to the threefold global crisis we face: poverty and debt; a collapse of the planet's ecosystem; and war. Indeed, privatisation and vocationalism threaten to remove the curricular space in which young people can develop the knowledge and social capacity to respond to these problems.

Using the concepts of voice and agency, and providing pedagogical illustrations, he presents some new directions for educational change and curriculum reform.

Capitalism has always had a problem with education. Since the Industrial Revolution, and the early days of mass schooling for working-class children[i], the ruling class has needed to increase the skills of future workers but is afraid they might become articulate, knowledgeable and rebellious.

The response to this contradiction has taken many forms over two centuries of capitalist development and working-class struggle (see Simon 1960). Early in the 19th century, Hannah Moore justified the founding of Sunday Schools for children who were at work the rest of the week; reading was important, so that her association's pious tracts could be read, but writing was dangerous, since workers might frame and disseminate their own experiences and ideas:

> They learn, on weekdays, such coarse works as may fit them for servants. I allow of no writing for the poor. My object is ... to train up the lower classes in habits of industry and piety ... Beautiful is the order of society when each, according to his place, pays willing honour to his superiors. (ibid: 133)

Perhaps that is why reactionaries still prefer children to complete meaningless exercises than to express their feelings and ideas.

Throughout the 19th Century, English policy documents stated bluntly that working class children should not be educated beyond their station in life. The aim of elementary schools was to teach basic literacy and numeracy, discipline children into the rhythms of factory life, and instil pride in the British Empire. Some teachers, of course, always struggled to overcome these constraints.

Often the British ruling class's fears of over-educating workers endangered their own competitiveness. For example, at the start of the 20th Century, local School Boards were forbidden from providing secondary education, thus delaying the spread of scientific and technical education. Since Germany and other European countries were rapidly catching up with Britain in industrial production and productivity, this represents, in Marxist terminology, a contradiction between education a) responding to *relations* of production, b) developing the *means* of production. The relations of production acted as a brake on development of the means of production. For most of the 20th Century, technical courses in schools were restricted to woodwork and metalwork (needlework for girls) though the economy had moved on. These subjects must largely have served a disciplinary function since they were largely archaic in terms of industrial production. It took until about 1990 for the widespread introduction of Design and Technology in its various forms.

Times have changed, but the basic principle remains: capitalism needs workers who are *clever enough to be profitable, but not wise enough to know what's really going on*. This appears stark, but is fundamental to understanding the dynamics. There are however two factors which complicate the basic contradiction, so that we cannot simply map curricular formation onto socio-economic analysis in a crude base-superstructure manner. Firstly, employers have different views of what they need: some insist on 'back to basics' - more spelling practice and multiplication tables - while others, more forward looking, would like communication skills and initiative -

though not *too* much of these! Secondly, there have always been many teachers, individually and organized in curriculum associations and trade unions, who persist in believing that schools should do more than prepare young people for work and their subordinate role in a social hierarchy - a more democratic and responsible vision.

What is particularly interesting, and critical, about the age we live in is that the contradictions are now exacerbated by globalisation, including the neo-liberal project to recreate a purer form of market capitalism and the sheer finality of looming environmental crisis. Humanity is faced simultaneously with three kinds of global crisis: poverty and debt; a collapse of the planet's ecosystem; and war. What is more, all of them connect back to global capitalism. For this reason, capitalism now has an event greater need to close down the discursive spaces where such a connection might be made and where an active critical understanding could be developed. Current educational reforms are as much an attempt to prevent people making sense of the world as a search for greater 'effectiveness'.

Thatcherite and Blairite education reforms: a model for neo-liberal schooling

After a relatively progressive period from the 1960s to the mid1980s, including more pupil-centred pedagogies in primary schools and the establishment of comprehensive secondary schooling, teachers in Britain were faced with a barrage of demands for restoring traditional practices. Key events in reversing the progressive trend were:

- publication of the 'Black Papers on Education' in 1971;
- Callaghan's speech calling for a 'great debate' in 1976;
- Thatcher's 1988 Education Reform Act.

This is no place for a detailed history, but it is worthwhile summarizing some basic features. A sense of crisis had to be manufactured, which took the form of a moral panic about 'low standards'. This is not to say that there wasn't a real economic and political crisis involving (internationally) a falling rate of profit and (nationally) resurgent trade-union militancy, but the ideological work consisted in constructing this as a crisis of schooling and educational standards, and laying the blame on teachers and schools.[ii] The panic generated by politicians and the right-wing press

involved fears of economic decline, but also social chaos - a collapse of moral standards. Spurious links were made between curriculum and social order:

> If you allow standards to slip to the stage where good English is no better than bad English, where people can turn up filthy and nobody takes any notice of them at school - just as well as turning up clean - all those thing tend to cause people to have no standards at all, and once you lose your standards then there's no imperative to stay out of crime. (Norman Tebbit[iii], 1985; cited in Marshall 1998).

After about ten years of ideological preparation, Thatcher felt able to introduce her far-reaching Education Reform Act (1988). This fulfilled a number of purposes.

