

Beyond Accommodation: Philosophy and History in the Service of Educational Recovery

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Abstract

In this paper, it is argued that it is the centrality of the liberatory function of education—its 'onto-formative' capacity—that has been most severely compromised through the contemporary recasting of 'education' as both a marketable commodity (externalized knowledge) and a particular form of institutional activity (schooling). In this respect, the manner in which education is normatively defined has important consequences for most if not all research and teaching activities. The paper discusses this problem and illustrates how a broader linkage between education and the human condition is an essential prerequisite for a better informed and critically conscious teaching profession. In particular, we explain how this normative description of education is challenged in our combined teaching endeavours.

Introduction

Ironically, in this age where 'critical reflection' is frequently being exhorted as the number one factor in achieving a fully responsible teaching profession, in-service teacher education programmes affording a rich philosophical and historical foundation are few and far between. The reason for this is obvious. As Australian commentators Elizabeth

Bullen, Simon Robb and Jane Kenway (2004) have recently argued—in defence of arts and humanities courses within the academy more generally—the value of disciplines principally concerned with ‘engaging the mind’ and ‘fashioning the intellect’ cannot but fail the test of legitimacy when measured against the narrowly pragmatic and commercially rigid criteria that have come to determine the value of knowledge. Entitling their paper “‘Creative Destruction’: Knowledge Economy Policy and the Future of the Arts and Humanities in the Academy’, the authors suggest that the existing ‘knowledge economy’ paradigm, to which all tertiary sector providers have been forced to pay homage, creates an unwarranted ideological polarization between science and technology and the arts and humanities. Motivated to write their paper as a reaction to the socially destructive nature of this tension, Bullen *et al.* advance the merits of an alternative paradigm in which the benefits of a social and politically-oriented, critically-reflective, standpoint are acknowledged in relation to a reinvigorated concept of a vibrant knowledge society.

We cite the above work as one of the more recent examples of how the positivistic and techno-economic nature of the existing concept of education has put the onus squarely on those working within the arts and humanities to continually justify the worth of what they do. What this Australian paper succeeds in illustrating especially well is that the nature of such a justification must also be of a particular sort for it to qualify seriously as ‘legitimate’: namely, it must be couched in the language of the dominant economic-rationalist discourse which automatically benchmarks the success or otherwise of its challenge to its capacity for ‘extra value-addedness’. That is, and referring to the case just cited, the central thesis of Bullen *et al.*’s argument is that the commercial benefits of a marriage between the technical knowledge offered by the hard sciences with the skills of cognitive-aesthetic reflectivity encouraged by the arts and humanities will be significantly enhanced only if due recognition is given to the reality that an inanimate economy remains ineffectual without reflective agents to propel its direction and oversee its expansion. In short, what this sort of argument unwittingly illustrates is that there is a much greater likelihood of success for those researchers lobbying for broader recognition of what they do when their petitions are couched in the language of accommodation rather than that of radical opposition.

As this paper will highlight, the problem of accommodation is a particularly pertinent one with respect to our own research and teaching

activities within the philosophy and history of education. For not only are we handicapped by this prior externalization and commodification of the concept of education—making it necessary to advertise the merits of our sub-discipline in terms of the ‘transferable skills’ that each is seen to offer—but the functional way in which ‘education’ is equated solely with ‘classroom teaching’ and ‘children’s schooling’ within the ‘professional’ environment of teacher education has meant furthermore that the philosophy of education is constantly reduced to the study of ‘classroom philosophies’, just as the history of education becomes ‘the historical study of schools and schooling’. In this latter respect, because most curriculum specialists further argue that their own curriculum-based study examines ‘schooling traditions’ and ‘classroom philosophies’, the question as to why further time and energy needs to be devoted to allegedly ‘repetitious’ philosophy or history of education courses is perpetually being raised. To the extent that the broader linkage between education and its shaping of the human condition has been rendered effectively invisible by means of such arguments, the corollary is sadly that many supposedly ‘educational’ programmes are actually blinded by their own conceptual shortcomings to the potentially humanizing and democratising aspect that defines education as a liberatory and onto-transformative discipline.

Backgrounding this problem of accommodation to prompt our students to think of education in other than economic or schooling terms is therefore the elected strategy of ‘educational recovery’ that informs our combined teaching endeavours. Insofar as it is the centrality of the liberatory function of education—its ‘onto-formative’ capacity—that has been most severely compromised through the recasting of ‘education’ as both a marketable commodity (externalized knowledge) and a particular form of institutional activity (schooling), we begin our co-taught course—‘Social Issues in Aotearoa/New Zealand Education’—by focusing on these reductions and inviting an examination of the ideological effect of these accommodations in broader social and political terms. After first inviting our students to consider a range of articles in which the authors contest the commonsense meaning of the term, Paulo Freire’s distinction between education as a form of liberation and a form of domestication is examined. His illumination of the differences implied for human relationships by the adoption of a communitarian (co-operative) ontology as opposed to an individualist (competitive) one is then outlined. Freire’s ‘historical materialist’ perspective subsequently provides an introduction to the second, historical, section of the course. It is here that the students are

given an opportunity to assess the extent to which the potentially humanizing and democratising education which Freire champions is possible within the historical parameters set by our thinking about education as a predominantly institutional and instructional enterprise.

