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PERSPECTIVES IN EDUCATION



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DISCUSSION

BACKGROUND TO THE HED(PG) WORKING PARTY

Don Margetson

Courses leading to a professional qualification in teaching, e.g. the HED(PG) course, seem to be dogged by discontent. Throughout the world such courses, it seems, suffer from a poor reputation. At this University reactions to the HED(PG) course have unfortunately tended to confirm this reputation. These reactions have emerged during much of the four years during which the HED(PG) course has been running at this University. As a result of these reactions, a Working Party was set up to reconsider the course; the current Working Party was set up on 18 November 1974 by the HED(PG) Committee which is a sub-committee of the Board of the Faculty of Education. Membership of the Working Party was intended to be representative of the different aspects of the course so that a balanced reconsideration of the course might be obtained.

The terms of reference of the Working Party are as follows:

"1 To reconsider the whole HED(PG) course;

2 To make recommendations for the improvement of the course both in the short term and the long term;

3 To report to the HED(PG) Committee at least twice, on 26 March 1975 and 21 May 1975;

4 To present a report to the Faculty of Education in meeting on 13 June 1975."

It might well be asked what reactions there have been to justify the setting up of a Working Party. The extent of reactions to, and the concern for, the course might be indicated roughly by the number of documents which have emerged as a result of these reactions and this concern. A list of these documents and related events is given in the appendix.

As to the reactions themselves, they have of course been mixed. Some students have found some aspects of the course useful to them when they have begun teaching; this view has been expressed in such ways as "Yes, looking back on it now, I can see that there was some relevance in what was done in the HED(PG) course to what I am doing now as a teacher". But that is little consolation; it would surely be most extraordinary if no benefit whatever were found in the course. What is worrying is that so few students appear to have said even that much in favour of the course,

and that so many have been either critical of, or confirmed in their indifference to, the course.

At this point, no doubt, and quite rightly, questions as to the evidence for these statements will be raised. In the remainder of this article I wish to outline something of a case to support the view that the significance of this evidence has been underestimated. To begin with, if one were looking for comprehensive evidence of the kind to be found in the research of Dr F Meyer (1), then one would be disappointed. To the best of my knowledge, no attempt has been made to obtain a systematic account of student reactions to the course either during the course or subsequently as a follow-up exercise to find out whether students' views had changed as a result of their experience as practising teachers. There may be practical difficulties in carrying out such investigations, especially the latter. On the other hand, it would have seemed natural for some attempt to be made, particularly in a new course. However that may be, the plain fact is that the only available evidence appears to be that obtained by students during the course. What are we to make of this evidence?

A not uncommon attitude to this evidence is to discount it because the views expressed are those of students, and students are not considered to be in a position to know very well what they are talking about. Perhaps the strongest objection to this attitude appears in research by Dr F Meyer. Some quotations from this University's The Reporter (1), in which this research was reported, will be pertinent here:

(a) "... the staff held various opinions on why the students appeared uninterested in the course" (in the Applied Mathematics Department).

(b) "The next step was to obtain the student assessment of the course."

(c) "Dr Meyer now found himself with two conflicting bodies of opinion on the course - the opinion of the teachers and the opinion of the students."

(d) "... it was possible at last to obtain a realistic description of the course, taking both teachers' and students' views into account.

This showed shortcomings in the course, not even suspected by the teachers."

(e) "Perhaps the most important fact to emerge from

this study is that the students at the University of the Witwatersrand are capable of making valid judgments about the teaching and learning systems to which they are exposed."

Two other points may be made about the attitude in question. First, criticism of the course has come not only from students, but from staff too. Second, the students in the HED(PG) course are all graduates in at least their fourth year of University study. Some of these students have practised as teachers before attending the course, and some are a good deal older than the average student. It seems bad enough in any case to be patronising towards students, but to be patronising to these students seems to be particularly undesirable.

Any tendency to patronise is sometimes aggravated by apparently false beliefs about the motives of students. For example, when students have commented that there is an overload of work to be done in the course, their comment has been dismissed as a sign of laziness and as an attempt to avoid some work. Of course this might be true of some students, as it might be true of all sorts of people in various situations. But to dismiss all student comment on this ground is surely simplistic; and it conflicts with some evidence. That is, in the 1973 student "Survey 1" the following item was included:

The HED(PG) course "Has (a) Too few lectures
(b) The right number of lectures
(c) Too many lectures

If (c), should there be (i) Fewer lectures, more free time
(ii) Fewer lectures, more seminars in small groups. (In this case are you willing to present short papers (max. 10 mins) as 'discussion-initiators' in seminars?)"

The results showed that 35 students voted for (ii), that is, fewer lectures and more seminars, while only 6 voted for (i), that is, fewer lectures and more free time. (No students voted for (a), 11 voted for (b). It may be readily admitted that this is slender evidence on which to base judgment of a period of four years and several hundred students; but then what other evidence is there?

This question is pertinent to another attitude which has been adopted to the available evidence. This attitude is that the "surveys" were biased towards casting the HED(PG) course in a bad light, and that they were unscientific. The surveys may well have been unscientific, but then we must ask what we are supposed to make of this charge? Does the charge imply that the surveys were totally valueless, or does it imply only that they could have been of more value than they were had they been drawn up in the properly scientific way? If the latter, then of course one would agree; obviously having proper comprehensive evidence is better than having sketchy evidence, but, equally obviously, having some evidence is better than having none. About the former possibility - that because the surveys were unscientific they were totally valueless - one can only ask that an attempt be made to substantiate this charge.

Another question must be raised in connection with the charge that the surveys were unscientific. Why, since it was considered important for this kind of survey to be scientific, was no attempt made to carry out a scientific survey? Students in 1973 and 1974 were sufficiently concerned about the course to carry out surveys of various kinds, and to offer a variety of suggestions as to how the course might be improved; and students in 1975 were sufficiently concerned to express their discontent verbally to members of staff even though at this time they were represented on the Working Party which was reconsidering the course. In the light of this student concern it would appear to have been unduly negative merely to criticise students' efforts as unscientific; students would surely have welcomed a comprehensive and properly scientific survey of the course. Furthermore, given the extent of student dissatisfaction with the course (for example, when in June 1973 students were asked in "Survey 3" whether they still wanted changes made to the course, 75 students out of a total of about 85 responded. The votes were cast as follows: 58 Yes (77% of 75); 13 No (17½); 4 Undecided (5%)), and given the doubts about the scientific validity of the surveys, it would have seemed appropriate to conduct a properly scientific survey to clarify the situation. For how else could a properly scientific judgment be made of the matter?

The charge that the surveys were biased towards casting the HED(PG) course in a bad light must now be considered. At the most general level it could conceivably be claimed

that merely to conduct a survey would be to attempt to cast the course in a bad light. This claim would be ludicrous in the context in which the surveys were conducted. For the surveys were conducted as a result of existing dissatisfaction with the course; they were not causes of the dissatisfaction. The surveys were attempts to find out and record what students thought of the course so that, if possible and if appropriate, something could be done about the course. These were attempts to provide some basis for constructive action, not irresponsible agitation. (Students who take a serious and sincere interest in their course of study - even when it is "only" at the level of a professional "training" diploma - may be forgiven for becoming cynical if their concern for their work is dismissed as some kind of adolescent impulse towards mindless revolution. This might seem to be an undesirably harsh way of expressing the matter, but then students who see teaching as a responsible professional activity may feel considerable commitment to act in a responsible way.)

However, a more credible interpretation of the charge of bias is that the questions in the surveys were biased. Possibly a detailed analysis of the surveys would show this to be the case in some sense. However that may be, it seems plain from a reading of the surveys that they were clearly intended to be unbiased. One item in "Survey 1" (1973) has already been quoted above. Another example from "Survey 1" may be worth quoting in support of this view. The first question in the survey read:

"The H.Dip.Ed. (now called the HED(PG) course) is

(a)	Interesting	(6)
(b)	Boring	(12)
(c)	Useful	(0)
(d)	Satisfactory as it is	(0)
(e)	Needs some modification"	(49)

The figures in parentheses represent votes cast for each option. It seems plain enough that an attempt was made in the drawing up of these questions to allow students to indicate reactions to the course as ranging from strongly positive to strongly negative. If students had been happy with the course this would have emerged clearly from the results of the survey. The fact that pronounced dissatisfaction with the course emerged from the survey appears to be a valid comment on the course rather than a criticism of the survey.