1. It marketised the governance of public education, by disconnecting schools from their geographical communities and establishing a quasi-market of parental choice.
2. Headteachers were won over with offers of more power and freedom from local authority control. This 'devolved management' gained them control of the accounts but simultaneously control of the curriculum was centralised through the National Curriculum and its associated test regime (see point 4 below).
3. Schools were subjected to pervasive and often draconian structures of surveillance, under the guise of improving quality. These included national testing, the publication of 'league tables', a threatening new system of inspection, and performance pay. Private capitalism found new means of involvement (and profit-making) through the contracting out of testing and inspection. All of this created major difficulties for schools in the most challenging areas - those already suffering massively as a result of neo-liberal economic policies and de-industrialisation.
4. Thatcher's National Curriculum was simultaneously a technological modernisation and an ideological retrenchment. Mathematics, science, design and technology and IT expanded to half the curriculum time. On the other hand, the space for creativity and self-expression was reduced, and for understanding the social world: the arts had a marginal role; there was no place for contemporary social studies; history had a nationalistic emphasis and events from the past 25 years were excluded. In many ways, the National

Curriculum was a fusion between neo-liberal and neo-conservative elements. (See also Apple 1996.)

Blair's reforms are, in many respects, far worse than Thatcher's government achieved, though largely built on those foundations.

1. There has been no slackening in the centralised surveillance and control. Indeed, in many respects it is worse. For example, teachers' salary progression from the moment of initial qualification is subject to decisions about 'performance'.

2. The Conservatives once argued that they would determine *what* should be taught but not *how*, which would remain a professional matter; whereas New Labour have closely regulated lesson structures and pedagogies through their various 'Strategies'. (See discussion in Jones 2001.)

3. Whereas Thatcher's National Curriculum made common provision to the age of 16, based on a 'broad and balanced' curriculum, Blair's new Education and Inspection Act decrees two separate tracks from age 14, academic and vocational. The 2006 Education and Inspection Act explicitly prevents those pursuing the vocational route from studying drama, music, media studies, languages, history, geography; these pupils will even have a functionalist version of the subject English, stripped bare of personal writing, debate and literature.

4. This legislation pursues a policy of accelerating privatisation, such that local education authorities become 'commissioners' not 'providers' of education. Firstly the 'academies' (secondary schools serving poorer urban areas) then 'trust schools' (primary or secondary, with no restriction of location) are publicly funded but privately managed, albeit (for the moment at least) not for profit. Like many other New Labour reforms, it flies under the flag of 'social justice'. That, of course, is Blair's Third Way; the wolf in sheep's clothing, neo-liberalism disguised and mystified.

The changing nature of the state

As David Harvey (2005) has demonstrated, neo-liberalism by no means entails a diminution of state power. On the contrary, a strong state is needed to regulate the

market, to combat any class resistance to it, and to eliminate / commodify any non-market spaces. Similarly, in the field of education, Stephen Ball (2007) has powerfully demonstrated the complex ways in which the state is used to open up public services to the private sector.

Sears argues that we must see privatisation not simply as schools under new ownership or management, but as a reorientation of education towards the needs and interests of capitalism.

> Privatization should not be seen as simply a reduction in the breadth of state activity, but rather as an active policy of extending market discipline ... The decommodified spaces of education are being eroded as part of the elimination of any spaces outside of market relations. (Sears 2003:18 and 21)

This radical commodification affects all areas of life. Pleasures which were once free (play in open spaces, the countryside, interpersonal communications) are replaced by those which are bought and sold. We are living through a cultural equivalent of the economic dispossession brought about by the enclosure of the common land (England) and the highland clearances (Scotland).

Parents were promised a greater say over their children's education through 'accountability' and 'choice'. In reality, the development of parental participation and community schools has been held back, and parents given the surrogate involvement of a commodity relationship: schools as an item of consumer choice. (The choice is often spurious; only a minority of London children gain a place in their parents' first-choice school.)

Some outrageous measures have been designed to drive schools towards privatisation, including making inspection tougher so that more schools would fail. The 2005 white paper[iv] decreed that the local education authority should then take drastic measures, dismissing the headteacher and other senior teachers, removing the governors, seizing control of the budget, to compel 'improvement' within a year. Such draconian measures are more likely to destroy schools which are already fragile; this is the cure of the leech-doctor who bleeds the patient dry. Local authorities must be 'commissioners not providers' of education, and are only allowed to run newly opened or re-organised schools if they receive permission to tender for them in an open

market. It seems unlikely that the increased diversity of school types which is destroying community-based comprehensive schools will extend to permit the political or pedagogical diversity existing in Denmark or the Netherlands.[v]

There has been considerable debate on the left about the purpose of Blair's latest reform. Schools minister Ruth Kelly insisted that it was not privatization since the companies running schools are not allowed to make a profit. However, indirect profits can be made by contracting the provision of services to other capitalists, including those with close associations to the sponsor. It has also been argued that quasi-privatized schools in England will serve as a shop-window for full privatization elsewhere in the world, leading to a rich seam of profits for the emergent edu-businesses. It is impossible to fully write off the economic argument, given the Confederation of British Industry's paper 'The Business of School Improvement' (2005), which demanded that a larger and larger share of the national school budget should pass through the hands of profit-making businesses.

It is important to appreciate the political as well as economic dimension to this reform. In a sense, we face a return to Nineteenth Century systems of governance whereby each school was beholden to a representative of capitalist class power such as the local farmer or the vicar's wife. Although they often also raided the school for cheap labour, as maids or to collect in the harvest, the essential function of these individuals was to exercise control on behalf of their class in general, rather than themselves in particular. They ensured, for example, that rituals of loyalty such as Empire Day were enthusiastically observed, that religious teaching was orthodox, that teachers maintained strict discipline and did not express 'extreme' views.