Education as a Culturally Determined Concept

Despite the New Zealand Prime Minister's statement in a recent publication of the Tertiary Education Commission that the 'intrinsic benefits and qualities of education [which have] the potential to transform the lives of individuals and whole communities' (Clark 2003, p.2) must not be made subordinate to an instrumentalist concept of education, the reality is that the normative description of education as a marketable and institutionalized commodity clearly sets limits on the way in which people conceive of education and its social value. Evidence of such limits is readily seen in the way in which contemporary educational policy is cast within everyday institutional practice, but also just as powerfully in the preferences that our students express with respect to their own educational choices. Of most concern has been the dissociation of the concept from the type of inquiry that expresses a broader linkage between education and the human condition. Rather than education being esteemed as an area of study providing the widest possible vantage point from which questions regarding the nature of the human condition and human purpose can be posed, the current 'common sense' ends-based definition has led to an inevitable curtailment of such enquiry—effectively culminating in a narrowing of the concept itself.

That the majority of our students are oblivious to the way in which their existing thought patterns about education act to restrict their intellectual capacity for open inquiry—thereby seriously undermining their subsequent consideration of the parameters of the learning of others—is therefore a natural starting point from which to introduce the idea that education is inevitably a culturally determined concept. As we discuss in our introductory sessions, a concept of education has already been assumed in their choice of a career as a teacher, just as it has already been assumed in their perception of education itself as a predominantly teaching-learning enterprise. It is through an initial examination of the normativity and resilience of these perceptions that we expose the power of language itself in the advancement or curtailment of critical inquiry. As one of our colleagues, Graham Oliver (1998), argues, the problem is essentially an ideological one. It is the product of the way that our reality has been shaped

historically by a dominant economic and political logic that reinforces certain 'good life' preferences. This is a theme that two other commentators also adopt—Karen Bohlin (2000) and Matthew Altman (2004). As with Oliver's paper, Bohlin's and Altman's concerns centre on the contemporary erosion of our capacity to choose our own 'worthy purpose'. In the minds of all three, democratic citizenship is gravely undermined when the opportunity is withheld from individuals to question the very conceptualisation of education that serves as their telos. In this respect, all three see philosophical thought as an indispensable prerequisite to genuine liberatory education, the antithesis furthermore of our contemporary educational policy and practice.

The ideological reduction of education

Oliver describes the reduction of education to schooling as a 'deep prejudice' that is so intimately inscribed within our discourse that it actually prevents us from considering 'human potential' in terms other than those which are directly related to the enhancement of our career—translated more generally as the enrichment of our earning potential (1998, p.299). Such is the extent of this prejudice that, despite what appears to be concrete agreement that education is linked in a very real sense to questions about democracy and citizenship, such ambitions are nonetheless hamstrung by our prior beliefs about what both concepts mean to us in practical terms. If we all believe, for instance, that the measure of a successful democracy can be gauged by the provision of universal access to formal learning institutions and quality programmes, then our future contemplation of democracy and education will subsequently be constrained by this *a priori* ideological conjunction. As a predictable consequence of this construction, not only will we be disinclined to further speculate about the nature of democracy but we will also be prone to dismiss those challenges that do not concede the merits of this empirical measure of democratic presence as their own initial starting point.

As Oliver suggests, in Wittgensteinian fashion, the limits of our language do set the ideological limits to our worldview and subsequent action in a very concrete way. As the example above serves to illustrate, our perception of the world is not merely the product of private and independent meaning-making but attests very powerfully to the socially constructed nature of our language and ideas. In relation to educational analysis, as Oliver's work highlights, we can only ever hope to engage in

genuine educational discussion if we take as our central understanding the notion that 'human agency' is itself always fettered by an array of discursive and extra-discursive prejudices.

In this respect, genuine educational initiatives can be distinguished more properly from counterfeit purpose and practice by the extent to which our conceptualisation of what is 'educational' is first scrutinized in a self-consciously critical fashion. Such initiatives must involve adopting what is essentially a non-reverential attitude towards the verities of the present in order to detect the forms of ideological governance that constitute our contemporary modes of rationality. As Oliver concludes, when viewed impiously in genealogical terms, 'education', inasmuch as we understand the term today, resembles more the practice of indoctrination than the genuine exercise of liberal values—if by 'liberal' we understand the defence of the right of individuals to freely choose their own 'worthy purpose'. Such is the nature of the political and economic undercurrents that structure our everyday thinking that the very idea of education being focused on activity chosen primarily to 'nurture the soul' and to lead it beyond 'life's external trappings' now seems strangely old-fashioned, if not even a trifle bizarre (Bohlin, 2000).