Overall, it appears that there is more than enough justification for a systematic review of the whole HED(PG) course. In the light of the problems which seem to dog this kind of course throughout the world, this need for review should give rise to neither despair nor guilt. It would surely be astonishing if a new course put on at this, or any other, University needed no reconsideration. Moreover, given the long, varied, and unsuccessful history of attempts to produce teacher education courses which are acclaimed, we could hardly expect quick results. Nevertheless the Working Party is now moving towards making some recommendations to the HED(PG) Committee. Need one say that, hopefully, these will make a significant contribution to the development of the HED(PG) course at this University?

Footnote

(1) "Research reveals better ways of teaching", in The Reporter, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1975, p.4.

APPENDIX

Summary of documents and events related to attempts to have the HED(PG) course systematically reviewed. Documents exist for items marked with an asterisk*.

1972 (First year in which the HED(PG) course was put on at this University)

1 Apparently some adverse comments from students, but there is no record of this nor any indication of its extent.

2* November 7. "A few initial suggestions", from Mr W Morrow, Department of Education.

1973

3* March/April. "Survey 1", conducted by students in the course as a result of discontent with the course.

4* April 9. Staff/student meeting about the course.

5* April 25. Meeting between Staff-Student Liaison Committee and the Director of Teacher Training.

6* May/June (?). "Survey 2", conducted by students in order to co-ordinate students' views.

7* June 15. "Survey 3", conducted by students mainly to find out whether students still wished for changes in the course. (More than 2/3 of the students did wish for this.)

8* June 20. Students suggestions on the course in General Methodology.

9 September (?). One or perhaps two staff/student meetings at which students proposed a "trial run" of a modified HED(PG) course for the 4th quarter.

10* September/October (?). Student request concerning the course in General Methodology.

11* October 24. Staff meeting to discuss student workload and time allocation.

12* November 13. Staff meeting to discuss curriculum problems.

1974

13* March 27. "Report on a visit to some Institutes of Education and Training Colleges in Britain in January 1974", by Mr J Paton, Department of English.

14* May 28. "Suggestions for a revision of the HED(PG) course", from Mr J Paton, Department of English, and Mr P Kallaway, Department of History.

15* April/May. "Some conclusions and comments arising from the questionnaires and the proposals given to the HED(PG) class (April and May 1974)", from the students.

16* July 31. Memorandum to the Dean of the Faculty of Education, from Mr D Margetson, Department of Education, relating to the 1973 and 1974 student questionnaires.

17* August 9. Meeting between the Dean, the Head of the Department of Education, the Director of Teacher Training, and students. Professor Gourlay requested to appoint a working party. (Prof Gourlay, Dr P Butterfield, Dr J Elliot, Mr W Morrow, Dr M Skuy, and students)

18* August 26. This Working Party met. Students presented a paper. Mr W Morrow, Department of Education, was asked to prepare a working paper.

19* September 11. The Working Party met. "An examination of the Wits HED(PG) course", from Mr W Morrow, was available. However the working party agreed to disband itself so that a working party more representative of all aspects of the HED(PG) course could be set up by the HED(PG) Committee.

20* November 8. "Some comments and suggestions concerning the HED(PG) course", from Mr P Kallaway.

21* November 18. HED(PG) Committee meeting during which a representative Working Party was elected:

Chairman:	Prof JW Brommert	- Dean of the Faculty of Education
	Prof N Gourlay	- Head of the Department of Education, and representing Psychology
	Mr R Tunmer	- Director of Teacher Training, and representing History of Education and Comparative Education
	Mr P Beard	- Representing Sociology
	Mr W Morrow	- Representing Philosopy
	Prof P Tyson	- (Geography) representing methodology and Faculty members not actually lecturing in the HED(PG) course
	Mr N Ferrandi	- (Mathematics) - ditto -
	Mr J Paton	- (English) representing methodology
	Mr P Kallaway	- (History) - ditto -
	Mr D Margetson	- co-opted as a member of staff who had been a student in the HED(PG) course
	Student representatives	- Two in number if the students were interested in being represented.

1975

22* January 22. Memorandum to the Dean from Mr D Margetson concerning the HED(PG) Committee meeting held on November 18 1974.

23* January 31. HED(PG) Committee meeting.

24* February. "Report concerning the meeting of the HED(PG) Committee held on Monday 18 November 1974".

25* May 13. First meeting of the new Working Party. "An examination of the Wits HED(PG) course", from Mr W Morrow, taken as a basis for discussion.

26 June 27. Second meeting of the Working Party.

27* September 9. HED(PG) Committee meeting.

27* Professor Brommert relinquished chairmanship of the Working Party due to pressure of work. The meeting agreed to ask the Working Party to elect its new chairman.

28* September. Memorandum from Mr P Kallaway.

29* October 2. Working Party meeting to elect new chairman. Professor D Moodie, Head of the Department of Sociology, elected interim chairman.

30* October 29. Working Party meeting.

31 At the time of writing, the next Working Party meeting was planned to take place towards the end of November.

ARTICLES

INDOCTRINATION IN THE HISTORY CLASS?

Peter Kallaway

The enterprising teacher of school history or civics who is concerned to get students to grapple with 'relevant' issues and to foster open thinking and critical debate in the classroom, is often confronted by a battery of problems so daunting as to tempt him to scuttle for cover behind old-school aphorisms and "talk-and-chalk-ideology".

John White (1) relates the aftermath of a disastrous sex education lesson during his early teaching days, when he was castigated by a crusty headmaster:

"I've always said so, and I say it again, lad - you can teach anything you like in school, as long as you keep off three things: politics, religion and sex" - for, he might have added, it is in these areas that one may be accused of indoctrination. By coincidence, it is also here that problems of discipline tend to arise. In such situations, faced with the threat (or perceived threat) of disorder from students, disapproval from one's senior colleagues and educational authorities, and even perhaps active hostility from parents, many teachers are tempted to abandon their ideals which prize lively lessons that aim at critical thinking. They turn instead to "factual", "text-book orientated" teaching that asks little more of students than that they "learn their work" and pass their exams, and abandon the view that effective teaching entails facing up to the reality of conflict in assessing political, social and moral issues.

The outcome of such teaching may well be to produce a profession of so-called ideal teachers who "concentrate their efforts on preparing their pupils for examinations ...; teach precisely the topics named in the syllabus, guiding themselves by the textbook in use and attempting to smooth the path for the children; keeping firm standards of discipline at all times (no noise issues from their classrooms!), and obeying cheerfully the instructions issued by the superintendent and principal, insofar as they can understand them." (2)

What is the result of such an attitude to teaching? And if you feel compelled to take such a position, should you be teaching?

To allow oneself to drift into this kind of mindlessness is not just to lay oneself open to the charge of intellectual and physical laziness, or cowardice. It is to give up one's moral responsibility to one's students. At the very least such teachers are divorcing "schooling" from the real

life situation of the child and adult world, making it into a series of pointless, boring exercises in dry-as-dust "information". More seriously, to take this approach is to be guilty of actively deluding children as to the nature of intellectual activity (and life?) and attempting to anaesthetize them intellectually, to abandon them to "closed" systems of thinking and give them no mental equipment to cope with the world in which they will have to live. This, to paraphrase Postman and Weingartner (3), is to allow schooling to stare fixedly into the past as we hurtle pell-mell into the future. It is to lock children in on their own prejudices and prevent them from ever approaching the high-risk area of responsible decision making; to leave their education to influences which emanate from outside the school (advertising, political propaganda, race prejudices etc.) without the teacher making any attempt to equip the child to cope rationally with these influences. To do this is not only to degrade education into schooling, but, I will argue, to indoctrinate, particularly if one lives in the kind of society where the pressures for intellectual conformity have been compounded to an alarming degree in the past twenty-five years. To opt out of stimulating critical thinking in controversial areas like politics, race relations, contemporary world issues, religion, drugs and sex, is to abandon one's responsibility as an educator.