The switch to a more vocational curriculum is a crucial part of Blairite reforms. I have referred above to the division of pupils, under new English legislation, into two distinct tracks. Jones and Duceux (2006) draws important parallels with similar reforms in other parts of the European Union. However, to believe that only those in the vocational track are deprived of important social and environment knowledge is to underestimate the problem. The academic track may well learn history and geography and literature but are likely to do so in such a high-pressured and disengaged way, as a succession of testable facts, that they will find it hard to develop a critical sense of the

world. I am reminded of Camus' description in The Plague (1948) of life under fascist occupation as *frenetic and absent*.

A traditional academic curriculum and a vocational curriculum are often constructed as opposites, without recognizing their similarities. Kemmis et al. (1983) argue that both serve to place young people in a hierarchical society as it exists, without seeing the need for social change; the only difference is their intended place in the social order. Whereas vocational courses prepare some young people for specific manual trades, young people pursuing more academic studies receive a less clearly defined and broader preparation for the more flexible challenges they will face in white-collar and professional employment.

We might extend this argument in various ways. Firstly, for the most part, the products of both tracks within the public system will end up within the working-class, in a classic Marxist sense - those who sell their labour power. They will not be capitalists, nor become a middle *class* as an independent historic force.[vi] Secondly, as Sears (2003) sees with considerable clarity, their preparation for the world of work is as much ideological as it is technical - the development of habitus and identity for work under fast capitalism.

It is not difficult to find manifestations of this. One clear example is the insistence on *enterprise* as a curricular value and activity, even for classes of very young children.[vii] Another is the exaggerated emphasis on assessment, which Sally Tomlinson argues has become a means of initiating young people into a culture of vicious and relentless competition:

> Market states must maximise opportunities by encouraging competition between individuals and promote those with merit, but also threaten penalties - poor education and low-level jobs or unemployment for those deemed without merit. Market states encourage meritocracies where 'ruthless assessment' is the norm, and 'choices' are in fact strategies in a competitive marketplace. Market states are not places where mutual assistance thrives and are largely indifferent to social justice. (Tomlinson 2006:52)

Sears argues that just as in 19th Century England capitalism 'had to destroy the old moral economy that included a particular structure of entitlements and expectations'

(2003:12), so today's young people have to be 'prepared for life without a net, or at least for a world with an Internet rather than a social safety net'. (ibid:20).

Students are encouraged to think about the market throughout their educational career - for example, they are encouraged to keep a portfolio from the earliest grades that relates their educational experience to their career goals. (ibid:21)

Educational reform is replacing the embrace of the state with a harsher market model of inclusion, marked by insecurity, user pay and increased opportunity to fail. The aim may be less to drive students out than to challenge them to survive in this new environment, hardening them for the lean world that awaits them after graduation. (ibid:57)

Despite the moral panic about education not producing the quality of skills the economy needs, the rhetoric of 'post-industrial knowledge economies' and the supposed need for everyone to become 'highly skilled problem solvers', most young people entering the labour market are confronted with a demand deficit rather than a skills deficit - there is simply not enough demand for their labour irrespective of skills levels (Morisette et al, cited by Sears 2003:69).

At the same time, young people are confronted with an increasingly abusive tirade from politicians, inculcating a sense of worthlessness if they do not concur with this culture of instrumentalism. Young people growing up in the poorer areas of Britain are increasingly being criminalised, in the double sense of facing incarceration and of being labelled as criminally deviant. (The parallel to this, of course, is the Islamophobic campaign of Blair's government, which led the neo-fascist British Nationalist Party[viii] to claim that 'New Labour ministers are scrambling over one another ... leaving BNP spokesmen trailing'!)

A further component of neoliberal 'citizenship' is the denial of essential knowledge. History and geography are in rapid decline as school subjects and English is being redefined through new qualifications as a narrowly instrumental 'functional literacy'. The creative and performing arts are being squeezed out of the curriculum, whilst having to fight for their place in the curriculum through arguments about their economic value.

Voice and agency

Two major discourses are available at present for thinking about school reform. One is the body of School Effectiveness, Improvement and Leadership texts, with their hollowed-out sense of the future; for all their talk of 'vision', they are largely silent on the big issues of our time such as poverty, environmental collapse and imperialism. The other is a literature on Critical Pedagogy which is generally too abstract and remote to be of much practical value. The important task for socialists working in education is to find practical ways of involving young people in a critical and engaged study of the world.

The recent interest in 'student voice' has sought to provide both a heuristic and a banner for challenging current practices theoretically and practically, but we need to add to the notion of *voice* a concern for *agency*. Both voice and agency are systematically denied in traditional practices of schooling on three levels:

i.   the organisation and disciplining of relationships in the school institution;
ii. the curriculum, as a selection of content;
iii. the preferred modes of teaching and learning.

This is particularly the case for young people from poorer and ethnic minority communities. It was Freire's lasting contribution to imagine and mount a challenge to all three forms of oppression: disciplinary, curricular and pedagogical.

Disciplinary

Disciplining young people no longer takes the form of physical beatings but current practices are equally deserving of the term 'discipline': long period of immobility, the strict regulation of time and space, a disconnection from activities which are valued by adults, and exclusion of those who break the rules. All of these have been increased by the intensification of instruction resulting from high-stakes testing and government regulation of teaching methods. To some extent control of behaviour and relationships is made necessary by the compression of young bodies in the classroom, and learning cannot take place in too chaotic or hostile an environment, but it has ideological consequences nonetheless.

Disciplinary measures are more likely to meet resistance in areas of deprivation for a number of reasons which are connected to teachers' social and cultural distance from the local community, adolescents confronted with too many different subject specialists for a secure trust to be established, and the washing over into school of domestic and neighbourhood problems. Teacher actions which are simply accepted as 'normal' in other schools take on the cultural significance of the disciplining of workers by a boss, or of ethnic minorities by a white majority, in such schools.

