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We were reminded by Chris of a number of events that happened in the UK and around the world during 1974, some good to remember, others rather grim. I shared some extracts from the programme of the first annual conference, held in Birmingham that year, which featured many names that are still well-known to us, as well as apparently frequent retreats ‘to the bar’.

One of the names in the programme was that of our first President, John Nisbet, and it was wonderful that his daughter and son-in-law, Liz and John Wallace, came down from their home Aberdeen to help in awarding the first Nisbet Fellowships. We could not have had two more worthy recipients whose lifetime contribution to educational research – and to policy and practice – has been immense: Professors Paul Black and Kathy Sylva. Paul received the award from Liz and, in Kathy’s absence, her colleague Brenda Taggart received the award on her behalf from Joe (Kathy’s absence was more evidence of her continuing deep commitment to her work – she had been unable to resist a last minute call to the DfE to discuss her research, although we were able to toast her in the evening when she attended the conference dinner).

All three keynote speeches were well received: from Andrew Brown speaking to the early career researchers on the first day, through Danny Dorling talking about education and ‘the 1%’ (coinciding with the publication of his book *Inequality and the 1%*), to Sugata Mitra and David Leat doing a very stimulating ‘double act’ right at the end of the conference, on the topic of new approaches to learning, adopting global technologies.

Several people I spoke with told me how high the quality of papers in the parallel sessions was. Certainly in the three symposia in which I had the privilege of acting as discussant, this was the case and whether this consistent high quality represents ‘a coming of age’ or that ‘life begins at 40’ I am not sure – but it is certainly good news.

In mid-December we will find out how educational research in our universities has been judged by a group of our peers, as the outcomes of the 2104 Research Excellence Framework are announced. I remain optimistic that we will see a report of further significant development in the overall quality of the work that is done across the UK and I would like to think that BERA has played some part in supporting that development. We in the process of setting up the annual BERA meeting for University Heads of Education Departments and will be inviting the Chair of the Education Sub-Panel, Andrew Pollard (himself a former member of BERA Council) and some of his colleagues to join us to discuss those outcomes. Finally, let me reiterate my profound gratitude to Mary James for her immense contribution to BERA as an Officer over the past four years. We presented her with a riding stick as a farewell gift during Conference (which I ignorantly referred to as a riding crop), in the expectation that she will spend a significant part of her well-earned retirement on horseback. In her place, it is a great pleasure to welcome Gemma Moss as the Vice-President/President-elect. She will take over from me during our 2105 conference, which as you should know by now, will be held in Belfast, at Queen’s University. I do remember the previous occasion when we met there and it was a very fine occasion. I am already looking forward to next year and urge you to make sure you meet the submission deadlines for papers, symposia and posters as well as challenging you to try out some of the new forms of presentation which our Conference Committee is suggesting.

Ian Menter
University of Oxford

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From the President

The Annual Conference in London, at which we celebrated our 40th anniversary, was a great success. For me – as well as receiving the enormous birthday cake presented to us by Chris Husbands, on behalf of our hosts, the Institute of Education - the highlights were many.
IT WAS VERTICAL IN NATURE rather than horizontal and although the IOE could do with more lifts (!) delegates negotiated their way up and down the nine floors taking in three stimulating Keynote Lectures, over 200 paper sessions, three Keynote Symposia and the publishers’ exhibitions on the way. Feedback would suggest that the quality of papers was high and the buzz in the breaks would certainly suggest that delegates were avidly networking.

Our 40th Anniversary ‘Question Time’ with Peter Mortimore, Pamela Munn (both past presidents), Sam Freedman and Alison Peacock and effectively chaired by Warwick Mansell set the standard of challenge for the Conference. Danny Dorling, geographer and cartographer, continued by giving a non-education view that made us challenge our own understanding of our field, and Sugata Mitra and David Leat concluded the Conference by challenging the future and what it could (or could not) mean for learning.

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This is our last year with In-Conference, who have so ably organised our annual Conference since 2001. We will miss them but with the appointment of Marie Blythe, our Events Manager, from next year we will be doing it all ‘in-house’. The new Conference website (www.bera.ac.uk/beraconference-2015) was launched at the Conference in London where Joanne Hughes, from Queens University, gave a lively presentation on the attractions of Belfast as a conference venue. We have not been to Northern Ireland for 17 years but with the budget airlines flying from regional airports for many of us it is cheaper to fly there than travel to London. So we are anticipating another highly successful Conference.

Abstract submission is already open but we have made some changes so please read the

submissions page carefully.

- We have simplified the symposium submission in that you will no longer need abstracts for each paper but just one longer (600 word) abstract covering the symposium itself and how the papers work together.
- SIGs will be grouping individual papers into quasi-symposia and where papers cannot be seen to relate to any others authors will be offered a round table session.
- There is a new category - Innovation - which encourages new forms of presentation. For example, we will be having an Open Space session where topics for discussion are solicited at the time. This may be the forum for further discussion on keynote presentations or that fascinating piece of research that provoked so many questions.
- There is the opportunity for those of you who do not feel any SIG is the appropriate setting for your paper or symposium. You will need to contact Marie to give keywords and the Conference Committee will find reviewers.

Planning for Belfast 2015 is already well underway so we hope to see you there on 15-17 September 2015.

Felicity Wikeley
Chair, Conference Committee

Joanne Hughes, from Queens University, gave a lively presentation on the attractions of Belfast as a conference venue

There is a new category – Innovation – which encourages new forms of presentation. For example, we will be having an Open Space session where topics for discussion are solicited at the time
News from the BERA Office

Our 40th anniversary landmarks, the first two BERA John Nisbet Fellows, Mary James ends her term, membership renewals and a new member of office staff

40@40 – A portrait of 40 years of educational research through 40 studies
As part of our 40th anniversary celebrations, BERA has collected together a set of 40 landmark studies that have had a significant impact on educational policy, practice, research methodology and/or theory over the past 40 years. The final 40 come from across the UK (and beyond where they have had substantial impact in UK settings), from a range of academic disciplines, from researchers of every background and every perspective, and from a range of qualitative and quantitative research traditions.

Accompanying the list of 40 is a publication which provides details of the studies themselves and the policy context in which they were published. Please visit the website for more details: https://www.bera.ac.uk/project/40at40.

BERA@40 History Timeline
Another way of marking 40 years of BERA has been to create a resource that charts some of the key moments over its lifetime – key moments both for the Association and also for educational research in the UK. Our intention was that this should draw as much as possible on existing resources (for example archive copies of our Journals, Presidential addresses, conference papers and the members’ newsletter, Research Intelligence) but it was not confined to these. Additional elements include photographs, videos, interviews with key figures from both BERA and the discipline as a whole as well as views and comments from other sources such as Government Departments and funding agencies. Rather than compiling a book, our approach has been to assemble a curated collection of digital artefacts that tell the history of the Association in multimedia format.

To view the timeline, please visit: https://www.bera.ac.uk/researchers-resources/the-bera40-history-timeline.

BERA John Nisbet Fellowship
BERA was delighted to announce the appointment of the first two BERA John Nisbet Fellows at the Annual Conference. Named in honour of our first President, these are awarded annually to one or more people who are deemed to have made an outstanding contribution to educational research over their career.

The first two recipients are Paul Black (Professor of Science Education at King’s College London)
and Kathy Sylva (Professor of Educational Psychology at the University of Oxford) and we were delighted to welcome members of the Nisbet family to the Conference for the presentation.

Mary James
This year’s Conference also saw the end of Mary James’s time on BERA Council following the completion of her term as Vice-President. Mary's leadership, guidance and experience have been vital to BERA's development as an organisation in recent years and she will be much missed – although we hope to retain her advice and counsel!

Membership Renewals
2014 saw BERA's membership on the rise and with your support we are extending the work we can undertake. So far this year we have held more events than ever, extended our range of publications, added new awards, bursaries and fellowships, increased funding for SIGs and raised BERA’s profile in lobbying on behalf of educational research.

A strong, active and engaged membership base is crucial to our work and with that in mind, Council has decided to freeze membership fees for 2015. By now, you should have received information on your renewals and if you have not done so already please renew now to avoid any interruption to your member benefits. Any queries, please contact membership@bera.ac.uk.