"Indoctrination" belongs with that family of concepts like "propaganda", "conditioning", "brain-washing", and in some senses, "socialization", which lie in opposition to notions such as "education", "learning" and "teaching". The former are associated with notions of "immorality" and "injustness" by implying that something is lacking by way of an atmosphere of rational inquiry and "open" critical thought in all circumstances (4) where these terms can be applied. The problem is, of course, that no teacher admits to practicing indoctrination, just as no writer or newsreader will admit to being a propagandist. It is therefore necessary to prepare some kind of criteria by which we can identify indoctrination when we see it.

Contrary to widely held views, indoctrination does not seem to me to be necessarily linked to any notion of compulsion or "drill". All that is necessary is that certain ideological views be accepted in an uncritical way in the classroom, creating "closed areas" of thinking. To get these enmeshed in a "world view" makes it difficult for them to be critically challenged. Within these parameters free debate is often allowed, and in fact one of the most effective methods of indoctrination is to encourage students to air their own views within the confines of the debate set out by the person in authority. This reinforces commitment to the unquestioned premise, which is after all the purpose of the exercise (5).

Having made these preliminary remarks, I would like to suggest that in South Africa we need to consider the problem of indoctrination in two dimensions if we are to understand the responsibilities of the humanities or social science (studies) teacher. We need to guard against indoctrination by commission - and by omission. The problem of indoctrination is not only to be located where students are being encouraged to accept uncritically the views of the teacher (or authority figure) or even where the teacher allows himself to dominate classroom thinking. The problem of indoctrination must also be faced up to where the teacher allows the child's prejudices / areas of "closed thinking", to go unchallenged.

The inherent conservatism in the attitudes of high school children (6) must be challenged by the educator, even if only to enable students to better understand their position, and to get a broader perspective on views that they had frequently just taken for granted. If one is to talk meaningfully about indoctrination and how it is to be avoided in the classroom, both dimensions of the problem must be taken into account.

Snook (7) sets out four criteria for indoctrination:

(a) the method used by the teacher,
(b) the teacher's aim or intention,
(c) the status of the beliefs imparted,
(d) the consequences on the mental life of the pupils.

Firstly, I believe that almost any classroom method can be used to promote indoctrination, just as it can be used to promote education or free enquiry. As I have suggested above, indoctrination can be occurring in an apparently free discussion where the teacher has manipulated the situation to meet his requirements, and conversely the teacher who uses only "talk-and-chalk" methods can foster an atmosphere of free thinking and questioning in his class. Therefore (a) is of limited use to us in attempting to define criteria for indoctrination.

Secondly, because I believe that the consequences (d) of this kind of activity are difficult to measure quantitatively (How would one go about measuring the influence of certain ill-informed teaching or propaganda on a learner?) I will place little emphasis on this aspect here.

For the present, then, I would like to emphasise (b) and (c) of Snook's criteria.

It was the teacher's intentions (or perceived intentions) that brought him into conflict with the headmaster in the situation outlined in the first paragraph. It is also the

teacher's intentions that are high-lighted in a consideration of whether indoctrination is taking place by commission or omission; or whether "closed" or "open" thinking is the aim in a classroom situation. Our understanding of the intentions of the teacher and his attitude to the activities promoted in the classroom is therefore of fundamental importance to determining whether a truly educational atmosphere is being promoted or not. The possible range of intentions of a teacher have been characterized by White as follows (8):

(i) the intention that the child should learn words or phrases by rote

(ii) the intention that a child should believe that a proposition 'p' is true (i.e. that he should come to understand why 'p' is so)

(iii) the intention that a child believe that 'p' is true in such a way that nothing will shake that belief

(iv) the intention that the child should believe that 'p' is true, if and only if, he has come to see that there are good grounds for believing it (this implies that the child should be able to reject 'p' on rational grounds).

For the purposes of the present argument (i) and (ii) can be subsumed under (iii) and (iv) respectively; but intentions (iii) and (iv) are contradictory, and could not be held simultaneously.

If the teacher was successful in getting children to the state described in (iii) one would say that indoctrination had taken place - certain beliefs would have been learned that were subsequently closed to rational debate. If a person in authority succeeded in promoting this end, we would be justified in describing his activites as conforming to the criteria for indoctrination by commission. On the other hand, (iv) describes a situation in which the learner becomes an autonomous agent, capable of continually reassessing beliefs in the light of new evidence, and if necessary, revising old opinions. This latter state would fulfil the requirements for "open-minded", "flexible" or "critical" thinking which is the characteristic of a truly educated person.

The factor to be emphasised here is that for education to take place (as distinct from indoctrination), beliefs must come to be held rationally. (The question of students coming to school holding irrational beliefs is dealt with below in connection with the question of indoctrination by omission.) (9)

In either case, the end in view, the teacher's intention, has fundamental implications for the "education" - "indoctrination" dichotomy under review.

It seems important at this point to emphasise that the "irrational beliefs" of the child are not in themselves what I am defining as part of indoctrination. It is the fact that the teacher allows these to go unchallenged that raises my charge of indoctrination by omission. It would, after all, be absurd to hold that the child had indoctrinated himself. The teacher's intention should be evaluated in this light. If no attempt is made by the teacher to challenge students' beliefs rationally, we must conclude that there is tacit agreement to leave some areas of enquiry unexamined. It is that tacit agreement that, particularly in the context of an intellectually closed society like ours, constitutes indoctrination.

The teacher's intentions are closely connected to the third of Snook's criteria, namely the status of the beliefs imparted. Hunt and Metcalf (10) stress the need for clarity regarding a basic philosophy of teaching for all social studies teachers if they are to carry out their obligations to their students, stimulate critical thought and the habit of free enquiry. Failure to examine these precepts can lead one to indoctrinate by omission and by commission.

White's Headmaster's prescription to keep away from sensitive, controversial and potentially inflammatory topics, is part of what I call "talk and chalk ideology". Three features of this school of thought (if one can call it that, for it is by definition committed to not examining most of its presuppositions) have long held sway in many educational institutions in South Africa. These lead teachers to act on a number of false assumptions that foster indoctrination by omission. The three underlying and often unexamined features of this "ideology" of "education" are:

a prevailing climate of moralism (11),

a widespread attempt to deny the presence of conflict as an important feature of life, and

the question of whether it is possible to "stick to the facts" and keep away from value-judgements in school history, civics and social studies.

All these views are in some way embedded in White's headmaster's aphorism - and each in their own way are seductively connected to ways and means of maintaining control in schools, maintaining an authoritarian aura, and promoting certain restricted notions of "orderliness", "discipline" and "character formation". The historical reason for the overwhelming success of these precepts in

schools must be sought in the fact that if you keep to them strictly enough, whatever else you might or might not achieve nobody could accuse you of indoctrination. As an additional bonus you often gained a reputation as the ideal teacher described by Passmore (2) who, above all, had no discipline problems.

"Moralism assumes that morality in young people is largely a matter of their learning the difference between right and wrong - a good person is simply one that does the right thing. It is good for people to be honest, loyal, kind, co-operative, and independent. It is bad for them to be dishonest, disloyal, unkind, unco-operative, and dishonest". (12) Under this regime students have a barrage of adages and aphorisms fired at them that they are expected to live up to - without questioning them - "Tidy desks mean Tidy Minds" (!!) "Honesty is the best policy" etc. Even though these views are frequently contradicoty and naive, they are expected to be obeyed unquestioningly. The impact on students is, at best, to leave them bewildered; at worst, morally crippled and incapable of effective and responsible decision-making. Moralism fosters the habit of unquestioning obedience to authority and totally fails to generate critical abilities in students.

Intellectual life is somehow divorced from reality - and ideas acquired in the educational context are curiously divorced from the "real" or "practical" world outside the classroom. There is a divorce between theory and practice. As a result knowledge is inert, not applicable to one's "real world". Thus beliefs and prejudices remain unexamined and unquestioned even amongst academically bright students who have learned to play the education game. When such students turn out to be incapable of taking up responsible positions in later life, or fall prey to political propaganda or religious fanaticism, we cannot, surely, be in any way surprised.