There has been considerable emphasis in government guidelines of the term 'orderly' but the keyword I have found most significant and positively used in successful inner-city schools is 'respect'. This is important, as it points to the importance of establishing less oppressive relationships. (There is also an interesting cultural resonance here with the use of the term within Afro-Caribbean communities in Britain.) This emerges in many ways in school culture:

- the display of children's photographs and their work;
- the quality of interpersonal relationships;
- a reaching out to parents, even when they haven't turned up to consultation evenings;
- a respect for heritage and youth cultures;
- the creation of social spaces.

It is important to question seemingly 'natural' structures, both those internal to the school and the boundary between school and the wider world. Given the turmoil of life under globalised late capitalism, and particularly for the most oppressed, it is essential to create a safe and nurturing environment for young people. Paradoxically, this safe space is a necessary foundation from which they can reach out to the complex world outside. The phrase 'school as a home for learning'[ix] encapsulates this idea; schools should be nurturing social communities as well as learning communities.

There are many alternatives to the current organisation of secondary schools in Britain, or to the large urban high schools in the USA which have been dubbed 'shopping mall schools'. It is far too easy for disturbed young people to get lost in these anonymous spaces while wandering from room to room every hour.

Scandinavian schools are generally much smaller, and often divided up into smaller communities. In Norway, for example, a year of 60-100 pupils is looked after by a team of 5-6 teachers, who teach the curriculum, provide pastoral care and guidance, and liaise with parents. They include expertise in learning support, and as a team have the power to reorganize their own timetable, making special projects and learning out of school easy to organise. The result is a much better quality of relationships and very little disruption; school exclusions are very rare. Many smaller schools and schools-within-schools are being established in the USA, with extremely positive results,[x] and the movement is supported from across the political spectrum, from communitarian radicals to the Gates Foundation.[xi]

Curricular

Since Thatcher's 1988 reform, it has become common to take for granted the centralised control of the curriculum, the teacher's role being to 'deliver' it. Schools are now being offered only one alternative to a traditional academic curriculum: vocational preparation. This is particularly the case in more deprived or troubled areas, where job training is seen as the answer to apathy and alienation. Although there are still some remnants of a 'multicultural' or even 'antiracist' curriculum, we no longer even have a word to indicate a curricular alternative which might meet the particular needs of poor urban communities.[xii] One lesson from the past is that the curriculum should connect up with pupils' lives and experiences, but also open up new opportunities and horizons. It is important to ground learning in community experience and a local culture, but at the same time education involves opening new horizons and opportunities and developing a critical vision.

Socialist teachers need a critical understanding of curriculum issues, in order not to accept too easily the neo-liberal alternative of vocationalism. There are many possibilities for a community- and activity-based curriculum which is more socially critical. For example, a design and technology project might involve investigation of the play facilities in the area, and then the construction of a new playground based on children's needs and wishes. In the process, much would be learnt about social inequalities and political structures.

A reformed curriculum needs to be critical and theoretical as well as practical. Philip Wexler argued that the following aspects of critical understanding are typically silenced in school texts:

i. 'the location of human activity in *history'*
ii. 'the ability to situate the individual and the immediate within a larger frame, to have a view of the social *totality'*
iii. *conflict* rooted in opposing interests' - and particularly exploitation (not just 'differences as cultural pluralism')
iv. *work*, i.e. 'collective human labour as the continuing source of what we are and of what we have', 'the human social making of relations and products'. (Wexler 1982: 287-8)

Furthermore, he pointed out that the authoritative tone of school textbooks - and we might add, its reinforcement by teacher voice - conceals from the learner the bias or inadequacies of the text's construction, disabling the learning from further enquiry and action (ibid: 289-90).

Here we might take issue with progressives who focus on process to the neglect of content. How, for example, could someone take a stand on the Israeli government's oppression of Palestinians without some key factual knowledge, for instance:

- the *historical* fact that Jews returned to their 'homeland' after an absence of 2000 years;
- that the Palestinian territories have a tenuous and marginal position within a wider *totality*, including a third generation of refugees in Lebanon;
- that they are largely denied the means to develop the land and engage in productive *work*;
- and that the Israeli state is able to deploy overwhelming force supported by $100million of US aid each day (i.e. knowledge of *conflict* and unequal power relationships).

These facts, along with a knowledge of the horrors of the Holocaust which gave impetus to the Zionist solution, are necessary for a critical and responsible understanding. For example, the final point illustrates the important difference

between an emphasis on conflict and structural inequalities and a liberal-pluralist emphasis on *diversity* alone. Without such key knowledge, we remain trapped in a limited 'two tribes' understanding of Israeli-Palestinian relations and a vague sense of 'isn't it terrible but what can you do?'

Particular subject paradigms may have a limiting effect on learning, such as the 'great men and battles' version of history, or a language curriculum crammed with technical detail about grammar. Sometimes teachers may subvert the state's attempt to impose a conservative version of a subject; for example, when Shakespeare was made compulsory for 14 year olds in England, the curriculum policy clearly intended 'iconic Shakespeare' but many teachers seized the opportunity to develop socially critical responses - the Shakespeare who calls into question kingship, filial obedience and racial prejudice. In other cases a full challenge is needed; for example we should insist on the central important of media education for the education of democratic citizens in the 21st century.