New member of BERA Office staff
Sarah Mills-McEwan joined BERA as Membership Officer in September 2014, after spending the past five years gaining membership coordination and project management experience in a variety of different sectors. Prior to her role at BERA, Sarah worked in the Canadian non-profit sector as the Membership & Partnership Coordinator for Canada’s Public Policy Forum, where she played a key role in the creation and delivery of the organization’s membership strategy. She was previously employed for three years as a junior policy officer and program officer for the Government of Canada in the International Expositions directorate. In 2014 Sarah relocated back to the UK to work as a membership administrator in the higher education sector at the University of Essex.

At BERA Sarah’s main responsibilities include member services, maintaining the website and client database, as well as social media and other administrative duties within the BERA office. Sarah holds an Honours degree in Philosophy and Political Science from the University of Ottawa.

The BERA Office
The BERA offices are based in Endsleigh Gardens, London. They are led by BERA’s Executive Director, Nick Johnson, supported by Farzana Rahman, Marie Blythe and Sarah Mills-McEwan.

Farzana, as BERA office manager, coordinates the administrative workload in the office, and works with Nick to support the governance structure of the Association. In her role as Events Manager, Marie organises the Annual Conference, attracting over 800 delegates. Marie also manages the Annual Lecture introduced by BERA this year, and the many events organised by the SIGs. Sarah has joined the team as Membership Officer.

To contact the BERA office, please telephone 020 7612 6987 or email enquiries@bera.ac.uk. Our address is BERA Office, 9–11 Endsleigh Gardens, London, WC1H 0EH.

Mary James receives thanks from Ian Menter for her time as BERA’s President and Vice-President

Sarah Mills-McEwan

Use this Quick Response code to view the new BERA website
SAVE THE DATE

2015
ANNUAL
CONFERENCE
BERA GOES TO BELFAST
QUEENS UNIVERSITY, BELFAST
15–17 SEPTEMBER 2015

www.bera.ac.uk/beraconference-2015
events@bera.ac.uk

KEY DATES
25 September    Abstract submissions open
12 January       Abstract deadline
23 March         Authors notified of outcome of submission
13 April         Authors notified of date and time of presentation
01 May           Early bird registration deadline. All presenters to be registered
Ruth Boyask has selected a wide range of authors to provide an international focus on the subject and emphasise that this is a global as well as a national debate. Each of the articles provides a different perspective on equality and education but together they represent a powerful expression of the issues that need to be addressed. In her introduction to the articles, below, she explains how this particular BERA project came about.

SOME OF BERA’S EDUCATIONAL RESEARCHERS have recently joined together to put forward a vision for the future of children and young people that is more equal, inclusive and socially just, and informed by research from the past 40 years. The Respecting Children and Young People project was established to stimulate public debate about equality and education prior to the Westminster election in May 2015. The project is centred on a blog where educational researchers are responding to key issues of educational policy that impact upon the lives of children and young people, and interrogating the issues from lessons learnt through educational research (BERA, 2014). We are developing a manifesto that outlines our policy recommendations for the incoming government from the work collated on this blog.

The devolved nature of government in the United Kingdom means that the education policy of Westminster only has direct influence upon the English educational system. Yet many inequalities faced by children and young people in England, as in the other nations of the United Kingdom, are influenced by changes beyond its national borders. Globalisation has brought new risks, making the lives of children and young people more precarious as they are exposed to human-induced crises such as financial instability or war, and natural disasters like climate change or contagion (UNDP, 2014). The capacity of national policy to intervene in the negative repercussions of global change is limited. Yet educational researchers can do more for children and young people than recognise the difficulties they face. Globalisation also brings possibilities for productive intervention through new opportunities for intercultural dialogue, and exchange of knowledge and practice (Kaur, Quinlivan & Boyask, 2009).

This issue of Research Intelligence aims to extend the conversation started by the Respecting Children and Young People project by examining its theme beyond the statutory responsibilities of the Westminster government. Through extending the conversation we may “…draw upon the insights of our cultural others to reveal the limitations and possibilities inherent within our own sites of investigation that we may not otherwise notice” (Ibid, p. xii). Contributions have been sought from a new group of researchers from Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, England and other nations, who address the theme from a global perspective by drawing upon their own and others’ research on social justice and education. The contributions differ in that contributors have chosen to focus upon global, national or local enactments of educational policy, yet together they build a picture of how global change connects and impacts upon children and young people.
Young People Deserve More than a ‘Winner Takes All’ Approach to Education

Many education systems around the world have embraced the ideology of choice, competition and accountability – or what Pasi Sahlberg (2011) calls ‘the global education reform movement’, or GERM.

Choice approaches to education hence tend to reproduce social inequalities, and hence unequal future opportunities.

By Susan L. Robertson, University of Bristol

I HAVE A DIFFERENT PHRASE for the same phenomenon; of ‘narrow-minded economism’ that has taken for itself the right to define good education. Youth feel it particularly potently. They are in a ‘high stakes’ life space between dependence and making choices about an increasingly complex and fragile future. In a large research project on governing education trajectories of young learners across eight European countries, we found that learners experienced increasing pressure to be successful in the education market (Ule et al, 2014). The transition into adulthood is considerably more challenging because choice, in actuality, means unequal access to those resources that help realise choices. Choice approaches to education hence tend to reproduce social inequalities, and hence unequal future opportunities.

The young people in the study worried about when and how to enter the labour market – a situation clearly more complicated when around them they see very high levels of unemployment amongst graduates (Brown, Lauder & Ashton, 2012). Yet youth are being pressured not just to go to university, but a good university, at great financial cost given changes in university fees! And whilst the social relevance of getting a good education seems to have increased, buoyed by the idea that we are moving into a knowledge-based society which demands high skills, disadvantaged groups (ethnic/class/gender) do not have the resources or social power to change their positions in the social hierarchies of the different European countries. At one level, such aspirations, ambivalences and fears have been the hallmark of youth. But Ule et al’s study showed that the wider changes in education system and societies have a huge impact on their learning, sense of self, relationships to each other and their view of the future.

As sociologists have observed for some time, educational problems that young learners face are less due to individual deficits and more a consequence of the structures of an increasingly unequal society and world. Thomas Piketty – the French economist – has been making waves with his recent book (2014). Backed by good evidence, he argues what we have intuitively known for some time; there is growing global inequality, and that wealth is being concentrated in a smaller and smaller group of the very wealthy. As Piketty (2014: 432-33) notes: billionaires owned just 0.4 % of global private wealth in 1987, but in 2013 this was 1.5%; a figure above the previous record of 1.4% attained in 2008 - the eve of the financial crisis. Yet rampant neoliberalism, with its focus on individualism and a deepening culture of competition, accountability and performance – for learners and teachers – is set to strengthen these inequalities, particularly for the next generation, unless we push for a reversal of current policies being championed by...
national governments, international organisations and corporate interests.

The growth of a global data-driven approach to governing education

Young people also increasingly face a future where important decisions about education are being made by groups who are not properly democratically accountable. Over the past decade, we have seen significant power moving upward to the small group of (mostly unaccountable) global players who make decisions on what learners are to learn, and teachers are to teach. These moves are legitimised by the view that ‘the race to the top’ is so important that education systems need to learn better how to learn and compare their performances with others. And if a policy recipe needs to be dished around, then the global agencies are on hand to provide it. This one-size-fits-all global data driven approach to education necessarily closes down opportunities for diversity, experimentation, creativity and innovation, because it offers only one route to success and the top. For instance the best learner, according to the OECD’s Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) is one who can demonstrate their capacity to solve problems in areas like mathematics, science and literacy. The competent teacher, according to the OECD’s Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) is one who does not use didactic pedagogies – but instead prefers enquiry-based approaches, and who is a constructivist in their pedagogy, rather than teaching discipline-based knowledge.

Now the point of raising this here is not to debate the merits or otherwise of constructivism or more enquiry-based learning. Rather, we need to ask a series of questions about how and where these decisions came to be made, and why it is that there has been a narrowing of what counts as good education, and shrinking opportunities for asking questions and making decisions for those concerned with education – the teaching profession, families, the public, and young people. Surely this is not how to engage in education if we want to engage young learners in the task of building a more democratic and sustainable future!