Indoctrination by omission or the failure to introduce young people to the reality of responsible decision-making, leaves them intellectually and morally crippled, and the responsibility for that lies largely with their teachers.

Closely linked to the above is the underlying premise of conflict-avoidance in such a view of education. Keep away from the controversial, the problematic - 'get on with your work' - and let adults sort out adult problems!

How often do we hear such statements from those in authority in South Africa!

The result is that adolescents never learn how to think about or cope with conflict - on an international, national, local or personal level. They never know what democratic

decision-making is; they do not learn to respect the right of their neighbour to be different or hold contrary views. Large areas of highly "relevant" knowledge and understanding are swept under the carpet in such situations - and thus closed to rational debate.

Finally, although this is not the place to enter into a debate about the status of logical positivism as a philosophic position, a few remarks need to be made in this connection. In essence those who hold this position claim that "only judgements of fact are verifiable. All judgements of value are unverifiable".(13) What this does is to try to separate "facts" into one camp, and "values" into another - and keep them apart "in order to avoid confusion". The point of the exercise is to emphasise that "facts" are objective and verifiable, where "values" are merely subjective - a matter of one's "point of view" - and have little intellectual status. But such a position is a gross oversimplification of the real position. It leads to the notion of "ethical neutralism" (a boon to White's headmaster) which specifies that "value judgements" are to be excluded from respectable intellectual enquiry.

It is increasingly accepted today that knowledge free from prescriptive connotations is little more than a myth, that the very use of language commits us to certain positions, whether we realize it or not or whether we want to realize it or not. The distinction between "facts" and "values" becomes rather illusory in this context. How could one, for example, teach children (or anyone else) about the Great Trek or the 1924 Strike without revealing one's opinions on these events? And even if one could, what would be the point of such an exercise? The only intention that I can imagine one having in claiming that one is "sticking to the facts" seems to me to lie in the teacher's wish to leave value assumptions unquestioned - and that is exactly what indoctrination is - whether by commission or omission. If a teacher allows an area os controversy to go unquestioned ("read it up in the textbook") he is <u>indoctrinating by omission</u>.

The teacher cannot pretend that he is "above" the debate - any more than he can make out that the textbook is "objective". The only way to cope with such a situation - if one is concerned with education - is to lead students, no matter how young they are, or how "average" they are supposed to be, towards a critical examination of current issues and areas of contention. Above all, however difficult it may be, one should encourage students towards a critical examination of their closed areas of thinking, to get them to examine the prejudices that they bring with them to the classroom.

In essence what is at stake if indoctrination is to be avoided, by commission or omission, is whether the teacher

is able to create a climate in the classroom where the free exchange of views can take place in a non-threatening environment and where students can develop the habits of mind that continually question ideological and attitudinal assumptions - their own (the most difficult) and those of others.

In South African schools the responsibility for this awesome task lies heavily on the shoulders of the history or civics teacher - for if he does not administer the antidote, who will?

Footnotes and References

(1) White, J.P. "Indoctrination" in R.S. Peters (ed) The Concept of Education (RKP 1967) pgs 179-191.

(2) Passmore, J. "On teaching to be critical" in R.S. Peters (ed) The Concept of Education (RKP 1967) pgs 192-212.

(3) Postman, N. & Weingartner, C. Teaching as a Subversive Activity (Penguin 1972) pg 203.

(4) White, J.P. op. cit.

(5) ibid. pgs 184-187.

(6) Schlemmer, L. Attitude survey done by Institute for Social Research, University of Natal (Durban).

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THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT - CONSULTANTS, INC.?

Peter Hewson

> "The problem is that theoretical courses are not about teaching, and that method courses which are about teaching have no theoretical foundation."(1)

This statement, made in 1969, is probably just as true today as it was then. Many students at this university have criticised the present HED (PG) course along similar lines. The theoretical courses just do not seem to be relevant to their perception of the role of the teacher. On the other hand method courses generally seem to be popular because they deal with the classroom situation into which classroom teachers are themselves going.

The reasons for the inclusion of both theoretical and method courses arise out of the aims of the HED (PG) course as a whole. In brief, the teacher should be a professional and not simply a technician. The Science Teacher Education Project (STEP) has identified four different roles for the teacher:(2) his role in society, in the educational system, in the school and in the classroom. We would expect the teacher as a professional to have a clear concept of all four of these roles, and the theoretical courses are included in order to develop the teacher's understanding of in particular the first three of these roles. Ultimately, of course, the teacher's perception of these roles could affect his role in the classroom.

Initially, however, teaching is seen to be that which occurs in the classroom, because at that stage the student's experience of teaching goes no further than the classroom. Until such time as the student has had more experience of these wider roles of teaching, it is difficult for him to perceive them as being relevant and important to his teaching career. In other words, initially the teacher sees himself as a technician, and only at a later stage, arising out of his experience does he see himself as a professional.

The question then becomes one of deciding how much experience is necessary in order for the theoretical courses, which we all agree to be essential, to be seen as relevant to the teacher's career. As a corollary it is also important to consider whether the amount of experience is dependent on how and when theoretical courses are provided.

Professor Brommert has spoken of his visit to a College of Education in Scotland where all theoretical aspects arose from the practical experiences of the students during their professional training year. He commented that he has

seldom seen better motivated students, but wondered how much the success of the course depended on the personality and ability of one man.

Assuming that it is possible to reduce the dependence on the individual, this does suggest a way of proceeding. The careful structuring of a wide range of experience in conjunction with the more obviously relevant method work (as is done, for example, by STEP(3))could lay an adequate experiential foundation upon which the theoretical courses could be built. In other words, the need to consider the theoretical basis of education should arise from the practical experiences of method courses and teaching practice. One implication of such a course is the need for a considerable degree of collaboration between education or theory lecturers and method lecturers.

What form should this collaboration take?

In considering this question it is essential to take into account the possibly unique and controversial Wits structure in which methodology lecturers are members of their academic subject departments. The one big drawback of this structure is the difficulty of maintaining effective communication between all those involved in the HED (PG) course. On the other hand, method lecturers, enjoying an enhanced status as a result of this structure, are better equipped to play a more important role in, and take a greater responsibility for the HED (PG) course as a whole.

One possible way in which this advantage of the Wits structure could be used to overcome its main drawback is the following: a method lecturer (or lecturers in a group of allied subjects such as Science and Biology) takes overall responsibility for the whole HED (PG) course taken by his students. Part of that responsibility entails the provision of an appropriate series of experiences (which could vary from observation and normal teaching in local schools to highly structured, simulated incidents recorded, if necessary, on videotape, audiotape, etc.) out of which important questions which would lead naturally into educational theory could arise. (Why does James have such difficulty with something which John finds so straightforward? Why does James have to take science at all?). These experiences and questions would be planned <u>in consultation</u> with the education lecturer whose later responsibility it would be to build the appropriate theory on foundations which each student would see as having arisen from and being relevant to his or her own teaching subject. The further implications of the theory for the subject teacher could then be explored in seminars, discussion groups, etc. which would, as before, be planned co-operatively by theory and method lecturers.

This proposal is in an embryonic form. There are clearly many problems associated with it, but this is not the place for considering those difficulties. Its principal aim is the seeking of an acceptable way in which the background of experience, so essential for an understanding of educational theory, can be obtained more effectively within the context of a teacher training course.

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THE YOUTH COUNSELLING PROJECT

Mervyn Skuy

The Department of Education, the Teacher Training Unit, and the Educational Technology Unit of the University have co-operated in producing an ambitious, two hour Television Programme based on an innovative Clinical Project conducted in the Education Clinic. First viewed by the National Congress of the S.A. Association for Children with Learning and Educational Disabilities, the videotape is to be used as a teaching aid in various appropriate Courses at the University. The film comprises three parts which illustrate a range of therapeutic interaction between students and children involved. Presented below is the Introductory Interview, which explains the nature and the scope of the Project. (Anyone wishing to view the Tape should contact the writer of this article).