In Oliver's view, the measure of our commitment to democracy can be judged on the basis of whether our educational thinking is designed to foster the most independent exercise of the emotions and the intellect. As he sees it, and to paraphrase Dewey, unless the goal of educational purpose includes as much the release of capacity of whatever 'hems the self in' as it does the encouragement of the independent exercise of powers of good reasoning and practical wisdom, what we purport 'education' to be will be nothing other than a gross violation of the spirit of that ethos.

Against indoctrination and the closure of the social mind

In another article that we offer to our students to complement Oliver's, Karen Bohlin (2000) reminds us that ever since the time of Socrates the aim of education has been more properly to encourage self-criticality and personal transformation than cognitive and moral submissiveness. Like Oliver, her concern is precisely the extent to which such popular notions of the good life involving only the self-gratuitous pursuit of wealth and power have percolated so deeply into our social psyche as to render 'psychologically unavailable' the contemplation of other sorts of

lives. In this respect, insofar as the purpose of educational inquiry had been traditionally to fortify a community against its own short-sighted culture and customs, our present collective incapacity for such 'against the grain' thought should warrant considerable disquiet and, more proactively, a strategic measure of social protest. As Bohlin sees things, the loss of elasticity in our ability to determine our own vision of the good is symptomatic of a dangerous closure of the social mind.

As with Oliver, Bohlin's barometer for detecting social closure is the inability of the present generation to contemplate an array of 'good lives' because of their incommensurability with mainstream values. What most disturbs Bohlin about humanity's bid to govern itself has been the loss of substantive reflection consolidated in the economic-technical rationality characteristic of the age. Because economics and technology remain strenuously indifferent to the real nature of the demands they actually serve—the human demands of real human beings—she argues, in effect, that we mistakenly equate 'human potential' with 'economic potential', thinking that by attending to one, the requirements of the other are necessarily satisfied.

Directing her focus specifically towards higher education, Bohlin sees this logic in evidence on a daily basis through the type of pragmatic course advice offered to prospective students by various enrolment advisors—including some of her colleagues. More often than not, advice which consolidates the merits of programmes of study in line with a strict 'cost-benefit' analysis of such options automatically excludes from serious consideration those fields of study that do not appear to offer the student any substantial career benefits or other such advancements in position or status. To Bohlin, this type of thinking clearly indicates the extent of institutional support for students to adopt a state of unreflective passivity towards the normative values of the history in which they find themselves immersed. It undermines what Bohlin considers should be the central purpose of educational endeavour—the formation of our own ontology or what she terms the 'schooling of desire'.

As Bohlin argues, submitting our desires to critical scrutiny is an essential prerequisite to learning which of our desires should frame our aspirations. Characterising our present-day mindset as one which allows us the freedom to choose, but not to choose well, her stance is to question the cost of this educational myopia. In her opinion, the cost is without question far too high. Rather than putting the primary focus on career preparation or vocational training, Bohlin contends that

humanity would be far better served if our teaching efforts were directed towards larger questions about the nature of human aspiration and the desirability ultimately of our vocationally-driven ambitions. In her view, students would then be in a much stronger position to commit themselves to a worthy set of goals, having first interrogated the types of satisfactions likely to accrue from their actual pursuit.

Philosophy as the practice of freedom

Matthew Altman's paper also addresses the above issues in a discussion titled, 'What's the Use of Philosophy? Democratic Citizenship and the Direction of Higher Education'. Motivated to write his essay out of concern about the market-driven accommodations that have severely undermined his discipline, he concurs with Bohlin that the value or worth of an enterprise should not be judged merely on the basis that we may or may not desire it. Put simply, desire, in and of itself, is blind. It is for this very reason that we need to reflect more rigorously on the nature of our preferences in order to establish the effect of our desires on who and what we are. To this end, philosophy must not be thought of in purely utilitarian terms as a discipline providing students with 'transferable skills' tradeable in the labour market. Altman argues that it is this type of reductionistic thinking that has been responsible for negating the primary importance of the discipline: to assist humanity in its quest to consider what it values most, and to contemplate its contemporary identity in light of these broader goals and aspirations.

The point of philosophy is therefore not to consolidate students' accommodation to the contemporary normative settlements of society but rather to provoke them to attain enough critical intellectual distance from these settlements so that what is known and how it is known are thrown into new relief. In a very real sense then, the purpose of philosophy is to insulate our minds from 'educational misadventure', a phenomenon that Altman considers to be so clearly in evidence today in the institutional tendency to portray education as a commodity, and knowledge as the neutral acquisition of a relatively static and fragmented body of information and facts. As Altman intimates, insofar as all pedagogical relationships have been forced to comply with a market logic, ultimately both teachers and learners have been manoeuvred into adopting a relationship defined solely with reference to their economic positioning towards each other. It is this misguided representation of what constitutes the nature of both teaching and learning—and the relationship between the two—which Altman blames

for the demise of his discipline. His key concern is that students cannot be taught to assume the role as critic and conscience of society when their sole motivation for furthering their studies has been to foster their own personal and economic circumstances.