When the bottom line is not the human right to quality learning – but profit

A 2014 report published by investment advisors working for Merrill Lynch Bank of America gave the estimated value of education as $4.3 trillion (2014). This is serious business; the business of edu-business. Who were to be the beneficiaries? Not students, or teachers, or the future generation who will depend on a ‘wiser’ population to organise societal affairs. Instead, three large global publishing companies, including Pearson Education which is one of the biggest education corporations in the world, were tipped to be main beneficiaries (Ball, 2012).

Of course the publishing world has always had a strong foothold in education – whether in schools, colleges or universities – through their interests in textbook production, journals, and so on. But these firms are not imagining themselves as operating on the margins but rather moving into core business, or engaged in shaping the education sector as well as institutional fortunes and careers in significant ways.

A conversation about the future of education for a future generation

Any future curriculum and pedagogy, and mode of assessment, if it is to engage with, and deliver a more socially-just set of outcomes, must be prepared to challenge the excess of competitiveness, individualism and economism in education: typically expressed as my choice, my aspirations – just for me. At one level this is crucially important, in that we know that our aspirations for children and their learning have real consequences for their futures. This is what the choosing class has been good at. Yet we have increasingly let ourselves slip into an access/opportunities/choice model, and failed to talk of the ways in which the individualising of aspirations has negative effects on those social groups who are unable to realise theirs. These are distributional arguments. Presumably the ‘choosing’ family did not set out to intentionally create a worse outcome for others – especially working-class families (Robertson & Dale, 2013). Nevertheless, the unintended, but predictable, outcomes for those working-class families are related to the decisions of other better placed families and the accumulated effects of similar decisions.

We need to promote a different vision of education that provides a contribution to making social beings and societies. Roberto Unger’s (2001) insights are particularly appropriate here – he argues that every one of us needs to take on the care of another – as a responsibility, and not just responsibility for ourselves. How might we have conversations that rethink the curriculum, pedagogy and our forms of assessment that acknowledge this as a fundamental value, and way of living life?
Respect for Others Must Begin in the Classroom

Critical perspectives on the nature and impacts of globalization are on the rise in Western societies today.

**The Globalization of Work** has led to new dichotomies and hierarchies at a global scale of haves and have-nots, often retracing historical colonial boundaries. Technology brings people around the globe together at the touch of a button, and also enables us to witness devastation and harm of people worldwide. Within wealthy societies, innocent children experience poverty and depressed opportunities for flourishing, as systems of education and welfare are reshaped by market ideologies.

In this context, educators are calling for ‘compassionate global citizenship’ as a virtue to impart to young people, as new participants in democratic society, to empower them to recognize and respond to innocents suffering in their community, and around the world. Compassionate global citizenship, as Nussbaum (2001) argues, involves acting to benefit (or desiring to benefit or not harm) those who are observed to suffer from serious problems through no fault of their own (nondesert). Such compassionate civic action further requires a ‘judgment of similar possibilities’ – that one is like you, in some way (Nussbaum, 2001, 420). This latter requirement is one we often lack in Western societies. We feel more for our friends who had lousy vacations than for people without food, water or shelter. There is a tendency to extend concern from immediate social circles, to others ‘like’ oneself – by nationality, ethnicity, and so on – and thus meet the most severe crises with numbness and ambivalence.

Nussbaum argues that learning for empathetic imagination is key to battling this tendency. Relatedly, Hytten (2009) recommends that we teach in schools about the connections we share with others worldwide, based on the tags on our clothing or where our gadgets were manufactured, for example. From here, Hytten imagines students becoming empowered to start grassroots campaigns on a local or global level to positively impact others around them, with an understanding of root causes of problems, rather than their most obvious symptoms.

However, education that starts from the idea that right feelings will lead to right actions is not always seen to work well in practice. As Applebaum (2007) notes, privileged students can resist emotional learning related to inequality. Older students may not want their emotions ‘toyed with’, or to experience feeling responsible or accountable for global harms which connect to unasked for, complicated social privileges and advantages. To get the judgements right, morally perfect educators seem required here, who understand their students well and can be understood by students as moral exemplars; this is a tall order in normal classroom environments.

On the other hand, even when all goes well, such an education can be overwhelming. Aiming for a uniformly received curriculum across a group of students is impractical in this case, as some students may be triggered into

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The technology brings people around the globe together at the touch of a button, and also enables us to witness devastation and harm of people worldwide.
How can we teach young people to act in society, in compassion for those who suffer, and with knowledge and awareness of links between global and local challenges of social justice?

Angst or despair at the scale of problems, while others seem untouched. Through volunteer experiences in their community or abroad, people can develop cynicism and hopelessness, when development agendas seem misaligned to local needs, and when they experience first-hand the complexities involved in making small improvements (Jackson, 2014). Or, they can imagine they made things better, when they have effectively disempowered others, re-establishing dichotomies of Westerners helping ‘savages’, who also learn from the encounter, that they cannot help themselves (Jackson, 2014).

So what are educators to do? How can we teach young people to act in society, in compassion for those who suffer, and with knowledge and awareness of links between global and local challenges of social justice? One possibility is to develop through education a sense of rational altruism. While emotions are unstable motivators of action, if we understand that people suffer through no fault of their own, and observe a connection between ourselves and others, we can begin to understand it as part of the duty of benevolence to act in the interest of unfortunate others, as possible. Such a sense of moral, unemotional duty has been cited by some rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe as motivating their actions (Konarzewski, 1992). Research with children also reveals that they learn about right and wrong in an objective sense first, and ‘do not attach moral sentiments to them’ until they get older (Zembylas, 2008, 4).

Of course, there are hurdles to developing a richer moral education in British schools (among others). As private ‘choice’ over education begins to dominate policy-making, in contexts marked by middle-class economic insecurity, providing an education for financial success of children will be prioritized by well-meaning, socially concerned parents (Merry, 2014). In this context, the hidden curricula of schools can contradict messages of compassionate global citizenship or moral civic education, in support of market values – private enterprise, personal liberty, meritocracy, and so on. Moral perspectives in policy-making related to curriculum and pedagogy become obscured, while institutions and organizations oriented toward social justice have been dismantled by political leadership in the past few decades (Peters & Besley, 2014). Some feel that even the autonomy of advantaged young people is threatened today, as market values dominate in media and public spaces in society.

In this context, education must be defended as a moral endeavour, and not merely as a venue to financial flourishing. Whether we like it or not, schools and classrooms teach messages of right and wrong, and can be seen to teach today that failing to respond to inequality and injustice is acceptable, when educators are discouraged from explicating alternative views.Returning to moral and civic aims of education is imperative for young people to learn from past mistakes and strive to increase equality. Of course, moral education is tricky, given values pluralism in democratic societies – but this does not justify viewing current demoralization of education as acceptable. We owe young people a better world, not merely a wealthier one.

As private ‘choice’ over education begins to dominate policy-making, in contexts marked by middle-class economic insecurity, providing an education for financial success of children will be prioritized by well-meaning, socially concerned parents (Merry, 2014).

References


Poverty, Class, and the Cultivation of Economically Just Educational Policy: The role of ideology

Few ideas have so thoroughly captured the collective imagination of the United States citizenry as the idea that education is the *great equalizer*.

I now know, of course, that meritocracy is a myth, as is its ideological cousin, the notion that schools are great equalizers. I now know and like many researchers have documented (Gorski, 2013) how advantage begets advantage even in – *especially* in – the United States education system. I know that on average the most economically privileged children, especially if they are white, are sent to the most well-resourced schools with the most experienced teachers, the smallest class sizes, the most engaging pedagogies, and the most access to a well-rounded curricula that incorporate the arts and physical education, and that the least economically privileged children, especially if they are of color, are sent on average to more or less the opposite of that. Most importantly, though, I know this: the great equalizer and meritocracy myths are narratives that help to justify, using Jonathan Kozol’s (1992) language, this savagely unequal distribution of opportunity.

