Education for Human Solidarity

Rowan Williams, Colleen McLaughlin, Cameron Taylor

How can the next generation thrive in an unpredictable world? How can young leaders cooperate in shaping future economic and political systems to allow everyone the freedom and support to reach their full potential? In dialogues with leaders and students, it has become clear that the Inspire Dialogue Foundation can assist by developing new approaches to education, which prepare individuals to be socially connected, emotionally resilient, and mature and responsible citizens of the planet.

The Foundation, as a result, has established a new, research and development program − Education for Human Solidarity – with a core goal: create evidenced-based, practical educational resources building on these principles. These educational resources will be used in schools to prepare young people for the challenges of adult life and to become creative, innovative and socially connected citizens.

Our goal is to challenge models of learning that are narrowly functional, individualistic and short-term in their aspirations. We believe that young people are more than ready to respond to real challenges to their imagination and compassion, and to discover how their well-being is bound up with their awareness of the needs of a wider world. We believe that 'educating the spirit' in this way is more than just a matter of adding a few subjects or modules to a curriculum; it is about the message given and the lessons learned in the entire ethos of an educational community, and we hope to offer properly professional perspectives on developing such an ethos.

Program Leadership

Leading the research and development program are Dr Rowan Williams, Master of Magdalene College at Cambridge University and former Archbishop of Canterbury, Professor Colleen McLaughlin, Director of Educational Innovation at Cambridge

University, and Dr Cameron Taylor, Executive Director, Inspire Dialogue Foundation. The program is being conducted in partnership with the Faculty of Education at Cambridge University and with a team of visionary leaders and academics.

The current context

There are many ways in which we have never had it so good. Rutger Bregman[1] reminds us of the great progress made in the last 200 years. In 1820, 84% of the world's population lived in extreme poverty; in 1981, it was 44% and now it is under 10%. These two centuries have seen unprecedented progress in terms of income, prosperity, longevity and living conditions across the globe. The Oslo Peace Research Institute estimates that the number of war casualties per year has fallen 90% since 1946.

If we look at education we see a similar picture. In 1962, 41% of children did not go to school as opposed to the 10% now. The 2011 Report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on 50 years of education stated, 'During the past 50 years, the expansion of education has contributed to a fundamental transformation of societies in OECD countries. In 1961, higher education was the privilege of the few, and even upper secondary education was denied to the majority of young people in many countries. Today, the great majority of the population completes secondary education, one in three young adults has a tertiary degree and, in some countries, half of the population could soon hold a tertiary degree.'[2] Countries such as the UK have become keen to address the social justice issues such as poverty, especially in relation to attainment in education, although there are many debates about all of these territories. There is evidence that education strives to improve and has done so. More money has

---

[1] Bregman, R. (2017) *Utopia for Realists and how we can get there.* London: Bloomsbury
[2] OECD (2011) *Education at a glance. Fifty Years of Education.* Pages

been spent, and there has been a sustained and rewarded focus on teaching, learning and leadership. There are other trends very evident too.

Data and measurement

It is the era of data and measurement. In 1988, the introduction of school league tables and Ofsted inspections began the serious measurement and accountability of those in education: processes that now dominate much of the educational landscape. Accompanying this has been the OECD PISA tables, which judge and rank countries. The use of data to help us judge how we are doing is not inextricably bad, but these processes have seriously driven schools for the last 30 plus years. Schools now use data to gain feedback on pupil progress and their school processes as a matter of course. However, they also distort processes, e.g. mentoring to raise a grade, rather than supporting all. Many argue they have driven out other worthwhile aspects and have created fear and had many unintended side effects. The new senior inspector of Ofsted has argued we are safeguarding children too much and have become risk adverse, but the inspection schedule is still one that makes any infringement on safeguarding an automatic 'failure' in the final mark.