It is precisely the extent to which universities today have embraced a commercial function that Altman argues has led to the over-promotion of education as a 'provision' and the under-promotion of its 'onto-formative' character. Insisting throughout his paper that the educational relationship must be wholly respectful of the moral nature of the enterprise that it professes to represent, Altman further employs Paulo Freire's concept of 'banking education' in his efforts to clarify the type of anomaly that he claims exists between the stated purpose of philosophers and their actual classroom practice. In his opinion, the prevalence of a predominantly technical orientation to the teaching of philosophy inspired by a market-driven interpretation of knowledge and learning has seriously militated against the very spirit of enquiry that has historically informed the discipline. It is subsequently this image of philosophy as a body of principles into which students must become duly initiated against which Altman reacts, consolidating his analysis by reiterating that this dangerous and non-interactive view of study and learning is more characteristic of an 'ideology of oppression' than one of liberation.

Freire's education for "being"

It is at this point that our students are offered an assortment of readings that allow them to examine Paulo Freire's ideas directly (Freire, 1972a, 1972b, 1976, 1985, 1993, 1997, 1998a, 1998b; Freire & Macedo, 1987, 1993; Freire & Shor, 1987). Despite the fact that each of the authors considered previously has promoted a vision of education for 'human growth' as opposed to a narrower, utilitarian definition, the advantage of Freire's distinctive account of education is that it not only contains a rich justification for the legitimation of this coupling but it also harbours a sophisticated theory of power and its ideological and material manifestation. His work is therefore especially important because education is named as an expressly 'political' venture. For most of our students, unaccustomed as they are to having ever considered education in these terms, much less having considered their own life's choices the product of 'politics', the connection is a crucial one. It furnishes them with a much-needed vantage point from which they can begin to re-examine old and familiar ideas in a new and socially critical

fashion. In particular, they begin to understand that our existing educational and cultural preferences are neither absolute nor given. Instead, they are portrayed most unambiguously as the product of deliberate human purpose. What this idea promotes correspondingly is a thesis of possibility for challenge and change.

To explain this connection between 'politics' and 'education' in a condensed form, Freire views the way education is conceived to be the product of a variety of political forces acting within society. By political, he means 'wholly man-made'. In keeping with this outlook, the type of relationships found to be legitimated within our social and cultural frameworks are no less than a product of the ideological preferences of various human agents. But, whilst they are ideological preferences, they are not just that: they are also manifest in the formal and informal institutional arrangements that structure a society in concrete form. Viewing society and culture historically in this way as a constructed entity can be referred to more generally as an 'historical materialist' way of viewing the world. In particular, it is an outlook that allows us to understand better the socially manufactured nature of the human settlements that now endure. It is on this basis of knowing that what we esteem both conceptually and pragmatically within our society has been the result of a political contest that we are provided with the necessary starting point from which we can begin to comprehend the nature of this contest and the depths to which these constructions extend.

Freire's understanding of the man-made nature of cultural and social construction, and the material power of the ideas we hold, opens up the ground that enables him to challenge a variety of dominant assumptions. In contradistinction to those on the Right, for example, who would defend the claim that humans are inherently competitive creatures—a claim that has been employed historically to justify the unequal treatment of individuals and to defend today's market-based economics—Freire views such disparities as themselves the product of this ongoing power differential between various social factions. He laments that when individuals are brought up to accept these divisions and inequalities uncritically—that is, without being encouraged to consider the contestable nature of these claims—then the myths that are appealed to by these claims regrettably become realised. Accordingly, Freire argues that the very condition for our future life is wholly dependent upon our capacity to reject the fatalism implied by this type of deterministic thinking. This is how Freire's historical materialist viewpoint fully informs his views on ontology: only to the extent that

we are fully conscious of our ability to 'make ourselves' and to 'name' our world are we actually able to do so.

The implications of this thesis are significant. Once we begin to realise that our so-called individualistic and competitive character is actually the product of our own making—that is, when we recognise it as an ideological portrait of society articulated to conserve the existing privileges of a certain sector of society and the inequalities of others—then space is opened up for a counter-cultural vision of progressive social reconciliation based on the inauguration of alternative ways of relating. Indeed, Freire's concept of 'being' authors a vision of intelligent co-operation among humans based on a thesis of the moral respect for personhood.

To explain this connection between being and morality, among all the species of the planet, Freire argues that it is only the human species that is unique in its ability to modify its desires and behaviours and to reflect especially upon the nature of its own humanity. In keeping with this line of argument, Freire states that if this capacity for critical self-reflection is not nurtured and encouraged then no significant distinction between humans and animals can be claimed. It is in this way that 'personhood' can be seen in Freire's thought as a 'marker' for humanity itself—meaning that if this 'potential' for humans to 'become' is never -actualised then we are no longer at liberty to speak in any legitimate sense about the uniqueness of our 'humanity'. It is this underlying set of philosophical assumptions that accordingly forms the ground upon which Freire conceptualises his concurrent vision of education as a deepening of humanity's sense of its own powers of 'being'.