Tim Brighouse (2002), on his retirement as the highly successful director of England's largest local education authority, asserted that the national curriculum is now more tightly regulated than in Stalinist Russia! We need to argue for a degree of 'authorship' on the part of the learners:

> How can we reconceptualise and reconstruct the curriculum in such a way that pupils, at least for part of the time, have an opportunity for fashioning some time for themselves so that they can pursue their own ideas and studies? (Davies and Edwards 2001:104)

It was a shock and welcome surprise to discover the Danish education ministry advising teachers against writing a precise plan for the year for social studies as this could undermine *negotiations* with the learners (Ministry of Education, Denmark, 1995).

Pedagogical

There is ample research from the 1970s and 80s to show the typical asymmetry of language use in the classroom. The teacher's voice dominates, with the teacher speaking more than everyone else put together. The teacher asks all the questions, including many phoney questions to which s/he already knows the answers. The

frequency of test questions undermines a real dialogue, as discussion becomes examination. Pupil contributions are normally very brief, and real discussion is rare.

Alongside this denial of voice, the denial of agency is part of the deep grammar of traditional schooling. There are rare examples of real problem-solving, such as I found in a German manual for social studies (Weissenau and Kuhn 2000) - the town hall or hospital comes to school with a problem which students are asked to help solve; they discuss and research it before presenting their answers to the local policy makers. Students are constantly told 'you'll use this knowledge when you're older' or 'you'll need this for your exam', with little sense of engagement in the here and now.

School learning is often a kind of alienated labour, with the exchange value of extrinsic rewards (grades, merit certificates, etc.) compensating for the lack of a sense of use value. The regular pattern of this economic exchange is:

- teacher tells pupils what to produce, and how long they must work at the task
- pupils hand it to teacher, who looks hastily at the product
- teacher hands it back defaced with a small token of its worth
- the product is of no earthly use to anybody.

This really is a lesson in selling your labour power. There are alternatives, where learners become genuinely engaged in working at a task, work in groups and then present back to the class or a wider audience.

Abstract and experiential knowledge : in search of inclusive pedagogies [xiii]

The relationship between symbolic representations and lived experience is a complex one, and seriously problematic when the abstract and decontextualised forms privileged by schools jar with more experiential and narrative cultures rooted in manual labour.
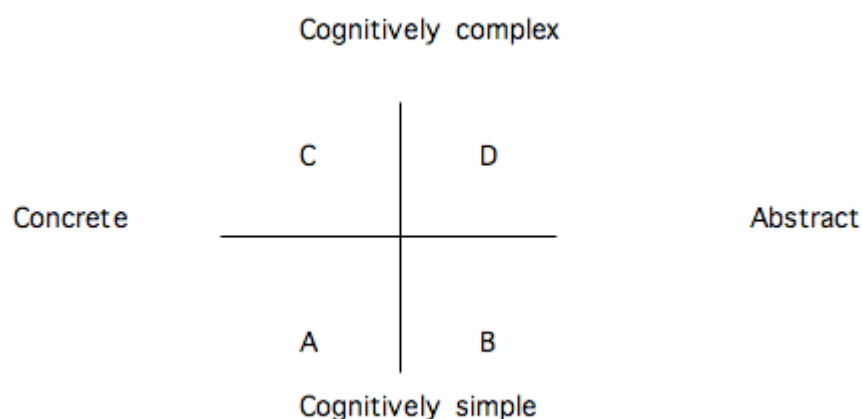
The identification of a general and innate intelligence (IQ) through tests of decontextualised abstract reasoning inevitably positions many students as *lacking* in intelligence per se. Similarly, Bernstein's loaded use of the term 'restricted code' has been criticised for portraying working-class (i.e. manual worker) families as linguistically deficient (see Wrigley 2003:76-83). A more productive understanding of

different forms of knowledge can help us overcome the barriers to learning faced by many young people.

It is useful to recognise a broad spectrum of forms of representation, from concrete to abstract. In broad terms, and omitting some important types (e.g. musical notation), the spectrum would run from physical models to virtual models, from narrative to academic language, and finally through arithmetic to algebra. My argument is that improving access for marginalised young people requires grounding theoretical knowledge in lived experience, but as a road towards theoretical understanding, not its avoidance. For many learners the best pathway to $C=2\pi r$ could be guided experimentation with different sizes of bicycle wheels, comparing the lengths of the spoke and the rim, but once properly acquired, the abstract language of algebra is very powerful in its ability to comprehend general relationships. Similarly, narrative styles can be more accessible than abstract academic language, and hold together affective and cognitive dimensions, but there are advantages to consolidating and critiquing the knowledge gained via narrative by using more formal academic discourses. Both examples illustrate the importance of moving up and down the experience-abstraction scale.

Models and simulations are form of representation which come nearest to lived experience. Along with works of art, drama, novels, they are a kind of 'microworld'. They are multi-sensory and multi-dimensional mappings of lived experience, but they are also 'off-line' in the sense that they have no direct practical consequences (see Wartofsky 1973). This provides the opportunity to play with alternatives - to explore different relationships and outcomes. Play provides a means of exploring alternative futures.