TUNMER: The Youth Counselling Project is an experimental programme of intervention which was initiated in 1974 in the Department of Education at Wits. Up to this point, 60 children in the Johannesburg area with an I.Q. range of 30 to 130 and with a wide variety of scholastic and psychological problems have benefited from this Project. In addition, some 60 university students - who participated as sub-professional therapists - have had the opportunity of serving in a helping relationship with children and have thus been given a chance for personal and professional growth. In the wings there has been a team of back-up professionals, including, at various times, psychologists, social workers, remedial therapists, and teachers. They have served as consultants and mentors to the student therapists and have also supervised the research aspect of the Project.

Mervyn, could you tell us what a Youth Counsellor is?

SKUY: Yes, certainly, Ray. He is someone who enters into a pervasive, close and extended one-to-one relationship with a child, under the guidance and supervision of a professional person. The kind of person that is chosen is someone who is likely to develop a good relationship with the child; a relationship which has a beneficial effect on the child's functioning. The qualities which are sought in the therapist, and which the Project tries to foster, are those which Carl Rogers and other eminent clinicians and writers have found to be important conditions for therapeutic change. These include empathy, unconditional positive regard, and congruence or genuineness.

TUNMER: You mention the term "Empathy". This, of course, bears some relationship to the concept of "sympathy", but goes a stage further?

SKUY: Right ... it involves more than the agreement, support and/or concern associated with sympathy. Empathy refers to the ability of the therapist to perceive accurately and understand someone else's feelings and perceptions - to see what it's like for someone else, to understand the child's reactions from the inside, to see things through his eyes, and to step into his shoes. For example, if a child has a hostile attitude to school, or feels very inadequate in certain situations, the therapist aspires not only to know on an intellectual level but also to feel, to understand what such feelings are really like. The communication of this empathy, showing the child he is understood, is central to the success of the relationship. The child will gain strength to tackle various situations.

TUNMER: The second important therapeutic quality you listed was "an unconditional positive regard". What do you mean by this?

SKUY: By unconditional positive regard, we mean that the Youth Counsellor (YC) adopts an approach to the child which communicates the following: "I trust you; although I may sometimes not agree with or approve of some of your actions, I value you. You are someone I care about".

TUNMER: You also spoke of "congruence". This is a phrase peculiar to Carl Rogers, isn't it?

SKUY: Yes. Rogers uses the terms congruence or "being a real person." They refer to the ability to relate to someone else without putting on a facade, without hiding behind a title or a role. Thus, I characterise the YC-child relationship as an I-thou one (to use Martin Buber's phrase), where two people are relating to each other as two people rather than as therapist and patient, and where both are contributing to the other's growth - it's reciprocal.

TUNMER: What is the significance of these interpersonal qualities to the YC Project, and to the enhancement of scholastic skills?

SKUY: Well, the qualities of the relationship are considered to be central to the success or otherwise of a given YC-child programme. This is true, not only with regard to the Project's psychological concerns - such as improving self-concept and interpersonal skills - but also with regard to its scholastic goals. There is well-documented research which has shown just how central and essential the quality of the teacher-pupil and parent-child relationships are to the quality of learning that takes place.

TUNMER: Apart from this therapeutic relationship, what are the salient features of any given YC-child interaction.

SKUY: There are two further basic features of the Project. The first is that a YC-child interaction is "activity - centred". That is, the two of them will generally spend most of their time in constructive activity - which will usually have some bearing on two significant areas of the child's life - home and school. The specific activities and goals which a given YC and child plan and carry out will vary according to the individual YC-child pair. This is because in addition to the quality of the relationship and the emphasis on activity, the third basic feature of the Project is "individuality". Thus, the specific contents of any Programme will depend on the needs of the child - his problems, his weaknesses, his strengths and his unique attributes. It will also depend on the YC - the media, localities and approaches that he finds most congenial to his personality. Thus, no set procedure or syllabus is laid down or prescribed. On the other hand, apart from the individual guidance given by particular supervisors to students, guidelines are provided - both in relation to the plan of action a student should adopt and with regard to the actual activities engaged in by YC and child. Each student is thus provided with a Manual, a booklet called Guidelines for the Youth Counsellor which among other things, contains a wide range of educational and recreational activities and games - devised to improve the child's scholastic functioning. When we speak of educational games and activities we are talking about the use of informal, enjoyable, non-obvious ways in which to improve scholastic performance.

This certainly helps to improve such skills as visual and auditory perception and discrimination, oral expression, visual-motor co-ordination, and ability to follow directions and carry out tasks. On the other hand, it is even more

concerned with such essential educational skills and goals as co-operation behaviour, appreciation of books and enjoyment of reading, responsibility and control, stimulation of interests, self-expression, and learning how to learn.

TUNMER: I know it is too early to evaluate the effects of this year's Project, but would you care to comment on the results produced by last year's Pilot Study?

SKUY: Last year, the children in the Youth Counselling Programme were compared to a group of children who received formal remedial tuition - also in a one-to-one situation, and to a group that received no intervention. The results indicated that YC group children improved significantly over the others in such areas as frustration tolerance and social competence. This held true regardless of I.Q. - and there were certain children with an I.Q. of below 50. At that time there was no significant differences between the groups in "specific scholastic" skills. Neither the remedial nor the Y C groups improved significantly in reading, writing or arithmetic. However, a follow-up testing - which we propose to do on our last year's group this year, and on this year's group next year - could conceivably produce an improvement in these specific scholastic skills. This is because improving basic attitudes to learning and to self are central to producing long-term and permanent improvements in school performance. This has been shown in various studies by people such as Kellmer Pringle, Spache, Combs, and Coopersmith. Conversely, various studies have revealed that the effects of remedial tuition can be transitory if not accompanied by pervasive personality and behavioural change.

TUNMER: You have given us a clear picture of who the Youth Counsellor is. You've broadly indicated what his goals and his methods would be. At this stage, could you tell us the central objectives of your Project?

SKUY: In a nutshell, the four main goals of the Youth Counselling Programme can be stated as follows:

Firstly, it is an attempt to provide a new approach to helping children improve their functioning at school. I have called it a psycho-educational model of intervention because here there is an attempt to integrate traditionally psychological concerns such as emotions, self-concept and behaviour with traditionally educational concerns such as

learning and mastery of skills. We believe - and the research of such eminent psycho-educationists as Tizard bear us out - that one cannot meaningfully separate such concerns. In fact, integration of approach produces the best results.

This brings me to the second objective of the programme - which is to bring students and professionals of various disciplines together into working as a team and to concentrating on common goals and objectives. Thus we have a multi-disciplinary team guiding the students and we also have students from such fields as psychology, speech, social work, and education working together. This helps to prevent a fragmentation of the child.

TUNMER: So you are actually providing students with practical experience in working with a child?

SKUY: Yes. And this represents the third of the four objectives which this Project has.

The provision of students with an opportunity to work with a child in a helping relationship - free of such preconceptions as labels impose and free of the restrictions and comforts of the clinic or classroom - is another central goal of the Programme. Last year's students counted this experience among their most meaningful at the University. This year we haven't received their Reports yet ... Of course, students encounter all kinds of difficulties - related partly to occasional feelings of inadequacy and party to the fact that they are after all fallible human beings.

TUNMER: Have there been other studies to indicate whether the use of students in therapeutic relationships has had positive effects?

SKUY: Certainly. It has been widely documented that this experience can be a profitable one for both the helper and the helped. Students have been shown to grow in various ways, including in the development of greater degrees of empathy acceptance and understanding of various categories of children. Also, they have developed a greater awareness of their own limitations and qualities.

Students, in turn, are an asset in the therapeutic situation. They can bring to it a relaxation and a normality that makes them particularly effective with children. They often have

a particular knack for meeting the child in his own world, in that the students may not yet be irrevocably committed to the adult world, or seen as such by the child.

TUNMER: You mentioned earlier that the Project has four main objectives. What is the fourth one?

SKUY: Yes. The fourth objective links up with the effectiveness of students. If students and other subprofessionals - which is what we call those with less than the required formal qualification - are effective in helping relationships, then we should aim to mobilise this source of manpower. In this way, a far greater number of children can be reached and provided with some assistance. There is a critical shortage of manpower in mental health and in educational spheres. This has provided impetus for the Community Psychology movement in the U.S.A., with its emphasis on the subprofessional and nonprofessional helper.