Although much more could be said about Freire's views on 'being' and 'education', all we want to signal here is that Freire's work importantly consolidates the concerns of the above mentioned authors by depicting education as a concept that sits at considerable variance with our conventional usage of the term. The next component of the course encourages our students to consider and critique the various functions of schools, some of which are familiar to them while others are encountered for the first time. In this way, they come to appreciate that these functions are not necessarily educational, in the sense outlined in the above section of this paper, for their onto-formative potential is either absent or has been drastically curtailed.

Historical Studies in Education

Although much valuable research has been undertaken by educational historians in New Zealand and elsewhere—in their quest to examine and account for the ways in which ‘education’ began and evolved in particular communities and societies—the bulk of this work is largely devoted to exploring the establishment and growth of schools primarily as educational enterprises. That this focus was adopted is hardly surprising, given the considerable personal and political faith invested over many generations in schools (at whatever level) as institutions purportedly dedicated to fostering the individual and collective development of those persons entrusted into their care. This faith, as the ‘deschoolers’ demonstrated so persuasively in the 1960s and 1970s, was both substantial and enduring. It culminated in an inability or reluctance on the part of many people closely associated with schools, both public and private, to view education in other than strictly institutional and administrative terms.

In our jointly taught course, students come to realise that once politicians and other interested parties began to identify schools as being the organisations best able to promote certain ideologies—as they were doing increasingly from the late 19th century—they became firm converts to the cause of compulsory schooling (see, e.g., Campbell, 1941). It was, of course, one thing for schools to be erected in a given community, into which youth might move for an indeterminate period, but quite another for all boys and girls to be required by law to enrol and remain at a school. The rationale for the latter scenario had to be broadly compelling: ostensibly, to prepare youth for their forthcoming citizenship as workers and neighbours; to introduce pupils to certain areas of knowledge sanctioned by the State and/or by a legally recognised education authority; to prevent them from growing up ‘in absolute ignorance’ and descending into ‘absolute brutishness’ (New Zealand Parliamentary Debates [NZPD], Vol. 24, 1877, p.32), and to occupy youth at a time when it was widely presumed that they would be easily diverted into unlawful and/or unproductive pursuits.

The latter consideration was an especially serious one. During debate on an Education Bill (1871) in the New Zealand House of Representatives, for example, several politicians—notably John Bathgate—boldly declared that ‘it was much better to pay the schoolmaster than the gaoler’ (NZPD, Vol.10, 1871, p.208). It was

sentiments such as these that tended to be widely echoed during the late 19th century because of a desire on the part of many statesmen to utilise the fledgling schooling system to educate youth *en masse*. Driven by the very real fear that some of these youth might very well one day grow up to 'govern the country', archives reveal a number of claims from various politicians to the effect that schooling the nation would ensure that a broad measure of democracy would be safeguarded for the next generation (see, e.g., William Russell, NZPD, Vol. 25, 1877, p.207). To this end, the politician and former Colonial Secretary Daniel Pollen confidently told Parliament:

In a democratic community like this, the possibility of the maintenance of democratic institutions as they ought to be maintained depends upon the intelligence of the people, and it is in the interests of the state to provide that intelligence with the means of civilisation [through free and compulsory primary schooling]. (NZPD, Vol. 26, 1877, p.119)

The correlation between reducing illiteracy through elementary schooling and minimising crime was accepted uncritically (NZPD, Vol.24, 1877, p.32), as was the belief that existing social class divisions would diminish if not disappear altogether once a common schooling system was operating (see, e.g., Mackey, 1967; McKenzie, 1975). Predictably, the political pressure to create a State-controlled, nationwide system of primary schooling rapidly gained momentum, as did the tendency for uniformity in schooling and its administration to become an end in itself (Mackey, 1967; Webb, 1937). Nevertheless only a minority of commentators were willing to state publicly, as Leicester Webb subsequently noted, that 'there is a point at which the very completeness and efficiency of the administrative machine becomes inimical to the true spirit of education' (1937, p.7). James Bonar was one of several politicians who remained convinced however that 'uniformity in a system of education is as great an advantage as uniformity in a railway gauge' (NZPD, Vol.26, 1877, p.132).

George Grey, twice former Governor-General of New Zealand, adopted a more pragmatic approach. His willingness to contemplate the daily lives of teachers and pupils under the proposed State primary school system post-1877 led Grey to conclude that they were unlikely to flourish in such a regimented institutional environment:

[Under the 1877 Education Bill] there is an attempt to reduce learning to one dead level. There is to be one class of teachers, all trained in the same class imparting but one set of ideas, and their teaching is to be regulated according to the wishes of Inspectors who, also, are of one mould. A great evil will be done to the country by such a system. (NZPD, Vol. 25, 1877, p.233)