The trouble for me now, as somebody who works with schools and school systems full of leaders enthusiastic about creating policy to address socioeconomically based educational outcome inequalities, is that this reality is of little mitigating consequence against mass perception. As a result, neither in the United States nor, I would add, in any of the other countries where I have helped schools and school systems address these issues, is there a lack of policy interventions against economic outcome inequalities. Rather, there is an abundance of policy interventions built on faulty assumptions, such as the assumption that we can fix socioeconomic class based educational outcome inequalities by fixing supposed deficiencies.
Some of the most common deficit approach interventions are mitigative in nature. Like hosting a canned food drive or distributing blankets to people who are homeless, they are no real threat to outcome inequalities because they do not change the conditions that cause outcome inequalities in people in poverty or by fixing supposed deficiencies in underpaid teachers teaching in high-poverty schools where they, too, are denied the resources they need to do so effectively. In fact, when I reviewed roughly the past 30 years of research on the greatest barriers facing students in poverty in the United States (Gorski, 2013), what stood out to me as the most formidable and most ignored barrier was purely ideological rather than practical (Robinson, 2007; Williams, 2009). The problem, again, was not a lack of interventions, but the fact that the people designing the interventions were doing so through a deficit lens – a lens that grays out the gross inequalities that are the roots of outcome inequalities. These include not only unequal access to educational opportunity, but also unequal access to healthcare, safe and affordable housing, and living wage jobs, among other commodities – among other basic human rights in a nation that can afford to provide them to everybody.

Some of the most common deficit approach interventions are mitigative in nature. Like hosting a canned food drive or distributing blankets to people who are homeless, they are no real threat to outcome inequalities because they do not change the conditions that cause outcome inequalities. For example, many schools offer tutors and assign mentors to students in poverty. Others, ignoring decades of research demonstrating that low-income people value education just as much as their wealthier peers, nudge low-income parents and guardians into parenting workshops and in doing so often further alienate them. It is important to acknowledge that this happens, not because purposefully repressive educators are targeting marginalized students. In some ways the reality is scarier: these are the common practices in schools in the United States because ideologically most educators, from classroom teachers to state-level administrators, like most citizens more generally, have bought into the deficit view.
Quality Education For All: The challenge for the education research community

Let me say at the outset how much I admire the concept and production of UNESCO’s successive Global Monitoring Reports (GMRs). The GMRs provide a unique snapshot of where we are. Progress towards EFA is reported but so are the intractable problems that slow things down. This GMR helpfully lists the 10 most important reforms needed. Number 1, the need to activate policies to address the vast shortfall in teachers, has been a recurring theme across all the GMRs. Number 3, the need for meaningful professional development opportunities for teachers, has likewise featured in every GMR. The reports are a heady mixture of hope and gloom. Yes we’re getting more children into school but for three out of four children the experience is pretty dire.

What is to be done? I want to orientate my comments towards the education research community. And I want to make just four points.

First, the GMR is a unique reference point for defining the research agenda. Here in the UK we have many examples of high-class research. But we could do a great deal more. Providing a school place for every child and ensuring the teaching is of the very best quality possible is, in my view, the world’s number one major education problem. We need international research and cooperation on an unprecedented scale to understand and overcome the obstacles that this GMR describes so cogently. We see such a mobilization in the health sector in the fight to eradicate the triple killers of malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/Aids. Could we emulate this in striving to achieve high quality Education For All?

Some people have pointed to the much smaller research budgets for education than health. But I wonder whether it’s more that the education research community is failing to provide the sort of evidence that policy-makers and practitioners want.

Which brings me to my second point. The education development agenda is crying out for more applied, intervention studies than is fashionable amongst education researchers today. Whilst designing, implementing and monitoring interventions is commonplace in the health sector, it is a rarity in education. I know of some...
Some of the most important issues identified by the GMR might appear rather mundane

In Sub-Saharan Africa, as the GMR shows (p. 52) we still have 30 million children out of school. In 30 years time there will be twice as many African children under the age of 14 as there are now. How is this going to be managed?

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fashion in research. Some of the most important issues identified by the GMR might appear rather mundane; teacher deployment is one example, the role of the local district education office in supporting teachers, especially in rural areas, is another. Alison Buckler’s research on women teachers in rural parts of Sub-Saharan Africa suggests how crucial the district office is to the teacher’s sense of agency (Buckler, 2014) but investigations in this area are few and far between.

I was impressed with the themes that DFID have identified in their admirable new ESRC-linked initiative ‘Education and Development: raising learning outcomes in education systems’. There is encouragement for applied R&D and intervention studies. And some of the less fashionable topics are given priority.

But one issue not addressed by DFID is the question of scale, and scale over long time spans, and here I come to my final point. The GMR gives this a strong focus. We need to know more about how very big systems operate and how they expand. There is very little evidence on this. Implicit in some development thinking is, I think, the idea that once we’ve got the large numbers of children into school, once we’ve found and trained sufficient teachers then our ‘goal’ will have been achieved.

This is not the way things are going to work out. Expansion at scale is going to be a norm for the rest of this century. Just look at Sub-Saharan Africa where the biggest EFA challenges exist. In 1970 there were 360 million Africans, a tenth of the world’s population. By the middle of this century there is likely to be 2.7 billion, a quarter of the world’s population. In Sub-Saharan Africa, as the GMR shows (p. 52) we still have 30 million children out of school. In 30 years time there will be twice as many African children under the age of 14 as there are now. How is this going to be managed? What can be done to prepare for such unprecedented expansion? Are the educational structures developed essentially for 19th Century ambitions really going to take the strains of the 21st Century? Can we go on living with inequities and lost entitlements, in the way so many children suffer today, on such a scale? These are major global research questions.

The GMR point out that ‘business as usual’ is not an option. The research community can make a big contribution to defining the alternatives. But we have to raise our game to do this; research on education and development needs to become a mainstream, not niche endeavor, and this report provides us with an excellent starting point.

This paper is derived from Bob’s address to the conference launching the 2013-14 GMR ‘Teaching and Learning: Achieving Quality for All’ Institute of Education, London, April 7 2014. This conference was jointly organized with UNESCO by The British Association for International and Comparative Education (BAICE) and the UK Forum for International Education and Training (UKFIET).

References

1 Bob Moon was appointed in 2014 to chair the commissioning panel for this programme.
Developing Mutually Respectful Adult-child Relationships in Schools: Is this a reality experienced equally by all pupils?

The European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) of 1950 set out core civic rights and freedoms for children and young people.

Article 12 of the UNCRC (1989) gives children and young people the right to express their views in all matters affecting them, and for these views to be given due weight in accordance with the child's age and maturity

THESE RIGHTS WERE ENSHRINED in UK law through the Human Rights Act of 1988. This was followed in 1989 by the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which provided additional protection for the rights and freedoms of children; the UK government ratified the UNCRC in 1991. Together these conventions provide for the rights and freedoms of children and young people, and affirm that children are equally legitimate holders of human rights as adults.

Recent educational policy documentation within England makes specific reference to the rights of children within the UNCRC (1989). For example, in 2008, guidance from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) ‘Working together: Listening to the voices of children and young people’ asserted that schools have a duty to promote children’s and young people’s well-being, and that this requirement is underpinned by the UNCRC (DCSF, 2008; 3). It is also clearly stated that there is an expectation for schools to ensure the views of children and young people are ‘heard and valued in the taking of decisions which affect them, and that they are supported in making a positive contribution to their school and local community’ (Ibid: 5). More recently, the Department for Education (DfE, 2014) issued statutory guidance, ‘Listening to and involving children and young people’, in which schools are strongly encouraged to pay due regard to the UNCRC. Within the guidance, it is stated: ‘This legislation is underpinned by the general principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), …in particular, article 12…’. Article 12 of the UNCRC (1989) gives children and young people the right to express their views in all matters affecting them, and for these views to be given due weight in accordance with the child’s age and maturity. Within this and other Articles of the UNCRC, there is an inherent expectation that respect will be shown towards children and young people; however, the embedding of these Articles into educational policy documents is no guarantee that they will be translated into practices grounded in demonstrating respect for pupils; it is the manner in which these rights are interpreted and upheld that is of significance.