TUNMER: Doesn't this sort of approach have its limitations and its dangers? After all, these students are not qualified in the formal sense.

SKUY: By emphasizing their value, I'm not trying to suggest that there aren't certain dangers and limitations in the use of students. This is why a backup team of closely-supervised professionals is so essential, and this is why each child who receives a YC is followed up at the end of 6 month period to see if he needs further,more specialised, treatment.

TUNMER: Up to this point, you haven't said much about the parents of the children who participate in this Project. Do they have a role to play?

SKUY: They certainly do. Perhaps one of the most important nonprofessional aides is the parent. That's why the Youth Counselling Project serves to involve the parent, both indirectly and directly. The former refers to the fact that the YC inevitably comes into contact with the family, who may often attempt to emulate various facets of the Y C's approach to and activities with the child. This gentle, suggestive communication of more positive attitudes and methods to parents through the work if the Y C is to be followed up and reinforced by a more direct frontal attack this year in the form of Parents Groups.

Next month parents will come together, under the leadership of a professional therapist, to discuss the YC Project, their child's progress, and ways in which they can help their child to flourish. (Incidentally, this is not the same as saying that parents must necessarily spend more time helping a child with homework. In many cases, just the opposite may be called for).

THE ELECTRONIC CLASSROOM

Helmut Schirmer

There is a possibility that Wits will have a fully equipped Electronic Classroom in the new Senate House language laboratory complex in the near future. Should this room become a reality, language departments will seriously have to consider how it is to be utilized effectively, especially for the beginners' language courses, if it is not to become a white elephant.

Since the objectives in a language course largely determine the methods to be applied, it is perhaps time for us as University teachers of foreign languages to re-examine and to re-define our language objectives. It is internationally agreed that the approach to language should primarily be oral and that active methods of teaching should be employed. At the 4th International Conference of German Teachers in Kiel in 1974 it was unanimously agreed that the aim of foreign language teaching was to place the spoken language as a means of communication into the foreground, even at the cost of grammatical perfection. The results of modern linguistics have proved that an all-embracing aim in teaching a language (as we have the situation here at Wits catering for different requirements under one hat) is impossible. Let's take an example from German. You cannot teach students to speak everyday German in order to read Goethe and Günther Grass, to orientate themselves in everyday German and to understand scientific texts and perhaps even to interpret for foreign visitors. These are tasks which involve different "registers" of German and only if the course is divided accordingly can we achieve any measure of success.

It is interesting to note that the French Preliminary Course is based on the audio-lingual method. New structures in the language and new vocabulary are introduced visibly and audibly by means of a synchronised tape-slide programme and the students are required to repeat the pattern sentences. No explanations are given in the home language and the written symbols are withheld initially. The emphasis is thus on the spoken language, i.e. the hearing, understanding and speaking skills. Only later are the reading and writing skills introduced.

I wish to examine the position of the Electronic Classroom within the framework of what has been mentioned above and in the light of language being regarded primarily as a means of communication and therefore based on the audio-lingual method.

The Electronic Classroom is the classroom of the future for foreign language teaching and by making use of such a room with its numerous technical devices, the entire concept of foreign language teaching becomes didactically and methodologically orientated. What does an Electronic Classroom consist of? Basically it is a combination of some of the features of our present audio-visual room and the language laboratory. It was developed in the U.S.A. a few decades ago as a result of the dissatisfaction and bad experiences with the language laboratory and its limited function as purely an aid to language learning. Imagine our present language laboratory in a much larger room, seating approximately 35 students. In front is the electronic lectern. The walls of the students' booths fall away and the sophisticated equipment in front of them is reduced to only a pair of earphones and a microphone. (This system is known as audio-active. Without the microphones, and they are dispensable, the system is known as audio-passive). The room contains the following audio-visual aids, all positioned for maximum visual impact: a blackboard, overhead-projector, slide projector, film projector, television monitor (for cassette video recordings and replays from a centralised studio e.g. the television studio at E.T.U.) overhead screen for projection of transparencies, slides or films, tape recorder and record-player. Furthermore, blackout facilities, preferably at the push of a button, from the electronic lectern, from which most of the electronic equipment will be controlled centrally by the teacher. A realia cupboard and shelves will house all the software and swivel chairs for students and the teacher will ensure that everybody has good vision facilities.

The Electronic Classroom has the great advantage of incorporating numerous technical devices at the push of a button, not indiscriminately, but when they are applicable during a lesson, not just to stimulate and create a change in the learning routine, but to create an audio-visual impact, increasing the degree of interest and improving the learning process. The various media at our disposal must not just be regarded as aids, but as educational media applied within the framework of a composite method in which each electronic medium serves its best function, i.e. a function that no other device could accomplish with a greater degree of proficiency within a given language situation or structure, including the teacher. In an Electronic Classroom the teaching of a foreign language becomes dynamic and lively and despite the automation the teaching is <u>not</u> impersonal, because the teacher who uses the Electronic Classroom effectively remains in control of the development of the lesson and retains the personal contact with his students, by reverting to the conventional methods of dialogue (question and answer technique) linking the electronically presented material. The greatest

advantage of the Electronic Classroom as compared to the conventional classroom or the language laboratory is that it has the possibilities of switching from a technically programmed insertion (be in audio or visual or a combination of the two of linguistically graded material with good studio quality sound reproduction and/or visual perfection) during a lesson, to the conventional type of teaching, still adhering to the audio-lingual principles, without causing a real disruption or wasting of time by moving, say, to the language laboratory.

The language laboratory is still used as an integral part of the overall language programme as an additional aid, for individual practice of pattern drills and special structures, where a laboratory booth and constant automatic repetition is required. (One could compare the laboratory to the operating theatre of a clinic and the Electronic Classroom to the entire treatment i.e. the laboratory and the Electronic Classroom supplement one another within the framework of a new language concept and methodology.) In the Electronic Classroom the intensity of the foreign language teaching increases considerably and the results are usually better than in any conventional type of language instruction, because of the audio-visual impact, the active participation of all students in a group discussion, after a text has been heard or a film has been seen, the intervention of the teacher to correct an individual mistake and to guide the general discussion.

The concept of the Electronic Classroom for foreign language teaching must be regarded as a "systems-approach", as a "multimedia-system" as postulated by Reinhold Freudenstein (1). Its scientific framework consists of educational technology, linguistics and psychology of learning.

We should try and make extensive use of the Electronic Classroom for intensive language instruction in our beginners courses. The questions arise: where do we obtain the necessary software? Is it readily available? Who will train teachers to use the Electronic Classroom effectively? The Electronic Classroom could well be used for teacher training, compelling students and lecturers to examine new and effective methods of teaching and should the planned Institute of languages become a reality, the need for an Electronic Classroom, in conjunction with the language laboratory will be an indispensable asset, especially for the training of interpreters and translators.

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THE PRIZE RED-HERRING: THEORY VERSUS PRACTICE

Don Margetson

Theory, we are often told in education, is an inpediment to the pursuit of practical matters. Practical people cannot afford to be distracted by considerations of mere theory. Theories are products of ivory towers; in the jargon of the consumer society they might be called luxury products, available for consumption by those who like to while away the odd hour on intellectual games, but of little, if any, use to people trying to get on with the business of education.

That there is some distinction between theory and practice no one would seriously doubt. Where questions do arise is over the nature and extent of the distinction. In particular, the question arises as to whether theory and practice can sensibly be opposed to each other in the way that frequently appears to be intended. For example, what sense can be made of this statement:

> "I am not going to look at any theories or philosophies of education. I think it would be more valuable to have a practical look at education in South Africa."

(This statement was made by a headmaster in a lecture.) The immediately puzzling thing about this statement centres on the notion of having a "practical look". If one is "having a look at education", then one is clearly standing back, as it were, from the practice of education: one is not practising the items of education that one is considering; one is rather talking about them. Now talking about them, rather than practising them, sounds suspiciously like theorising. If so, then "a practical look" turns out to be an instance of theorising, and we must ask what has happened to the distinction between theory and practice?