Unfortunately, in dealing with a gulf between the colloquial language of young people, particularly those from manual-worker backgrounds, and the abstract language of academic learning, teachers often fall back on a traditional diet of decontextualised exercises. Jim Cummins (1981) has identified a similar tendency in the case of bilingual pupils whose home language is not the school language. He represents this as a quadrant:

Cognitively complex

```
            C       |       D

Concrete  _____|_____  Abstract
                    |

            A       |       B
```

Cognitively simple

A represents everyday conversational and transactional language, whilst D represents the academic language of school learning. He argues that schools tend to trap learners who are struggling with abstract learning to zone B, which is abstract but cognitively simple, instead of developing zone C activities which root challenging ideas in experiences and richer forms of representation. C is the route to D, whereas B is a cul-de-sac.[xiv] Zone C activities provide opportunities for teachers to scaffold the learner's language from descriptive / narrative to more abstract theoretical discourses, and from colloquial to formal registers. Cummins model is, I believe, equally applicable to large numbers of monolingual learners from manual-worker families.[xv]

Open architectures of learning

New Labour's curriculum 'strategies' have been highly scripted and prescriptive, though there is now some greater freedom and diversity. Teachers have been encouraged to 'deliver' tightly planned but fragmentary lessons, such as stereotypical 'four-part lessons' which divide each 50-60 minute lesson into a starter activity, a plenary explanation, a group based activity, and a final plenary. Strangely, the starter often has no connection to the main lesson, as it consists generally of skills practice such as spelling; and the group activity and final plenary are far too short to enable a real construction of knowledge. One such example allows each group of pupils a mere 20 minutes to struggle with a difficult 19th Century poem, identifying the main theme and unusual language, followed by a 10 minute plenary for the six groups to share their understandings of the six different poems and decide on the poet's main issues

and beliefs. This fast-paced fulfilment of curricular objectives is not a pedagogy of engaged and interactive learning; indeed, it is almost a parody.

An alternative can be found in methods such as project, storyline and design challenges (see Wrigley 2006a: 105-9, including examples). I have called these 'open architectures' because they provide a structure whilst leaving scope for learner initiative and collaboration. They have many advantages: they are language rich, collaborative, connect with learners' prior experience, and give a sense of achievement through a final product or real audience. Each of these architectures has its characteristic structure and benefits, though they can also be hybridised.

Project method begins with a topic suggested by the teacher or the learners, perhaps a significant current event. The next stage, also plenary, consists of discussion to problematise this topic, during which specific questions and directions of enquiry are identified. This stage also involves the teacher bringing in insights from academic disciplines. Stage 3 involves individuals and groups of learners researching sub-topics and questions of their choice. The fourth stage, again a plenary, allows groups to share their knowledge and engage the class in further debate, whilst a fifth stage can be added involving some kind of action in the wider community.

I have used this approach with student teachers to help them understand the situation of refugees, beginning with a simulation exercise. In stage 2 it becomes clear that some know more than others, and students differentiate themselves (in response to prior knowledge, not 'ability') through stage 3 research topics. For example, some will find out where refugees come from and why, whereas others choose to explore complex issues such as national identity and xenophobia.

Storyline is based on a narrative[xvi] in which each event stimulates a learning activity (research, writing, drama, painting, discussion, etc.) It begins with a visual representation of the setting (e.g. a mural), then each participant invents and identifies as a character. Storyline was first devised in Scotland as a form of thematic work appropriate to lower primary children, but is now used extensively in Scandinavia in secondary schools as well.

Design challenges[xvii] work by the teacher proposing a final product in response to an initial problem or problem-posing situation. Usually groups work collaboratively, and have a strict deadline for preparing and presenting.

Such approaches to learning, along with other collaborative problem-based pedagogies, provide a means of generating a community of common concern as a basis for learning, rather than the competitive individualism of test preparation and the accumulation of dead facts.

Literacy

The teaching of 'literacy' has been a particular target of educational reform; indeed, in the English-speaking world, the shift in terminology from English, Language or Reading to Literacy has betokened the introduction of a highly regulated and fragmented approach.

Mirroring the dominance of test questions in teacher-pupil interchanges, reading beyond the initial stages is often characterised by 'comprehensions' or reading-as-test. It would be foolish to write them off altogether, as skilful questioning can focus readers' attentions on rhetorical features, ambiguities and ill-founded assertations, and can help to develop skills of critical literacy, but 'comprehensions' rarely invite engagement.

Alternatives include the invitation to readers actively to 'do something' with the text, e.g.

- predicting how the story will continue
- disputing a statement from someone else's point of view
- comparing two texts on a similar subject. (Simons ed., c.1986)

Converting textual information into diagrammatic form requires a more proactive struggle to find the holistic meaning offered, and can help to highlight flaws in the logic.

Critical literacy can be brought to life through dramatic techniques such as hot-seating, thus helping to reveal the dialogic nature concealed within apparently

monologic texts. This was developed by drama teachers (the actor playing Lady Macbeth is in the hotseat, facing questions from other actors or the audience). It could be extended to political situations, for example:

- ask somebody to represent the author of a newspaper article, and subject them to questions about their intentions, motives and evidence;
- role play Tony Blair or George Bush to ask them to justify their decision to occupy Iraq;
- hotseat an abstract concept such as Imperialism, or more specifically the British Empire or the American Empire.

Supplying some key quotations can heighten this. We could use Madeleine Albright's infamous television comment that the death of half a million Iraqi children through the sanctions was 'worth it' (Pilger 1998) or Bishop Tutu's summary of colonisation:

> When the missionaries first came to Africa, they had bibles and we had the land. They said, 'Let us pray.' We closed our eyes. When we opened them, we had the bibles and they had the land. (Peterson, in Darder et al. ed., p379)

In an era of globalisation, it should be a central part of education to learn to question its dark side, particularly imperialist war and the racism that accompanies it. At the time of writing, Blair's ministers are falling over themselves to generate anti-Muslim prejudice.

Critical literacy can also extend to studying the graphical techniques of tabloid journalism and advertising, including classic illustrations of subversive art - Herzfeld's photomontage, or the wonderful moment when the Daily Mirror subverted G W Bush's own rhetoric through parody, turning it against himself:

There is a lunatic with weapons of mass destruction 'ramping up' for a war that will threaten the whole world. Stop him!