A drive to developing a rights-respecting school ethos

There has been a purposeful and determined drive by UNICEF UK to promote knowledge and understanding of the UNCRC within schools, and to build rights-respecting school communities through the development of their Rights Respecting Schools Award (RRSA). The RRSA seeks to put the UNCRC at the heart of a school’s ethos; it helps schools to use the UNCRC as
their values framework, and specifically teaches pupils about their rights and their responsibilities to respect the rights of others (Sebba & Robinson, 2010). The RRSA was introduced in 2004; there are now over 3,200 primary, secondary and special schools in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales registered for the award. A three-year evaluation of UNICEF UK’s Rights Respecting Schools approach found that where schools were actively working towards RRSA, pupils and staff reported changes in their school’s ethos, with staff and pupils demonstrating relatively higher levels of respect, understanding and tolerance for each other than had previously been the case (Ibid). In particular, pupils and staff reported improved relationships and behavior since the introduction of RRSA. They considered this was largely attributable to pupils having an increased knowledge of their own and other people’s rights, and an improved understanding by pupils and staff of their responsibilities to respect the rights of others. Where schools were working towards RRSA, staff and pupils adopted a rights-respecting language; fundamental to this was an expectation that all members of the school community would communicate with each other in a respectful way. Once embedded in a school, a rights-respecting language equipped pupils and staff with the capacity to adopt a mutually respectful and tolerant approach when talking about potentially conflicting issues (Ibid: 20). Schools working towards RRSA also introduced more opportunities for staff and pupils to share and listen to each other’s views.

It is a moral prerequisite that children should be respected, and the establishment of a rights-respecting school ethos is a positive move in working towards this. We need to proceed with some caution, however, and look critically beyond the initial wholly positive outcomes to which the development of a rights-respecting school community alludes, to ensure a respectful school ethos is a reality experienced equally by all pupils in all areas of school life.

Cautions around the development of a rights-respecting school ethos

There are several cautions to be considered in relation to the reality of developing of a rights-respecting schools ethos. For the purpose of this paper, attention will be drawn to two of these concerns, both of which relate to concerns around the development of genuinely mutually respectful adult-pupil relationships. Firstly, findings from the research suggested that in most cases, when decisions about school-related issues were made by pupils, these focused on issues which, although they were of importance to the pupils themselves, tended not to be of central importance to school policies and practices (Sebba & Robinson, 2010, 40). This raises ethical concerns about the extent to which central issues of school practice and policy are genuinely open for debate. It gives rise to concerns about whether seemingly mutually respectful adult-pupil relationships allow for the genuine involvement of pupils in all areas of school life. While on the surface relationships may appear to be mutually respectful, the micro-processes at play within schools can work to position pupils as relatively ‘powerless’ when compared to the adults in schools, with pupils internalising unstated assumptions that certain aspects of school organisation, policies and practices are not open to be challenged by them.

A second concern relates to whether the voices of all pupils are listened to and respected equally. The issue here is whether those who possess the schools’ cultural capital and agree with what the adults in the school want to hear are acknowledged more often, and listened to in a more respectful way, than those whose voices are counter to the values to which the school espouses.

The reality of mutually respectful adult-pupil relationships may, therefore, not be as prevalent as first assumed. If such relationships are to become a reality in schools, there needs to be situations in which a multiplicity of voices, including those considered to be conflicting, are listened to and respected in equal measure to the more popular, conformist voices. The adults involved need to trust pupils’ competencies and their abilities to offer insightful comments about a wide range of school-related issues, and to give serious consideration to the procedures around selecting whose voices are listened to, acknowledged and respected. Consideration also needs to be given to Initial Teacher Education programmes, to ensure that those entering the profession appreciate the principles of the UNCRC, and are able to think critically about how to promote this work and establish relationships grounded in mutual respect, with all pupils in schools.

While on the surface relationships may appear to be mutually respectful, the micro-processes at play within schools can work to position pupils as relatively ‘powerless’ when compared to the adults in schools.
Institutional Innovation in a Divided Society

“All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.”

By Tony Gallagher, Queen’s University Belfast

DIVIDED SOCIETIES OFTEN PROVOKE feelings of exceptionality. When violence broke out in the late 1960s in Northern Ireland there was a widespread, if inconclusive, debate on whether religiously divided schools reflected or exacerbated the divided society (Gallagher, 2004).

Over the next 30 years four main education interventions were used to promote reconciliation: curriculum interventions aimed at common textbooks and programmes; contact programmes, bringing young Protestants and Catholics together for joint projects; new religiously integrated schools; and equal treatment, especially funding, for Catholic and state schools. An underlying theme was a debate on the appropriateness of separate or common schools.

On the one hand, the consequences of separate schools appear obvious and they seem to offer little hope of promoting social cohesion. On the other hand, the call for common schools can sound like a demand that the minority subsume its identity and assimilates to the dominant community. The right of minorities to run their own schools is acknowledged under the European Convention on Human Rights, but in a conflicted society should the goal of cohesion not predominate?

The peace process in Northern Ireland provided an opportunity to assess the impact of these interventions. The best reasonable judgement was that while much was done, relatively little was achieved: reconciliation had been treated as a key priority by few education leaders; many dedicated and committed teachers carried out inspirational work, but few found support and recognition; even the religiously integrated schools had grown to encompass only about 7% of the pupil population. Overall, there was little evidence of significant systemic change (Gallagher, 2004).

In this context a new approach, termed Shared Education, emerged. This was shaped by a range of theoretical influences, including Sherif’s realistic conflict theory and the concept of interdependence; Wenger’s work on communities of practice, porous boundaries and bridging processes; new work which highlighted the importance of sustained, regular contact; and ideas on social networks that cast schools as part of an interconnected system (Gallagher & Carlisle, 2009; Hughes et al, 2013).

Shared Education involved the search for effective means of encouraging collaborative networks of schools in which teachers and pupils would move between schools as a matter of routine. The potential value was that creating sustained patterns of engagement across institutional boundaries would create new patterns of relationships between young people, teachers, parents and communities (Duffy & Gallagher, 2014).

After a decade of research and development work, the model is being mainstreamed: shared education was in the Programme for Government; a Delivering Social Change initiative has the support of two government departments; a shared education campus programme is encouraging shared facilities and could make schools mutually dependent for the delivery of the curriculum; and the next wave of Peace Funding from the European Union will include shared education as a key priority.

So the answer to whether we have separate or common schools is not ‘either/or’, but both. Retaining the right to separate schools is a recognition of the right to identity, but operating within collaborative networks provides a more positive relational context.

The question of separate versus common schools is more widely relevant. Leaving aside the unambiguously wicked models of enforced segregation, many societies face the challenge posed by the recognition of identity versus the desire for cohesion. The shared education model may provide a means of achieving both, and at this point it has attracted attention in Israel, Macedonia and in some school districts in Los Angeles.

References
Literacy and Empowerment

Literacy for all is a global issue which transcends geographic and economic boundaries. Literacy education has been shown to enhance confidence, contribute to personal development, promote health, social and political participation, social justice and gender equity.

By Vicky Duckworth, Edge Hill University

AT A PERSONAL LEVEL, literacy lies in the development of self-identity; in our social, cultural and emotional life, happiness and wellbeing. For the 16 former Adult Basic Skills learners in my longitudinal ethnographic study ‘Learning Trajectories, Violence and Empowerment amongst Adult Basic Skills Learners’, based in a former Northern mill town in Lancashire, returning to education was a means for them to develop their literacy skills. Literacy in child and adulthood was very much linked with their subjectivity and how they viewed their self-worth.

The study exposed that the literacies the working class children brought to school, and as adults brought to further education, afforded little dominant symbolic value in that it could not be used in class to pass exams. For example, the domestic and caring literacy which has been traditionally carried out by girls and women seldom enters the public domain and often remains invisible and unrecognised. The working class practices, which are often gendered, were not valued. Wrapped in notions of literacies were class and ethnically diverse learners (Bernstein, 1971; Labov, 1972). This inevitably meant that learners who were not proficient in the linguistic skills required in schools and colleges were defined as failures or lacking in intelligence simply by virtue of the way they relate to and know the world. Whilst the lack of dominant literacies had an impact on their progress through the field of education, all the aforementioned caused them to struggle through the educational system. It influenced the choices or lack of choices they made. This, juxtaposed to being poor and having little social capital to support them to break out of their conditions, left many anxious, with low self-esteem and a belief they were stupid and failures (Duckworth, 2013).

So what can be done?