Despite the improvements, there is dis-ease and there are indicators that suggest that it is matters of meaning, purpose and values. These are issues that affect the well-being of both students and teachers. There is well-founded concern about the ways in which negative and even destructive habits of thinking and living can find a place in educational institutions if there is not a clear shared commitment to a broader and deeper vision of the purpose of the work.

Teachers

As well as the measurement changing, the language in which we talk about education has changed, and these shifts of language convey a particular mindset. The language is that of the market and of customer and satisfaction. It is also the language of efficiency. We have a value for efficiency, which is causing many teachers to leave. The NUT[3] state that in October 2016, the UK Government confirmed that nearly a third of teachers who joined the profession in 2010 had left teaching within five years. Of the 21,400 teachers who started working in English state schools in 2010, over 6,400 (30%) had quit by 2015. Department for Education figures show that this trend is continuing: of the teachers who joined the profession in 2011, only 69% were still teaching five years later.[4] A survey published in October 2015 by the NUT and YouGov found that over half of teachers were thinking of leaving teaching in the next two years, citing 'volume of workload' (61%) and 'seeking better work/life balance' (57%) as the two top issues. [5] This is in a context of rising pupil numbers and unfilled teacher education places. We are heading for a serious teacher shortage.

Young People and Education

There is also a mixed picture if we take a look at young people in the UK. The HBSC England National Report 2014 shows that young people see themselves as largely academically achieving - 76% of students of all ages rated their academic achievement in school as 'good 'or 'very good';[6] they felt safe at school (82%); felt they had good

---

[3] NUT *Teacher recruitment and retention.* Downloaded July 2017 from https://www.teachers.org.uk/edufacts/teacher-recruitment-and-retention

[4] Dept For Education. *Initial Teacher Training census for the academic year 2016-17.* SFR 57/2016, November 2016. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/572290/ITT_Census_1617_SFR_Final.pdf

[5] NUT commissioned YouGov poll of 1020 teachers carried out in June/July 2015 and published in October 2015. Available at: https://www.teachers.org.uk/news-events/press-releases-england/nutyougov-teacher-survey-government-education-policy

[6] Brooks, F., Magnusson, J., Klemera, E., Chester, K., Spencer, N., and Smeeton, N. (2015) *HBSC England National Report 2014.* University of Hertfordshire; Hatfield, UK.

Registered Charity No. 1164471 (England)

relationships with peers and teachers whom they trusted; 33% of young people reported that they 'liked school a lot'; a substantial portion reported that they felt pressured at school (41% of girls reported feeling pressured, for example). Another report on global citizenship[7] showed a tolerant group of global young citizens who valued difference and variety, were apolitical and when asked about whether they would describe themselves as happy, nearly seven out of ten (68%) did so. 'There was, however, large variation between countries. Surprisingly, the highest happiness levels tended to be in developing countries such as Indonesia (90%), Nigeria (78%) and India (72%), and were lowest in advanced economies such as France (57%), Australia (56%) and the UK (57%). Young people tended to get less happy as they passed through to early adulthood, and young women were less likely to say they were happy (56%) than young men (62%).' [8] They were supporters of diversity, equality and liberal values. Their concerns were about global safety. However, only 30% had good overall emotional wellbeing, which was defined as a young person who admits to not thinking about their problems too much and does not feel anxious, bullied, unloved or lonely. The World Health Organization (WHO) [9] has predicted that depression will be the main health problem amongst young people by 2030. Depression is linked to many things and there is a huge danger in oversimplifying, but we do know that developing young people's success at school, giving them a sense of self efficacy or agency[10], secure peer and adult relationships combined with a learning rather than a performance orientation[11] gives many a good start. Again, there are more sophisticated debates to be had about all these statistics but they suggest that all is not well in the field of young people's wellbeing and health in the developing nations, nor are we providing a base for citizen involvement or general involvement with others.