When one is engaged in theorising one is thinking about something; when one is practising something one is doing that thing rather than thinking about it. In this formulation, the phrase "thinking about something" is ambiguous; the ambiguity arises over two possible interpretations of the phrase:

(a) One may say of a person that he is theorising insofar as he is thinking about x (something which we will refer to as x).

(b) But one may also say of the person that he is thinking about x while he is doing x.

The ambiguity lies in the fact that the phrase "thinking about x" is not doing the same work in (a) as it is in (b). In (a) "thinking about x" is intended to result in a theory or theories concerning x. In (b) "thinking about x" is a way of saying that the person is "paying attention to what he is doing"; the distinction implied in (b) is the distinction between doing x thinkingly, and doing x unthinkingly.

The interpretation of "thinking about x" that is of concern to us is (a). This might be called the reflective sense of "thinking about x" since one would be reflecting on, or about, x rather than doing x. By contrast, interpretation (b) is concerned with the non-reflective sense of "thinking about x", since in this sense of the phrase one would be paying attention to what one was doing rather than reflecting on what one was doing. These distinctions may be summarised as follows:

(i) Someone may do x unthinkingly

(ii) Someone may do x thinkingly

(iii) Someone may think about x (about x itself, or about doing x)

The first two, (i) and (ii), may be called practice; (iii) may be called theory (at least in a primitive sense which will have to be refined below). Of course (iii) may itself be a practice, that is the practice of theorising. But this in no way invalidates the distinction between theory and practice, for the distinction between thinking about x and doing x, remains. The distinction may be expressed in this way: To do x is to practise x; to think about x is to practise y, where y is "thinking about x".

So far, "theory" has been used in a primitive sense in that it has been identified only as being reflective, and this sense needs some refinement. It needs refinement since, while all theorising is reflective activity, not all reflective activities are concerned with theory. For example, reminiscing is a reflective activity but it is not a case of theorising. In reminiscing one might become involved in theorising but the reminiscing and the theorising would remain distinctly different kinds of reflection. One way in which they differ is that theories are in some way intended to provide explanations of what they are about, while reminiscences are not; reminiscences are intended to provide something like entertainment rather than explanation.

It is also particularly worth noting that while all theories are the result of theorising, not all theorising results in theories. Sometimes theorising may not be carried through to the extent that it results in a theory or in some theories.

In such cases it may be questionable whether the activity that has been engaged in is really theorising, or whether it is some other form of reflection. For example, if an activity is to be counted as theorising, must it result in a theory, or must it only be intended to result in a theory, or need it only explain something, or need it only be intended to explain something? These questions, and others, are very real and important questions in clarifying precisely what theory is and what theorising is; and then one would have to ask where "theoretical" fits into this web of concepts? Whatever precise relationships exist between these terms, at least this much seems to be plain: in common usage "being theoretical", "theorising", and "theory" are used somewhat indiscriminately. And, in particular, they are used indiscriminately in contrast to "being practical", "practising", and "practice". As a first step, then, we must consider what sense, if any, there is in the common contrast between the theoretical and the practical.

In discussions of theory and practice it is noticeable that not all theories are treated in the same way. Usually a division is made between theories in formal logic, mathematics, and the natural sciences on the one hand, and, on the other, other areas of theorising. Theories in the first group, and especially the natural sciences, are generally considered to be both respectable and useful; it is perhaps because they are useful that they are considered to be respectable. No one in his right mind, for instance, would doubt that a proper understanding of optical theory is necessary to the design of all sorts of very useful optical instruments. But when we move off the solid ground of formal logic, mathematics and the natural sciences, we flounder immediately. We seem to thrash around in a marsh of shifting opinions where the oddest procedures occur. Often, for example, in this confusion, those who bustle most win most acknowledgement because no-one appears to know how to evaluate claims that are put forward.

The position could be set out in the following way. When people object to "being theoretical" they are not objecting to theories whose usefulness has been established. Nor are they objecting to theories, however abstruse and abstract, whose usefulness has not been established - provided that these theories are produced in those areas which have earned their respectability. Formal logic, mathematics, and the natural sciences have, as it were, a healthy credit balance and so their theorisings enjoy a large degree of acceptance; even if some of their proceedings are extremely expensive and show no obvious signs of being productive, it is believed, on the grounds of past performance, that they are likely to be profitable eventually.

But theorisings in areas other than formal logic, mathematics, and the natural sciences do not enjoy the same

credibility, largely, it seems, because they have achieved nothing like the same success. It is in these other areas that people object to "being theoretical". To such people it appears that there is no way in which controversies, which they characterise as "theoretical", can be clearly settled. The assumption on which this view is based is intimately connected with the notion of certainty. In areas outside of formal logic, mathematics, and the natural sciences, we cannot, it is believed, reach conclusions which are certain. Therefore there is always the possibility that a conclusion which is put forward might be faulty. The implication of this is that, since we cannot be perfectly certain about any particular conclusion, we have to accept the possibility that all conclusions are equally valid. Consequently, it appears that the pursuit of these theoretical controversies is futile.

Now it seems that a person who wishes to hold this view would find himself committed to the following position. He does not wish to "be theoretical" about x, but he wishes to come to a decision one way or another about x, e.g. he might want to know whether x is true or not, or he might want to know whether he ought to do x or not. There are only two ways in which he could proceed in order to come to a decision.

(i) He could arbitrarily choose between the apparent alternatives, since theorising will, he claims, be an unsound method of attempting to come to a decision. Such decisions, he claims, are based on nothing more than mere opinions.

(ii) He could try to find good reasons for choosing one alternative rather than any of the others.

Option (i) is absurd. The absurdity of this view emerges if we consider an example of its consequences. Suppose some decisions about the content of a course in South African history have to be taken. The person having to take the decisions has to select 6 topics from a list of 50 topics. Now if he believes in option (i), then he will select arbitrarily; perhaps he would shut his eyes, stab at the list with a pencil, and select the items that his pencil fell on. On looking at his arbitrarily selected 6 topics, the person notices that, by chance, all of them concern the 1820 Settlers. As a believer in option (i) this person would have to accept that the 6 arbitrarily selected topics might be as good a selection as any other, and that would be the end of it. He could not, if he wished to be consistent with his belief in option (i), make any such comment as "Well, for a course in South African history, this content is unbalanced; it looks more like a history of the 1820 Settlers than like a history of South Africa as a whole". For in making this comment he would be giving a reason for criticising the selected content. This he

could not consistently do because he believes no certainty can be reached in this area, since according to his belief one reason might be as good as another and so more weight should not be given to one than another.

The moment a person of this persuasion produced any reason for doing one thing rather than another, he would have abandoned his persuasion. He would then be committed to option (ii), that is, to trying to find good reasons for choosing one alternative rather than any other. It is necessary to say "good reasons" rather than merely "reasons" for if any reason whatever were acceptable, then we would be virtually back to option (i). E.g. the person choosing only the history of the 1820 Settlers for a South African history course might give as his reason for doing so that he had recently read an inspiring book on the 1820 Settlers. This is certainly a reason, but it is an irrelevant reason in regard to the question of what could be a suitable content for a course in South African history. If this were to count as an acceptable reason, then could anything be excluded as a reason for doing something? If nothing could be excluded then the notion of giving reasons in support of, or against, some proposal would become redundant, for reasons could not influence decisions: if one reason were as acceptable as another then what could be the point in trying to be reasonable?

Of course this is not to say that no choices are arbitrary. For instance, one might have no reasons for choosing coffee rather than tea after lunch; one might simply arbitrarily choose coffee, and if one were given tea by mistake this might not bother one at all since the original choice was arbitrary. But such cases are usually trivial. Arbitrary choice is unobjectionable because little depends on the choice. By contrast, in matters such as educational policy it is of the utmost importance to make the best possible decisions, for a great deal hangs on such decisions. In such cases it would be sheer folly to abandon decision making to arbitrary choice, if only because different decisions have different implications, and this alone removes such decisions from the sphere of the arbitrary. For if decision x has implications a, b, and c, while decision y has implications b, g, and h, then in what sense could deciding between x and y be arbitrary? Of course someone might in fact simply make an arbitrary decision, that is, ignore any reasons which were relevant to the making of the decision; but if one assumed that reasonable people were making the decision, then a, b, and c, on the one hand, and b, g, and h on the other, could not be ignored in coming to a decision. a, b, etc. count as reasons why one should decide on x rather than y, or vice versa. In the nature of things such decisions are seldom as clear-cut as this formalized example suggests; however that may be, it in no way invalidates the principle that the making of

decisions about action, and judgements as to the truth or falsity of some state of affairs, may be made more reasonably or less reasonably. From the fact that in some cases the reasons and reasonings may be extremely complicated - so much so that any attempt to come to a reasonable decision may seem hopeless - it does not follow that a reasonable decision cannot in principle be reached.