Education, including literacy, needs to disentangle itself from neoliberal fusion to create space for contextualised and emancipatory learning. The potential for resistance and counter hegemonic practice, however, remains a challenge to teachers. They need to be aware of how their beliefs and practices may be inclined by perceptions of learners’ ability tied to class, gender and ethnicity and to challenge the reproductive tendencies these perceptions involve.

Opening up a space for critical reflection and dialogue, the learners in my classroom challenged the notions of what literacies are. This supported the move from an instrumental ‘one size fits all’ approach to a more critical curriculum whereby the learners’ lives and experiences in the form of their personal narratives and poetry were used as resources. This validated their experience and deconstructed the old knowledge, where they blamed themselves for being ‘thick’ and ‘stupid’ because they struggled in literacies, substituting it with the construction of new, shared knowledge where they were able to see the inequalities and violence in their lives this had stemmed from offering a potential space for transformation (Duckworth, 2014). For example, Joanne, a single mother who struggled with literacy and self-belief, went onto pass level two Literacy, an Access course, University Nursing Diploma and is now an empowered and empowering staff nurse in the North of England. Literacy facilitated the learners to make their own connection with historical, social, economic and political structures that privilege the dominant ideologies and in doing so offered a tool to empower them and their local and wider communities.

References


I AM EXPLORING THE TRANSITION EXPERIENCES of children and young people (who were street-connected on a full-time basis) leaving the street in two provincial Kenyan towns. The interdisciplinarity that is and should be applied to research into street-connectedness is required to produce a holistic picture of the situation. I draw from my experiences as a scholar and practitioner in International Development as well as being co-supervised in Education and Anthropology. However, I have found that education plays a central role in the experiences of street-connected children, both on and off the street.

Education – just about access?
Previous research with street-connected children highlights a lack of access to education as a significant reason why children are on the street (Wakia, 2010) and this was confirmed by a number of the participants involved in my research. In explaining why they initially migrated to the street, a number of the boys talked of there being no money at home for school – especially for secondary school, which is not covered by the Education for All agenda that currently prioritises universal primary education through the Millennium Development Goals. However, some of the participants started going to the street instead of school because they were dissatisfied with what school could give them. The explanations given ranged from arguments with teachers, difficulties in learning or just being bored with school. The girls, although they did not relate it to their migration to the street, talked of a possible lack of safety in schools in terms of the threat of sexual abuse by teachers. Therefore, school being a motivating factor for becoming street-connected is far more complicated than just a question of access.

Nevertheless, being able to go back to school is a key reason why children decide to leave the street. Consequently, in exploring the transition experiences of 51 children and youth returning to families and communities, their (re-)integration into formalised education systems becomes a significant element of the journey. In general, every participant saw the value of becoming educated for an improved future. The pathway they chose to follow to that end depended very much on their age (Corcoran, 2013a). The majority of the older youth saw apprenticeships and vocational training as a means to income generation that could be accessed sooner rather than later; and some expressed a wish to never go back to school.

Transitioning back into formal education could be problematic. Both boys and girls spoke of difficulties in maintaining concentration for the entire length of the school day and being able...
In one instance a boy relates the story of being caned by a mathematics teacher on his first day, along with the rest of his class, because the monitors forgot to collect in the books to afford paraffin for light at night in order to study. Those that lived in households where a parent was sick, or on one occasion an alcoholic, found it difficult to forget these problems at school or ignore them at home while they tried to complete homework. A number of the participants found it difficult to make new friends (Corcoran, 2014).

Teacher support during and after the transitions was a cause for dissatisfaction. Teachers did not differentiate between them as new students and the rest of the class; some students complained that they had not even been shown where the toilets were, and in one instance a boy relates the story of being caned by a mathematics teacher on his first day, along with the rest of his class, because the monitors forgot to collect in the books (Corcoran, 2014). Students attending a boarding school had previously attended a state-run, primary day school. They spoke of the teachers in the state school as being tardy in comparison to where they were at the time of the research, and often absent, which they felt greatly affected their learning.

**Problematising deficit conceptualisations of the street**

In the UK there is a tendency in education to speak about beyond school as those things children bring into the classroom which will affect how they engage with the lesson. Above I have included some of the factors that can negatively affect learning and performance. These problems can often be exacerbated by behaviours developed on the street, such as drug addiction or anti-social behaviour, which can prevent easy social assimilation. Organisations working with street-connected children to support them through the transition often provide transitional care that includes informal education to prepare them for what is expected as they re-enter the classroom. But what of the positives that being street-connected can develop? Street life can be difficult and children and young people build resilience through their experiences (Tum, 2006). Their ability to develop skills and adapt to meet the challenges of daily survival are not usually actively engaged in the traditional teacher-led classroom. However, such experiences imply a predisposition to practical problem-solving and innovation that could be a benefit in student-led activities, such as enquiry-based learning.

Education is much more than the formalised delivery of knowledge through schools and alternative training courses. The lessons learned through life experience are also important. A number of the older participants, who were engaged in vocational training, highlighted how important living on the street had been in the development of networks of support that were exploited later as a means to top up the training income they received from assisting in the garages where they were apprentice mechanics (Corcoran, 2013a). A number of the boys struggled to pay for rent and food when the number of customers at the garages was low. Also, in order to conform to youth culture, as they perceived it, the young men wanted to buy the right clothes, jewellery and have a mobile phone. They wanted to attract girlfriends and work towards getting married. Their time on the street taught them the skills with which to achieve the extra income. The more successful individuals adapted to the nuances required to interact socially with both traders in the market places and families living in the middle-class areas of the town. They were therefore able to take on casual positions working for either. These social and employment networks had all been developed while they were living on the street (Corcoran, 2013b).

Of course, not all of the children and youth interviewed shared the same experiences and successful (re)integration requires an understanding of the varied needs of each individual. However, when preparing children to return to life away from the street, it is important to appreciate and develop the lessons they learned from being street-connected and provide quality, supportive education opportunities that helps them move forward.

**Education is much more than the formalised delivery of knowledge through schools and alternative training courses**

**References**


HAS THIS AFFECTED the way you view education and how you will educate your children?

Although the outcomes of education are often the topic of discussion, its suitability is rarely contemplated. The majority of parents do register their children for school in England; nevertheless there is a growing number who feel that an education at home is more suitable. This might be because they want to teach their child themselves, they are unhappy with school provision (Arora, 2006) or problems such as bullying (Gabb, 2004).

The Education Act (1996) guides the current workings of elective home education (EHE) policy and practice:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable (a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and (b) to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise (Sec. 7).

Note the emphasis on educational suitability, yet I found that for some vulnerable children neither school nor home education is right. I knew from professional experience in working with Traveller families that they experience problems in school: bullying, discrimination and being in the minority meant that parents were very worried about their child’s safety and wellbeing especially at secondary school. As a result of wider discrimination, parents also questioned the relevance of the school curriculum and GCSEs when their children could not gain employment because they were a Traveller. I subsequently undertook my own doctoral research into Traveller families’ experiences of school and home education and this has just been published in my first book (D’Arcy, 2014).

My research findings substantiated the literature (Derrington, 2007; Wilkin et al, 2010) which tells us that Traveller children experience inequality in school. Interviews with parents revealed that their own school experiences and their children’s were filled with problems relating to a lack of respect of their culture and values. Teacher expectations are very low, illiteracy was not properly addressed and children left to fall behind… when they withdrew to be home educated the reasons for this move were not questioned nor documented.

This was a central problem as inequality issues were not recorded; instead teachers relied on rhetoric regarding cultural differences. The dominant discourse regarding EHE and Traveller suggests that they home educate because they are mobile, yet research with Travellers themselves had discounted this time after time (Bhopal & Myers, 2009; Derrington & Kendal, 2004; Ivatts, 2006). The educational journey is rarely a smooth one, yet for some it is unnecessarily arduous due to a reliance on cultural assumptions. Better respect and awareness of Traveller cultures is necessary to dispel the dominant assumptions about Travellers and consequently improve their educational and employment opportunities.

Although home education is a legal educational alternative, there is often only annual monitoring and no legal requirement for parents to register for home education. Hence we know very little about the number of children who are actually home educated in England. Educational equality is an issue as parents and carers are solely responsible for the education. Contemplate the example of the child with special educational needs (who like Travellers are home educated due to problems in school (Arora, 2006)); they do not receive specialist support at home, hence their education may not be suitable. This is clearly not the parents’ fault but it is an equality issue which goes unreported and unnoticed.