[A picture of the President appeared below this headline.]

One of the best developed examples of education for critical understanding comes from New York's Central Park East Secondary School, where the teachers worked out a code for evaluating new texts and ideas:

- *Viewpoint*: From whose viewpoint are we hearing this? to who's speaking? Would this look different if she or he were in another place or time?

- *Evidence*: How do we know what we know? What evidence will we accept? How credible will such evidence appear to others? What rules of evidence are appropriate to different tasks?

- *Connections and patterns*: How are things connected together? Have we ever encountered this before? Is there a discernable pattern here? What came first? Is there a clear cause and effect? Is this a 'law' or causality, a probability, or a mere correlation?

- *Conjecture*: What if things had been different? Suppose King George had been a very different personality? Suppose Napoleon or Martin Luther King Jr or Hitler had not been born? Suppose King's assassin had missed? (Our fourth habit encompassed our belief that a well-educated person saw alternatives, other possibilities, and assumed that choices mattered. They could make a difference. The future wasn't, perhaps, inevitable.)

- And finally - who, after all, cares? Does it *matter*? And to whom? Is it of mere 'academic' interest, or might it lead to significant changes in the way we see the world and the world sees us? (from Meier 1998: 607-8)

A different future

Schools have rarely been future-orientated, but now, in our neo-liberal 'postmodern' world, they are in danger of losing sight of the past as well. It is crucial that we defend history from marginalisation in a new 'lean' curriculum which is only concerned with providing skills for a capitalist economy (albeit an economy which has no idea how to use them). As Howard Zinn expressed it:

> If you don't know history, it's as if you were born yesterday. And if you were
> born yesterday, anybody up there in a position of power can tell you anything,
> and you have no way of checking up on it. [xviii]

We also need to develop a sense of openness towards the future - a sense that life can be different. Many of the pedagogies in this article have done this implicitly, but let us finally consider two ideas which focus explicitly on the future: a futures website, and a futures timeline.

The former can be generalised (the global future), localised (Imagine Scotland, Imagine London), or thematised (environment, peace, etc.) It provides a structured but open opportunity for young people to combine text and images, their own voices and others, and relate knowledge of past and present to hopes for a different future.

A futures timeline is rather like those we use for history, but since we don't know how the future will turn out, it divides into three: from the current year, one line slants upwards (the future we dream of), one downwards (the future we fear), and one is horizontal (the probable future). Of course, drawing the timeline is not an end in itself but should serve as the focus and trigger for discussion and action.

Schools for a future

It is a cliche that we are living in an era of unprecedented change. It is a reasonable conclusion that schools must also change, but an absurd non sequitur to believe that this can be limited to buying more computers, more 'effective' instruction, or better management techniques.

In the last 20 years, government-favoured versions of 'School Improvement' and 'Leadership' have led to little more than intensification - a speeding up of the old structures and processes rather than genuine transformation. We are expected to believe that this theory of School Improvement is universal, a kind of global 'common sense', and indeed agencies such as the World Bank seek to make it so. Despite this, there are many alternatives which result from teachers' courageous attempts to do education differently. These bold attempts to change direction involve a challenge to current norms at the different levels referred to earlier: disciplinary, curricular, and pedagogical. They offer learners a chance to develop both voice and agency so that they can create a more democratic and just world.

Because of the weight and force of what we are opposing, this involves us in working together in new ways. A powerful model is Rethinking Schools, a teachers' network in the USA, which simultaneously campaigns against government policy and develops practical resources and methods for critical pedagogy. My recent book 'Another School is Possible', and the UK-based network Rethinking Education (albeit at an early stage of development), seek to open up new possibilities, particularly for a

generation of young teachers who have been narrowly 'trained' to think that *this is all there is*.

We are at a critical point in educational history. We face, to a heightened degree, the enduring contradiction of a dynamic economic system which needs its workers to acquire knowledge and skills, but is terrified lest they become truly educated. Overlaid onto this is another deep contradiction: that today's young people are saturated in consumer culture and changed by it, but the very same corporate forces which pour out commodified excitement are imposing a pedagogy which is regimented and dull (see Kenway and Bullen 2001).

We are confronted with the challenge of developing new forms of curriculum and new pedagogies in the face of heavy opposition. The road ahead is unclear, but a quotation from novelist Philip Pullman may shed some light on our task:

True education flowers when delight falls in love with responsibility. [xix]

Notes

[i] The principal reference here is to the first Western European countries to industrialise, and particularly England. As a result of religious Reformations, some countries such as Scotland and Sweden had an earlier development of mass education and literacy.

[ii] Bethan Marshall (1998) illustrations of how a moral panic about standards in English was fostered. See also Alan Sears (2003) for evidence that a media panic was deliberately engineered by Canadian politicians.

[iii] Tebbit was a leading minister in Margaret Thatcher's conservative government, and also the Conservative Party's chairman. This quotation and others can be found in Marshall (1998).

[iv] Higher standards, better schools for all (2005), subtitled 'More choice for parents and pupils'. London: HM Government, Cm 6677.

[v] An outline summary can be found in Justesen (2002), with useful references to sources, though I do not agree with the lessons drawn by this report on behalf of the Adam Smith Institute.

[vi] This is not to deny, of course, the constant reconstruction and positioning of professional families as agents competing for their children's relative advantage within a marketised school system, see Power et al. 2003.