In virtually any situation, then, in which decisions or judgements have to be made the question of reasons for selecting one alternative rather than another will arise. These decisions and judgements cannot be dismissed as worthless or as opinions which are exempt from evaluation, simply because they cannot be established with perfect certainty. For these decisions and judgements may be supported to a greater or lesser extent by reasons, or reasons may show why some decisions and judgements should enjoy no support at all. To suggest that the alternatives are only either perfect certainty or arbitrary choice is rather like insisting that the only alternative real colours are black or white and that all the other colours of the spectrum are in some curious sense illusory.

Now what has all this to do with theory? We were considering a person who does not wish to "be theoretical" about x, but who wishes to come to a decision one way or another about x. If he wishes to do this seriously he will be committed to considering reasons connected with reaching a decision on x. In considering these reasons he will be thinking about x in sense (a) discussed above. This sense of thinking about x concerned what is commonly called "being theoretical". Consequently it appears that the person in question cannot, if he wishes to take what he is doing seriously, avoid being theoretical. Indeed, a most telling point is to ask whether a criticism of theorising as such could even be coherently stated? For if someone says "Theorising is a futile activity", then is he not condemning his own statement? For, if the statement "Theorising is a futile activity" is true, then the statement itself is futile, since the statement is itself an item of theorising in that it is talking about x (where "x" is "theorising").

In the light of this, what can we say about the view held by a person who wishes to be practical and not theoretical in coming to a decision about something? If, when he is thinking about x rather than doing x he is to that extent being theoretical, what can "being practical" mean?

One possibility is that the person might be faced with a problem in a situation in which there is insufficient time to go carefully into all the implications of some decision. No-one would sensibly deny that this frequently occurs; if there is some overriding urgency for a decision to be

taken even without adequate reflection then it must be taken. Certainly in this situation the decision-maker is "being practical" in the sense that he is making a decision so that something may be done (that a certain practice may be engaged in) since it is urgent that it be done. But even in these situations there is usually some reflection on what to do, even if due to the circumstances this reflection has to be somewhat rough and ready. Where even this degree of reflection is out of the question, that is in situations where "snap" decisions have to be made, reflection is indirectly involved. For the snap decision that is made will be made in the light of the way in which one sees the situation, and one's way of seeing the situation will be influenced by what one has thought about such kinds of situations. Such situations are "practical" in that one is doing x rather than thinking about x; one is therefore being practical rather than being theoretical, but it certainly does not follow from this that theory is in some way opposed to practice. Indeed, it may be a permissible oversimplification to say that in a sense the practice is the practice of the theorising, and that without the relevant theoretical backing there would be no practice; there might be all sorts of haphazard and uncomprehended happenings, but these would not be understood as practices for there would be no means of understanding that one event or series of events constituted one practice rather than another.

Another, less valid, possibility is that the person is appealing to something like intuition. Going through the hard work of rigorous theorising may be a daunting task (Russell once remarked that some people would rather die than think), and the appeal to "be practical" may then become merely a rhetorical device to win agreement on some point without investigating the point explicitly. Closely related to this possibility is the one in which the appeal to be practical is an appeal to agree on what appears to be "obviously" true, or the "obvious" thing to do. No doubt when people first suggested that the earth was not flat they were scorned for talking obvious nonsense. This is not to deny that many things are obviously true and that many actions should obviously be carried out. If we questioned every single statement or intended action we should never do anything. But this is not the point; the point is rather to question a too glib acceptance of what is claimed to be obvious at the level of, say, educational policy. At this kind of level, matters which appear to be perfectly obvious often turn out on reflection to be the ones that are most in need of investigation. In these cases, too, the appeal to "be practical" may, as it were, simply be an appeal not to rock the boat.

Perhaps, in the light of the argument put forward here, the concluding remark should be this. It may sometimes be imprudent to engage in theorising or too much theorising, as the term is commonly used, (because there is insufficient time when urgent decisions have to be taken, for instance), but the theoretical cannot in principle be opposed to the practical. For what we do and what we think we are doing is crucially influenced by our thinking about what we might do; to deny this would commit us to the view that our reflective, theoretical, thoughts had nothing to do with our actions or beliefs. And if that were so, there could be no point in stating it since it is itself a reflective thought on our theorisings and so could have no connection with them. The criticism of theory then cannot be that it is in some way opposed to, or inimical to, practice; the criticism can only be that a particular theory or area of theorising is inadequate. The solution is not to abandon theorising, but to improve it; and to the extent that our theorising is improved our practices will be more practical.

NOTICES

EDITORIAL NOTE

In the light of the central function of this house journal we would like to build up its Discussion section. Discussion has as its essence that contributions to it are brief and relevant to current concerns. If you have disagreed with anything you have read in this issue, or if you think that some of the views put forward deserve development, or if some other matter, say some decision facing the Faculty Board, strikes you as particularly relevant and important to education here, now, respond in writing as soon as possible.

We considered having a section called "Letters to the Editor" as this might have been appropriately vigorous and informal; we still think of the Discussion section as having something of that flavour - simply omitting the "Dear Ed." at the top. But together with the idea that there be an "Editorial" we dropped "Letters to the Editor" as we do not think that a "newsheet" is what is required.

If you have any general suggestions to make about this journal please let us know, as its character is still fluid and we would like it to be sensitive to your views of what it should be.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The editorial committee would like to re ord its thanks to the following persons who gave considerable help in the production of this journal: Professor JW Brommert, Don Margetson, Colin Whitehead (Director of Liaison Services), Colin Emslie (ETU) and Mrs Nell and her helpers in the typing office.

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Mrs D Wright	- French

STAFF FOR HED COURSES

The University has, as from 1 January 1976, appointed its own staff to run the 'Departments' of Home-Economics and Industrial Arts at the JCE Campus. A full-time member of the University staff has also been appointed to the Department of Physical Education of JCE. To handle the typing and similar instruction for the HED (Commercial) course the University has made a full-time appointment. The HED (Commercial) students receive all their training at the Milner Park Campus.

NEW PROFESSORS

Two new professors have joined the Education Department. They are Professor D Lomax who was previously at Manchester University, and Professor P Hunter who was previously at UBLS.

DIARY OF EVENTS

One function of the journal is to bring to everybody's attention such things as forthcoming conferences, meetings, seminars etc, which may be of interest and value. The Editor would welcome information about such events so that a diary can be compiled. Vol 1 No 2 of the journal is due to be distributed on 17 May 1976.

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS: VOL 1 NO 1

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INFORMATION FOR CONTRIBUTORS

The Editor will welcome contributions in the form of comments on local events or issues, original articles, discussion of articles, reviews, items for the 'Notices' Section and so on.

I would be helpful if contributions were submitted according to the following specifications:

(i) the length should ordinarily be no longer than about 3 000 words;

(ii) the contribution should be typewritten on one side of A4 paper, double-spaced with good margins all round;

(iii) three copies should be provided, as well as an indication of length;

(iv) references and footnotes should be kept to a minimum but, if required, should appear at the end of the contribution.

Proofs will not be sent to authors for correction unless this is especially requested. The date by which contributions for the next issue must be with The Editor appears on the back cover.

All contributions should be sent in the first instance to The Editor:

Wally Morrow,
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If you want any further information please get in touch with a member of the editorial committee:

Paul Beard	Department of Education
Patricia Morris	Department of English
Wally Morrow	Department of Education
Helmut Schirmer	Department of German Studies
Mervyn Skuy	Department of Education

DISTRIBUTION

If you know of anyone who has not received this journal, but would like to, please let The Editor know.

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