---

[7] *The Global Young People Report, 2017*. The Varkey Foundation
[8] ibid page 17
[9] World Health Organisation (2014) *Health for the worlds adolescents a second chance in a second decade* (June 2014).
[10] Rutter, M. (1991) 'Pathways from childhood to adult Life; the role of schooling.' *Pastoral Care in Education* 9.3 (1991): 3-10.
[11] Dweck, C. S. (2000). *Self-theories: Their role in motivation, personality, and development*. Psychology Press.

Reflection on our context – Is this good enough?

The UK is a developed and prospering country. We are generally in better health and have a greater potential for peace than ever before, and yet we face many societal and individual challenges. These challenges are a result of the kind of society that we have created which suggests that we should be paying more attention to ethical considerations. Studies have drawn a picture of many people living in developed nations as being concerned with materialistic and individualistic values, in line with nature of modern life and society. [12] We know that education is deeply connected to the decisions and events we have struggled with globally and locally. Post-election analysis showed that support for more nationalist and protectionist interests such as that which fuelled Brexit is deeply connected to education.[13] Millar argues that despite education's successes 'the process of judging success is still bedevilled by the lack of clarity among so many politicians and many commentators about what our education system is for? Is it simply to raise attainment for the largest number? Or to ensure young people can get jobs and deliver the economy workers with the appropriate skills? Is it to give every parent choice? Must it then spawn a myriad of different types of "niche" schools to meet the demands of ever more particular groups of consumers? ... And what about the qualities that can't be so easily measured: enjoyment, creativity, initiative? Do they have a part to play? What about education for education's sake, rather than to just hit a target? And what of the role that education can play in creating a better, more equal society?'[14]

Our human evolutionary history offers insights as to why the role of education is so important for us. The combination of the helplessness and relative underdevelopment of

---

[12] Wilkinson, R. and Pickett, K. (2010) *The spirit level: Why more equal societies almost always do better*. London: Allen Lane. p.4

[13] Goodwin, M. and Heath, O. August 31, 2016 'Brexit vote explained: poverty, low skills and lack of opportunities'. Joseph Rowntree Foundation. https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/brexit-vote-explained-poverty-low-skills-and-lack-opportunities?

[14] Millar, Fiona. (2009) *Ten Years of Education for richer or poorer?* Guardian, Tuesday, 8 December https://www.theguardian.com/education/2009/dec/08/education-decade-richer-poorer-fairer

human infants[15], a long period of juvenile dependence[16], and the emergence of our capacity for language allowing us to transmit and evolve shared beliefs have resulted in an unparalleled ability to adapt. This has led to a high level of diversity across individual people and societies, which are more complex and larger than other primates due to an ability to cooperate flexibly and beyond kinship groups in very large numbers[17].

Many years are required for humans to develop both biologically and culturally due to an extended infancy and childhood[18]. During this time of increased dependence, social and technical skills are acquired though experiences[19]. The underdeveloped and plastic cognitive systems of children permit many aspects of social cognition to be culturally transmitted during their rearing experiences[20]. Indeed, human children can be educated to an unprecedented degree in comparison with other social species. Children have the potential to develop in many ways, and this is heavily influenced by the social environment.[21]

Changes in the social behaviour of most social animals usually require genetic mutations[22][23]. For humans, culturally transmitted ideas and beliefs influence our development and consequently our social behaviour[24]. While other primates exhibit complex and flexible social cooperation, which cannot be explained by biological factors