[vii] I have yet to hear of a school running 'enterprise projects' which are not sanitised - ones in which participants in the role of employers pay minimal wages, sack workers, face industrial disputes or go bankrupt.

[viii] 15 October 2006 on their official website.

[ix] The phrase derives from a conference which took place in Germany in the mid-1990s, see Wrigley 2003:5 and 141-152.

[x] A good starting point for research and further information is www.schoolredesign.net

[xi] It should be noted that, unlike the 'sponsors' of the privatised city academies in England, the Gates Foundation have taken a deliberately hands-off approach, encouraging a diversity of models which can then be evaluated.

[xii] The term 'urban education' is frequently used in the USA but rarely in the UK.

[xiii] This section provides a reworking of the issues which led Howard Gardner to his concept of 'multiple intelligences'. The arguments presented here can be found at greater length in Wrigley 2006b.

[xiv] Many successful learning activities can be found in Wrigley 2000, a set of case studies of successful multiethnic schools.

[xv] Further explanations can be found at www.iteachilearn.com/cummins/bicscalp.html and www.naldic.org.uk/ITTSEAL2/resource/readings/KS6Cummins.htm. Many illustrations of how this works in practice appear in Wrigley 2000.

[xvi] Storyline can be based on a novel or short story, but more usually it is based on a skeletal plot which is fleshed out by participants. Further information and examples can be found at www.acskive.dk/storyline/index.htm

[xvii] For further information, see www.criticalskills.co.uk

[xviii] This quotation can be found in an interview on the American new programme Democracy Now, broadcast 27.4.05. www.democracynow.org/article.pl?sid=05/04/27/1350240

[xix] The Guardian, 22.1.2005

Bibliography

Apple M. (1996) *Cultural politics and education*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Ball S. (2007) *Education plc: understanding private sector participation in public sector education*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Brighouse T. (2002) *Education chief attacks test regime*. (news item dated 11 April, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/1924203.stm)

Cummins, J. (1981b) The role of primary language development in promoting educational success for language minority students. In California State Department of Education (Ed.), *Schooling and language minority students: A theoretical framework*. Evaluation, Dissemination and Assessment Center, California State University, Los Angeles.

Darder A. et al. eds. (2003) *The critical pedagogy reader*. London: RoutledgeFalmer

Davies M. and Edwards G. (2001) Will the curriculum caterpillar ever learn to fly? In Fielding M (ed) *Taking education really seriously: four years hard Labour*. London: RoutledgeFalmer

Harvey D. (2005) *A brief history of neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Jones K. (2001) Responding to the themes of the collection. In Chitty C. and Simon B. (eds) *Promoting comprehensive education in the 21st century*. Stoke: Trentham

Jones K. and Duceux N. (2006) Neo-liberalism in the schools of Western Europe. *Our Schools / Our Selves*, special issue Education's iron cage and its dismantling in the new global order.

Justesen M. (2002) Learning from Europe: the Dutch and Danish school systems. London: Adam Smith Institute (www.adamsmith.org/images/uploads/publications/learning-from-europe.pdf)

Kemmis S., Cole P. and Suggett D. (1983) *Orientations to curriculum and transition: towards the socially-critical school*. Melbourne: Victorian Institute of Secondary Education

Kenway J. and Bullen E. (2001) *Consuming children: education-entertainment-advertising*. Buckingham: Open University Press

Marshall B. (1998) English teachers and the third way. In Cox B (ed) *Literacy is not enough*. Manchester: Manchester University Press

Meier D. (1998) Authenticity and educational change. In Hargreaves A et al (eds) *International handbook of educational change*. Dordrecht: Kluwer

Ministry of Education, Denmark (1995) *Samfundsfag*. (Curriculum guidelines for citizenship education)

Pilger J. (1998) Killing Iraq. *The Nation*, 14 December.

Power S, Edwards T and Wigfall V (2003) *Education and the middle class*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Sears A. (2003) *Retooling the mind factory: education in a lean state*. Aurora, Ont. : Garamond Press

Simon B. (1960) *Studies in the History of Education 1780-1870*. London: Lawrence and Wishart

Simons M. with Plackett E. eds. (c.1986) *The English curriculum: Reading 1. Comprehension*. London: English and Media Centre

Tomlinson S. (2006) Another day, another white paper. *Forum* 48 (1)

Wartofsky M. (1973) *Models*. Dordrecht, the Netherlands: D Reide

Weissenau, G. and Kuhn, H-W. (2000). *Lexikon der Politischen Bildung Band 3*. Schwalbach: Wochenschauverlag

Wexler P. (1982). Structure, text and subject: a critical sociology of school knowledge. In Apple M. (ed.), *Cultural and Economic Reproduction in Education*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Wrigley T (2000) *The power to learn: stories of success in the education of Asian and other bilingual pupils*. Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books

Wrigley T (2003) *Schools of hope: a new agenda for school improvement*. Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books

Wrigley T (2006a) *Another school is possible*. London: Bookmarks and Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books

Wrigley T (2006b) In search of inclusive pedagogies: the role of experience and symbolic representation in cognition. *International Journal of Pedagogies and Learning*, 2(1)

Author's Details

Terry Wrigley has worked in education for over 30 years, and is now a Senior Lecturer at the University of Edinburgh. His teaching, research and writing spans and connects diverse fields of interest: school development, pedagogy, curriculum studies, social justice. His latest book *Another School is Possible* (Bookmarks / Trentham) is both a sharp critique of a school system damaged by tests, league tables, market competition and privatization, and an exploration of creative, engaged and socially just pedagogies from around the world.

Correspondence

terry.wrigley@ed.ac.uk