Schooling under Scrutiny

As explained to our students, such concerns did not call the status of schools into question however, only their activities. This was true of the criticisms of schools levelled some 50 years later, for example, by a former Director of Education, John Caughley (1921-1927), and Frederick Bakewell, a retired senior primary school inspector. Lamenting the fact that for far too many pupils and teachers the primary school curriculum was 'regarded as a list of necessary items of knowledge or training' and that the syllabus was 'literally a collection like the stock-in-trade of a shop' (1928, p.37), Caughley opined that boys and girls were generally treated like 'elastic receptacle[s] into which and from which unlimited quantity and variety can be poured and extracted' (pp.37-38). In advocating a move away from 'think[ing] in terms of subjects and courses and schools' (p.44) whenever education was (or is) being discussed, he urged teachers and other parties not to see youth as individuals to be experimented with and manipulated. Instead, Caughley decreed that 'the child is at once the problem of education and the solution of it' (p.44) and that he or she "is a human personality with a destination of his [or her] own' (p.44). He was adamant that once teachers, school officials and other interested groups no longer saw a pupil as 'a new specimen to be dealt with from divergent points of view by each operator who takes him [or her] into his [or her] laboratory' (p.44) then education, not instruction, would rightly gain ascendancy. To this end Caughley clearly understood that schools, teachers and pupils in late 19th and early 20th century New Zealand were often busily engaged in activities that were not necessarily educational. But this did not mean that he and other like-minded critics supported the wholesale abandonment of schools because they had failed to fulfil their educational potential and that of their students.

Bakewell, for his part, reflected in retirement on his work as an inspector of schools for the Wellington education district. He, too, remarked on the frequency with which pupils were seen and treated as 'lump[s] of clay to be forcibly moulded or rather pounded into the

particular shape that might meet with the approval of the authorities of the time' (Bakewell, 1928, p.51). Several decades prior to the publication of Paulo Freire's criticisms of the dominance of a 'banking approach' to knowledge, learning and teaching, Bakewell was complaining about the tendency for examination success to be equated with high quality education. Arguing that 'totally false ideals of education' (p.53) were created in the relentless pursuit of impressive examination results, Bakewell concluded that excessive uniformity—or 'a monotonous level of attainment on certain special lines of knowledge' (p.53)—was the unfortunate but predictable consequence. He explained the phenomenon as follows:

All [pupils] had to go through the same mill. The foot was planed down to fit the boot. The fitting of square pegs into round holes was not the only evil of the system; worse evils...were the fitting of big pegs into small holes and the fitting of very small pegs into large ones. (p.53)

The 'educational horizon', Bakewell shrewdly observed, had been 'narrowed to the limits of the class room' (p.53). Consequently, the chief legacy of the 1877 Education Act—legislation allegedly designed to 'make further and better provision for the education of the [non-Maori] people in the Colony of New Zealand' (The Education Act, 1877, p.109)—was that 'education' was framed unapologetically in formal schooling terms. As argued in the first part of this paper, the results of the wholesale adoption of this mode of thinking are not, and have not been, resoundingly positive.

The Cult of Efficiency and Miseducation

Because students' 'good lives' from the late 19th century had been defined in instrumental, utilitarian terms, and since schools were regarded as the most obvious or 'natural' vehicle through which children's future prospects could be either promoted or restricted, it seems reasonable to suggest that parents were often prepared to curtail their more serious criticisms of schools in pursuit of this narrowly prescribed good life for their sons and daughters; that is, one linked to their examination performance. Nevertheless, as the Minister of Education Rex Mason (1940-1946) reported, there was a high price to be paid for viewing schools in this way. The introduction and retention

of a mass schooling model did not guarantee that children would always benefit from their schooling:

In the old [late 19th and 20th century] days, with enormous [primary school] classes, it was scarcely possible to do other than treat children in the mass, to aim the pedagogical blunderbuss at the so-called 'average' child, and hope that those who were not average were hit by a few of the flying facts. (Mason, 1945, p.11)

Our students' understanding of this dilemma is greatly assisted by David McKenzie's (1975, 1983, 1997) research on New Zealand schools and credentialling, and that of C. E. Beeby (1956, 1984). Through this literature they come to appreciate how and why schools have shaped, and continue to shape, students' school and post-school lives positively or otherwise. McKenzie, for example, coined the phrase 'the cult of efficiency and miseducation' (1997, p.47) in his study of school examinations to describe this relationship—one, moreover, that is arguably more visible in schooling in New Zealand and elsewhere than in any previous era. This cult has gathered considerable momentum, notwithstanding several criticisms of its orientation and outcomes, in an age where schools and teachers are labouring under the externally imposed doctrines of 'scientific' assessment and managerialism, institutional efficiency and accountability, among others (Gordon, 1997; Lee, O'Neill, & McKenzie, 2004; McKenzie, 1997; O'Neill, Clark, & Openshaw, 2004). Such doctrines appeal to those authorities and individuals who see safety and certainty in rigidly prescribed task prescriptions, and who view education predominantly in commercial, fiscal, and vocational terms. They will probably derive additional comfort from the policy pronouncements emphasising students' vocational preparation and economic contributions to New Zealand in the following documents: The Ministry of Education's *New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (1993) *Education for the 21st Century* (1994), and *Tertiary Education in New Zealand* (1998), and the Ministry of Commerce's (1999) *Bright Future, 5 Steps Ahead—Making Ideas Work for New Zealand* (see, e.g., Lee, Hill, & Lee, 2004; Lee & Lee, 1999). In this connection the official rhetoric of 'growing a knowledge economy' is likely to find a receptive, uncritical audience in certain quarters, the educational philosopher James Marshall (2000) perceptively observed.