Although this research is specific to England, research from the United States has shown that uptake of home schooling rises year on year. Other studies (Badman, 2009; Petrie, 2001) have highlighted the diversity of home education policy and practice across Europe which suggests that issues around home education are of global importance. I therefore propose an
A View From Wales

Despite all the noise and angst generated by PISA, perhaps the most significant development in education in Wales in recent times has been an increased focus on the stark inequalities which exist within the system.

THE FACTS ARE DAMNING.

About 20% of families in Wales live in persistent poverty and up to another 30% move in and out of poverty over any four-year period through the combined effects of an unstable economy, growing in-work poverty and the Coalition’s programme of welfare cuts.

The impact of poverty on educational achievement is equally bleak. At the age of 15, for example, whilst 59% of children from more affluent families achieve five ‘good’ GCSEs including English or Welsh and Mathematics, the percentage for children living in poverty is 26%.

This is not a new situation. It existed before Wales’ industrial economy declined through the 1970s and went into freefall after the Miners’ strike of 1984. It has continued to be a feature of post-industrial Wales and whilst overall levels of achievement are growing the inequality gap remains the same.

What is changing, however, is that new intervention paradigms are emerging, there is cause for hope.

How this situation may be overcome has been influenced by research within the Welsh education system and awareness of progress being made in other parts of the UK (particularly London) and the world. This has led to a growing consciousness that whilst improving the curriculum, learning and teaching and leadership within schools is important, it does not constitute anything like a transformative and sustainable solution.

What is also increasingly recognised is that greater involvement of families and communities in our most disadvantaged areas in supporting their children and schools has a critical role to play.

Through the Welsh Government’s Tackling Poverty Plan and the flagship anti-poverty programmes of Flying Start (intervention in the early years), Families First (early intervention in families) and Communities First (community empowerment in Wales’ most disadvantaged areas), a far more sophisticated approach is being developed to accompany the more traditional school improvement focus represented by the recently launched Schools Challenge Cymru programme, which borrows from the experiences of London and Manchester.

Given that at the political level improving education equity is now the top priority of the Welsh Government and that new intervention paradigms are emerging, there is cause for hope. The situation for children and young people living in poverty in Wales remains bleak, however, and a resolute determination to tackle inequality will require far more to be done than is currently in place.

By David Egan, University of Wales Trinity St David

urgent need to reflect on the current suitability of school and home education, especially for those children who are already marginalised on account of their difference. Please do contact me if you would be interested in developing this debate [Kate.d’arcy@beds.ac.uk].
Education and Social Justice in Scotland

Since the establishment of the Scottish Parliament in 1999, social justice has been a strong theme in education and wider social policy.

By Sheila Riddell, University of Edinburgh

IN THE WHITE PAPER on Scottish independence (Scottish Government, 2013) and throughout the close-fought referendum campaign, essential differences in core social values between Scotland and England were emphasised by the Scottish Government. The lack of tuition fees for Scottish-domiciled students was cited as an example of the Scottish Government’s commitment to redistributive policies, although critics pointed out that this policy actually favoured the middle classes, who, as in England, were over-represented in higher education and particularly in the more selective institutions. Interestingly, despite marked differences between the Scottish and English systems, school education scarcely featured in the referendum debate. In the aftermath of the campaign, it is worth considering whether Scottish education does indeed reflect different social values, and, if this is the case, whether policy differences are reflected in more equal social outcomes.

Despite the comprehensive and inclusive nature of Scottish education, social inequalities are deeply entrenched within the education system. One in five Scottish children lives in poverty and there is a strong and enduring association between low household income and low educational attainment (Bradshaw, 2011). By the end of compulsory schooling, young people from socially advantaged neighbourhoods are five times as likely to gain a university place compared with those from the most deprived neighbourhoods, with particularly marked differences in entrance to ancient universities (Wyness, 2013). The attainment gap in England is slightly lower than in Scotland, and some initiatives, such as the London Challenge, have achieved ‘stunning’ results in producing more equal outcomes (Sosu & Ellis, 2014). There appear to be no equivalent initiatives in Scotland at the moment, raising questions about the extent to which narrowing the attainment gap has been a social policy priority in Scotland. Key policy documents often fail to mention the need for anti-poverty strategies in school, and Scottish local authorities distribute only 5% of their budget allocation in relation to social deprivation, with overall no clear link between deprivation and per-pupil expenditure.

The new Scottish curriculum, Curriculum for Excellence, might have the potential to improve the educational outcomes of children from poorer backgrounds by allowing teachers to design ‘context-specific, whole-school approaches that bridge the gap between learning in school and the experiences that children have outside school’. However, there are some potential pitfalls. If educators proceed on the assumption that children from different social backgrounds need access to different types of knowledge, there is a real danger that children from poorer backgrounds are channelled into vocational courses at an early age, ensuring that access to high status academic knowledge remains the preserve of those from more affluent backgrounds, particularly those in the private school sector. This would threaten the principle of universal cultural literacy which informs the Scottish liberal education tradition and would be a regressive move.

Despite the recognition in Scotland of the association between poverty, social exclusion and additional support needs, spending on school education has been cut over recent years. Education is the largest element within local authority budgets, and the freezing of the council tax since 2007, along with reductions in core grant from central government, has meant that local authorities have had to meet their statutory commitments from severely reduced budgets. A report published by Audit Scotland in 2014 showed that over a three-year period from 2010/11 to 2012/13, expenditure on school education in Scotland had reduced by 5% in real terms, whilst pupil numbers had remained constant. The reductions were mainly achieved by spending less on school staff.

To date, it would appear that social justice rhetoric in Scotland has outpaced changes in educational practice and outcomes. As in the rest of the UK and Europe, major inequalities in educational outcomes persist, which are often inter-generational and regionally specific (Ballas, 2012). In the post-referendum period, and with a range of new fiscal powers, Scotland has the opportunity to effect at least some of the changes which are required to produce a more socially just education system.

References


BERA Post-Compulsory and Lifelong Learning SIG Events

Three events were organized this year to mark BERA’s 40th anniversary, on the theme of vocational education and training (VET).

These were held at: the Institute of Education (IOE), University of London on 27th January, the University of Birmingham (UB) on 21st March, and Durham University (DU) on 2nd July.

Speakers for the events were: Prof Ken Spours (IOE), Prof Ann Hodgson (IOE) and Emeritus Prof Peter Jarvis (University of Surrey); Prof James Avis (University of Greenwich); and Prof Geoffrey Elliott (University of Worcester), Emeritus Prof Prue Huddleston (University of Warwick) and Prof Karen Evans (IOE).

A three-tier framework of macro (at the national and policy-making level), meso (at the programme and organizational level) and micro (at the individual level) is used as a typology to discuss the rich and stimulating presentations over the three events.

Ken offered a macro vision of education in the ‘New Times’ (in the post-Fordist era) where a strong vocational education runs alongside a robust general education, which features disciplinary knowledge, research and application as central themes of learning. James critiqued the post-Fordist and neo-liberal assumptions in relation to vocational education and suggested that a ‘really useful knowledge’ approach based on competency, socially situated workplace practices and notions of expansive learning should be at the heart of this macro offer. Geoffrey opened up the possibility of constructive partnerships between further education (FE) and higher education institutions which were based on shared values and trust. Geoffrey viewed collaboration in relation to provision, progression and sustainability from the perspectives of the local community, economic development opportunities and re-purposing FE institutions in the 21st Century.

From the meso perspectives, Ann gave an account of initial VET from the 1980s to the present and indicated some changes, such as raising of the participation age, higher take up of young people in vocational courses and realization of the unattainability of ‘parity of esteem’. Along with Ken and Geoffrey, she advocated a collaborative local/regional learning system. Prue, like Ann, focused on initial VET and argued that there were still deep-seated structural and historical issues, especially the academic/vocation division. She envisioned a strong VET route as having ‘seven modest principles’ based on: synthesis of knowledge, skills and attributes, relevance, progression, flexibility, authenticity, programme coherence and re-engagement. Ann-Marie investigated the important terminologies of ‘vocationalism’ and ‘vocational knowledge’ based on two case studies in general vocational education (GVE) practices. She suggested that vocationalism varied from applied approaches of learning a subject to practicing knowledge and skills, and that GVE was a form of ‘compensatory education’. Martin (and Patrick) investigated apprenticeships, which has been the focus of the current Coalition government’s vocational policy, and argued that the upbeat reports about progression of apprentices were not supported by the actual figures. They highlighted that the provision of level 4 schemes constituted only 2% of the total apprenticeship offer with very low completion rates. At the lower levels, there appeared to be few real job opportunities. FE colleges were also increasingly marginalized. They argued instead for a robust general education, including vocational elements.