We have found for our students, however, that a timely (re)assessment of this type of rhetoric and its underlying premises often

occurs after reading Harold Benjamin's (1939) superb educational fable, the 'Saber-Tooth Curriculum'. Through his account of 'the first great educational theorist and practitioner, New-Fist-Hammer-Maker' (p.185), a better appreciation is gained of significant debates relating to: education versus training; what can and ought not to count as 'knowledge' and the reasons behind the selections made; the power and control sought and exercised by different interest groups seeking to retain traditions and practices or to critique and oppose them; and the creation and dissemination of educational myths. Each of these components is revisited in our 'Social Issues in Aotearoa/ New Zealand' course by means of literature relating to the establishment and evolution of schools in New Zealand society. Students thus come to appreciate that schooling has never been free from controversy, and that dissenting views of 'education' do not disappear automatically whenever access to schools is widened under the rubric of promoting equality of educational opportunity or a related policy initiative. As Benjamin rightly concluded, the competing claims of those whom he labelled 'radicals' and 'traditionalists' ('wise old men') will be articulated prior to and following social, environmental, and educational change (Benjamin, 1939, pp.190-191). And he freely conceded that such claims would always be subject to ongoing public scrutiny.

Additional weight is afforded to Benjamin's thesis by Arnold Campbell's (1941) and C. E. Beeby's (1984) accounts of the origins and longevity of a particular approach to 'education' in 19th century New Zealand society. Campbell suggested that in their adherence to familiar, conservative, ways of thinking and acting colonists privileged 'cultural continuity...[over] practical adaptation' (1941, p.2). This orientation resulted in 'the geographical principle of adaptation to a new environment' (p.6) being suspended for several generations, as Beeby (1984) also lamented. With mass elementary schooling often regarded as a cure-all for every social and economic problem from the late 19th century—particularly those attributed to an ignorant, unschooled citizenry—it was widely viewed as 'an insurance against civil disorder' (Campbell, 1941, p. 10) and a means to prepare workers for their respective positions in an expanding workforce. Yet, despite these social and vocational roles, there was a definite limit to the State's professed generosity in the schooling domain throughout the 19th century, because Charles Bowen (the co-author of the 1877 Education Act) had not endorsed free post-primary schooling for the nation's youth in his 1877 legislation (NZPD, Vol.24, 1877, pp.32-37). Echoing this sentiment, John Mackey concluded that politicians in 1877 had

'conceived of the function of the common school as an instrument for imparting merely the elements of literacy', in their general desire to enhance the 'usefulness' of the burgeoning lower middle class (1967, p.284).

Schools, Citizenship Training, and the World of Work

That education has been concerned more with pupils' vocational preparation, economic contributions and citizenship training than with their personal, intellectual and other flourishing is also clearly in evidence when one also explores New Zealand's 'educational' past. Because pupil retention at New Zealand primary schools post-1877 had increased to an extent and at a rate not anticipated by the architects of the 1877 Act, parents and other groups began lobbying post-primary school authorities and government to 'open up' these fee-charging institutions—district high school secondary departments and technical high and secondary schools—to appropriately certificated youth (McKenzie, Lee, & Lee, 1996; Openshaw, Lee, & Lee, 1993). This move to a free place post-primary schooling system occurred between 1901 and 1905, commencing with post-primary institutions in rural communities where the bulk of New Zealand's population was located and ending with the newly established technical high schools. Pupils were left in no doubt though about the reasons why access to higher levels of schooling was endorsed by government: more schooling meant more opportunities and time for pupils to be groomed for the world of work and to receive the requisite amount of citizenship training.

These messages were reinforced in the civics textbooks approved for both primary and post-primary schools by the Department of Education. In one work circulated to thousands of Form 3 and 4 (first and second year post-primary) pupils from the early 1920s the authors, Edward and Alan Mulgan, described the relationship between 'education' and 'good citizenship' in a young, socially and politically conservative democracy as follows:

[It] benefits the individual by giving him knowledge and mental and moral training, which make him a more efficient unit of the community and generally a better citizen...because the community is made up of a number of units, which act and react on one another. It also benefits the country as a whole by making its workmen (using the term to include all who work with hand or brain) more efficient and better able

to compete with the workmen of other countries. (Mulgan & Mulgan, 1922, pp.70-71)

Five years later, in another civics textbook for Form 3 and 4 pupils, Nellie Coad chose to adopt a more utilitarian and conformist stance to schools and schooling. Boldly declaring that boys and girls should be (more) grateful for the excellent schooling they received and for the taxpayers' generosity in ensuring they had free access to all that the New Zealand schooling system could offer them, Coad informed readers that 'the real reason of the school' was to show all pupils 'how to work and how to employ their leisure' (1927, p.9).

In spite of this unapologetically instrumentalist approach to schools and their purpose, the Thomas Committee showed a clear softening of this orientation in their 1944 Report. Recommending that post-primary school authorities and teachers should revisit their activities and orientation to ensure they were properly educational in word and deed (Department of Education, 1944), the Committee prioritised 'the full development of the adolescent as a person' (p.5) over preparing boys and girls for their future roles of 'worker, neighbour, homemaker, and citizen' (p.5). Although the latter objective was certainly not ignored, they nonetheless outlined their educational philosophy in more general terms by declaring:

All post-primary pupils, irrespective of their varying abilities and their varying occupational ambitions, [should] receive a generous and well balanced education... In practice both personal needs and social needs have all too often been pushed into the background, especially by economic pressures...the educative process has been restricted and distorted as the result of economic pressure, to the ultimate disadvantage not only of the individual, but of society also. (p.5)

From the outset, the Committee criticised the fact that for too long 'attainments that can readily be marketed' (p.5)—school qualifications—had governed teachers' and pupils' lives to the detriment of '[those] personal and intellectual qualities that mark the live...student' (p.8). In this and other respects they had undoubtedly been influenced by the 'liberal' views of the energetic Director of Education, C. E. Beeby (1940-1960). Seeking to emphasize the educational potential of schools rather than their well-known ability to coach students to pass high status public examinations in response to external demands, the Committee concluded that education differed

from traditional schooling

...in such things as intellectual curiosity and receptivity for ideas, in tenacity and drive, in clarity and precision of thinking, in flexibility of mind, and capacity of adjustment to novel needs and situations...[and where people are not] denied experiences that are needed for full and healthy growth. (p.8)

While historical and sociological research clearly demonstrates that the Committee members were rather optimistic in their thoughts and recommendations (see, e.g., Lee, Hill, & Lee, 2004; McKenzie, 1983; Nash, 1980; O'Neill, 2004; Openshaw, Lee, & Lee, 1993), there is no doubt that their report stimulated debate about school activities and their respective educational merit. Sadly, despite the Committee's pleas that 'educators' generally adopt a more political, philosophical, and sociological perspective towards schooling, a retreat from such questions has characterised the last sixty years of our educational 'development'.

Evidence for this conclusion is not difficult to find. The current Secretary for Education, Howard Fancy, for instance, has been an enthusiastic and long-term advocate of an outcomes-based approach to education. As many of his statements clearly reveal, Fancy is fully convinced that a government should be able to specify in detail the skills, values, attitudes, and knowledge that students need to acquire and demonstrate in order to live successfully in the present and future global society (see, e.g., Ministry of Education, 2002). With this thinking symptomatic of an unassailable faith in a quantitative schooling model that allows 'objective' comparisons to be made readily between students' attainments in different OECD countries (Fancy, 2004), it is further presumed the introduction of such a model will guarantee high quality education for the nation's students. Sentiments such as these are captured openly in the Ministry of Education's (2004) schooling strategy:

Schooling Strategy Goal—Excellence and equity of outcomes for all students: To this end all students will leave school with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and sense of identity they need to enrich their own lives and become contributors and leaders in a 21st century world. (p.10)

What seems to have been ignored in most official discourse is the inevitable tendency for policymakers in an age of perceived and/or real 'change' to privilege the tangible and pragmatic, and whatever is more easily measurable, over what can and ought to be considered educational (see, e.g., Lee & Lee, 1999; Marshall, 2000). In other words, a thesis of passive accommodation effectively militates against the possibility of educational restoration or recovery, with predictable consequences for Freirean or similar approaches to education. This was what Marshall meant when he wrote about 'the subsumption of education' (2000, p.13) to external forces. It was also what Christian Cole, a University of Sierra Leone academic, had in mind when he warned readers over 30 years ago:

[It is recognised that] society is going through a period of rapid changes propelled by advances in technology. The rapidity of change, pregnant as it is with the desire for an increase in material benefits, may tend to over-emphasize the utilitarian much more than other aspects of national [and personal] development. This dilemma carries with it the threat of dehumanisation....(1972, p.21)

Conclusion

It is against this background that we suggest to our students that the reason why they have found it so difficult throughout the course to think of education in other than schooling terms has been because of the continuing dominance of both a commodified and institutionalised concept of education throughout their own upbringing. As we also point out to them, given that such a definition has been consolidated in practice for such a long period throughout New Zealand's history, it is certainly by no means coincidental that their choice to be an 'educator' has likewise been cast narrowly in schooling terms. In our experience of teaching this course, however, by merely prompting students to discuss the reasons why they have had so much trouble in considering education in a broader onto-formative manner, particularly during the first section of the course, they come to a heightened sense of awareness of the legitimacy of these concerns.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the typical response we initially elicit from our students is one of anger—anger that they have never before been challenged to interrogate these normative assumptions, and anger that the very institution in which one would

expect this challenge to have occurred has chosen the (easy) pathway of accommodation instead. Ironically, it is the students' own developing self-awareness of the nature of the intellectual struggle that they have experienced throughout the course which ultimately drives home to them the saliency of the ideas we teach.

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