Finally, on the individual or micro level, Karen offered a highly contextualized understanding of how different forms of knowledge might be recontextualised in varied settings from the perspectives of learners, teachers and workers. Her ‘Putting knowledge to work’ theoretical framework offered new understandings of learning and applying knowledge in vocational, work-based and workplace settings. Knowledge may be tacit and this was the focus of Peter’s revision of his comprehensive theory of learning, which places greater emphasis on the relevance and application of tacit knowledge in an individual’s learning in formal and informal settings.

These stimulating presentations have highlighted remaining issues such as definitions of vocationalism, vocational pedagogy, and the distinctive characteristics of VET programmes for further research. The events have also offered further ideas for research, in areas such as VET progression routes and the relationship between VET and higher vocational and professional offers.

All the presentations are available on the SIG’s website for BERA members. Alongside the increasing focus on higher vocational education, there will hopefully be sufficient synergy for BERA members to submit papers on this theme to the 2015 Conference. Finally we would like to thank the presenters and participants in making this series a success.

Sai Loo
Institute of Education, London
Bronwen Maxwell
Sheffield Hallam University
BERA congratulates the winners of our awards for 2014

BERA John Nisbet Fellowship
In 2014, BERA has launched the BERA John Nisbet Fellowship. Named in honour of our very first President, this is awarded annually to one or more people who are deemed to have made an outstanding contribution to educational research over their career. The inaugural recipients are:

- **Professor Paul Black** – *King’s College London*
- **Professor Kathy Sylva** – *University of Oxford*

BCF-BERA Routledge Curriculum Journal Prize


**Professor Tim Cain**, Edge Hill University & **Mrs Rachael Wardle**, Lymm High School – *How research evidence, about gifted and talented students, impacts on teachers and teaching*

**University of Stirling in partnership with East Lothian Council** – *School-based Curriculum Development through Collaborative Professional Enquiry: a research and development project partnership, University of Stirling School of Education and East Lothian Council Education Services*

BERA Brian Simon Fellowship

**Dr Johanna Waters**, Associate Professor, University of Oxford. The fellowship commences in September 2014 includes funding for an 18-month qualitative study into internationalisation within secondary schools in England.

BERA Doctoral Thesis Award

**Christy Kulz**, Associate Lecturer, Goldsmiths College – *‘Structure Liberates?’: making compliant, consumable bodies in a London academy*

BERA Masters Dissertation Award

**Kenichi Udagawa** – *Creating a discursive equality: The legitimation of meritocracy in New Labour and Coalition government educational discourse 2007–2013*
Could you be part of one of BERA’s Editorial teams?

Over the next year, both the British Journal of Educational Technology (BJET) and the Review of Education (RoE) are looking for new people to take on editing responsibilities. BERA’s Journals are a key part of our work and we value the work of Editors in maintaining the highest academic standards.

Editors have final authority on decisions about the academic content of the journal and are supported by BERA and Editorial Boards in carrying out their roles. There is a small editorial budget made available to BERA by the Publisher. This is to cover all the administrative costs of editing and preparing the journal for publication but Editors will not be paid for the provision of the Editorial Services. Reasonable office expenses connected with the Editor’s responsibilities shall be reimbursed.

The term of office of an Editor or editorial team is normally three years (renewable once) and a range of options from a lead Editor with designated assistants or a more team-orientated approach are invited. At this stage we are also interested in hearing from individuals who may be interested in being part of a team.

If you are interested in learning more about joining either the BJET or the RoE editorial team, please contact Farzana Rahman for further information: Farzana.rahman@bera.ac.uk.

Insights – five new papers published

Every year BERA invites members to publish accessible research summaries that are intended to showcase member research and engage policy and practitioner communities on important educational issues.

- Prof Tehmina Basit: Educational capital and generational aspirations amongst British Asians
- Dr Celia Jenkins and Dr Umit Cetin: Minority ethno-faith communities and social inclusion through collaborative research
- Dr Neil Harrison: How local communities influence the demand for higher education
- Kenichi Udagawa: The legitimation of meritocracy in government discourse 2007-2013
- Dr Amanda Keddie: Schooling, social cohesion and ‘Britishness’

Please download Insights from the BERA website: www.bera.ac.uk/publications/Insights and publicise with your contacts. A limited number of hard copies are available from the BERA Office.
BERA Welcomes New Members of Council

This year, Professor David James (Cardiff University) and Professor Dominic Wyse (Institute of Education) were successfully elected to BERA Council. Both will serve until 2017. David James was previously co-opted on to Council, and he will continue to serve on the Membership & Engagement Committee as the new Vice-Chair. Dominic Wyse will serve on the Academic Publications Committee. The BERA office congratulates both on their elections and we look forward to working with both David and Dominic in driving the strategic objectives of BERA forward.

Professor David James
David is Professor in the School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University, and Director of the ESRC Doctoral Training Centre for Wales. David has overseen the work of the BERA Postgraduate Forum and delivered the Welcome at the ECR Conference this year. David’s research focusses on “teaching, learning, assessment and learner identity across a range of educational settings, with a particular focus on the relationship between educational processes and social inequalities”.

Professor Dominic Wyse
Dominic is Professor in the Department of Early Years and Primary at the Institute of Education, University of London. His research focusses on curriculum and pedagogy. Dominic is also an editor of The Curriculum Journal and is Convenor of the Curriculum, Assessment and Pedagogy BERA SIG.

We have co-opted Professor Joanne Hughes (Queens University Belfast) to the Conference Committee, where she will serve as the liaison between BERA and QUB as the host institution for BERA Conference 2015. This year saw the end of terms for Professor Jean Murray and Professor Chris Husbands. We would like to thank them both for their involvement with BERA Council.
Call for contributions to Research Intelligence 126

The next issue of *RI* (RI 126, Spring 2015) will focus on **REF: CHANGING EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPES.** Each issue of *RI* aims to capture a range of perspectives on a topic of current relevance to the wide range of sites for the generation and mobilisation of education research. If you have some recently completed research that you feel is relevant to the theme and likely to be of interest to BERA members, please summarise it in 1000–1200 words and send it to the Editor.

We are keen to hear from researchers at different stages of their career, including student and early career researchers. We welcome contributions from different education sectors and interest groups and from different sites for the generation and use of education research.

If you would like to contribute please contact Farzana Rahman at farzana.rahman@bera.ac.uk with the subject line “RI 126”. The deadline for papers will be 16th January, 2015.

Opinion and general contributions

Brief opinion pieces addressing other current critical issues affecting education research and its stakeholders are also welcome. We also encourage members to submit contributions discussing initiatives of strategic importance to education research from any sector of activity. Members wishing to respond to an existing piece or to suggest topics for future issues of *RI* should contact the Editor.

We would like to receive brief pieces relevant to agencies or individuals who use educational research. We would particularly welcome contributions sharing news in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

SIG convenors can use the medium of *RI* to update all BERA members of their activities or open up a particular issue for debate. Contributions should not exceed 600 words and be sent to the Editor. Accounts of events supported by BERA are also very welcome.

In all types of submissions please avoid the use of footnotes and keep the number of references to a minimum. Please refer to articles in recent issues for examples of acceptable formats. Material should not exceed 600 words unless specifically agreed in advance and should be sent to the Editor, Hilary Burgess, care of farzana. rahman@bera.ac.uk.

Notes for Contributors

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The British Educational Research Association (BERA) is a member-led charity which exists to encourage educational research and its application for the improvement of practice and public benefit.

We strive to ensure the best quality evidence from educational research informs policy makers, practitioners and the general public and contributes to economic prosperity, cultural understanding, social cohesion and personal flourishing.

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