---

[15] Dunsworth, H and Eccleston, L (2015) The Evolution of Difficult Childbirth and Helpless Hominin Infants, *Annual Review of Anthropology* 44:1, 55-69
[16] Bogin, B. (1990) The Evolution of Human Childhood: A unique growth phase and delayed maturity allow for extensive learning and complex culture, *BioScience*, Volume 40, Issue 1, 16–25
[17] Boyd, R., & Richerson, P. J. (2009). Culture and the evolution of human cooperation. Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: *Biological Sciences*, 364(1533), 3281–3288. http://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2009.0134
[18] D.F. Bjorklund, J.M. Bering (2003) Big brains, slow development, and social complexity: The developmental and evolutionary origins of social cognition
[19] B. Rogoff (2003) The cultural nature of human development. Oxford University Press, New York
[20] D.F. Bjorklund, P.H. Hawley (2014) Children, childhood, and development in evolutionary perspective, Developmental Review, Volume 34, Issue 3, 225-264
[21] M. Brüne, H. Ribbert, W. Schiefenhövel (Eds.), The social brain: Evolutionary aspects of development and pathology, Wiley, New York, pp. 133-151
[22] This is particularly true in species which exhibit rigid social behaviours such as bees and naked mole rats.
[23] Bell, A. M., & Robinson, G. E. (2011). Behavior and the Dynamic Genome. Science (New York, N.y.), 332(6034), 1161–1162. http://doi.org/10.1126/science.1203295
[24] Mesoudi A, Whiten A, Laland K.N. Towards a unified science of cultural evolution. Behav. Brain Sci. 2006b;29:329–383. doi:10.1017/S0140525x06009083

alone[2526], humans, unlike even the most highly social primates, cooperate in unprecedented large numbers[27]. Human cooperation is not based solely on our genetically inherited biological needs (although this plays a role[28]) and so is not limited, for example, by kinship groups. A unique cultural mechanism makes our extraordinary ability to cooperate in large numbers possible: shared beliefs which can be transmitted through language.

Since the emergence of human language[29]+[30], human societies have undergone dramatic social, economic and political changes. Humanity has witnessed the emergence and dissolution of states, shifts from oligarchies to democracies, and the emergence of civil and political rights. These changes have been ignited by our shared beliefs and transmitted to future generations through language without the need for genetic mutations or environmental changes. In addition to the biological parameters set for our behaviours and abilities, our shared beliefs have played a significant role in shaping the cultures and societies that we live in today. Our shared beliefs can determine the parameters of the life outcomes of particular social groups, such as who is allowed to vote or access public services.

This unique evolutionary history has resulted, for better or worse, in an anthropogenic world, and given us unique level of responsibility. It means that the environment we share with the other inhabitants of this world is actively shaped by the shared beliefs of humans. It also means that the development and lives of our fellow human beings is

[25] Melis AP, Warneken F, Hare B. 2010. Collaboration and helping in chimpanzees. In The Mind of the Chimpanzee:Ecological and Experimental Perspectives, ed. EV Lonsdorf, SR Ross, T Matsuzawa, pp. 278–393. Chicago: Univ. Chicago Press

[26] Hare B, Tan J. 2012. How much of our cooperative behavior is human? In *The Primate Mind: Built to Connect with Other Minds*, ed. FBM de Waal, PF Ferrari, pp. 175–93. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press

[27] Brian Hare (2017) Survival of the Friendliest: Homo sapiens Evolved via Selection for Prosociality, *Annual Review of Psychology* 68:1, 155-186

[28] Burnham, T. & Johnson, D. (2016). The Biological and Evolutionary Logic of Human Cooperation. Analyse & Kritik, 27(1), pp. 113-135. Retrieved 24 Aug. 2017, from doi:10.1515/auk-2005-0107

[29] Clark, J. (1992). African and Asian Perspectives on the Origins of Modern Humans. *Philosophical Transactions: Biological Sciences*, 337(1280), 201-215.

[30] Lahr MM, Foley RA. 1994. Multiple dispersals and modern human origins. *Evolutionary Anthropol* 3:48–60.

shaped by our shared beliefs. With this responsibility, it is important that we ask questions about our shared beliefs. And in this context, what kind of education is required so that we are best equipped to engage with that level of responsibility?

Our evolutionary heritage provides us with an opportunity to choose the kind of future we would like to co-create. What if we were to try to educate for human solidarity, reclaiming the idea of education as about living the 'good life' with respect for persons at its core? Bregman puts it well, 'We need a new lodestar, a new map of the world … We need alternative horizons that spark the imagination. And I do mean horizons in the plural: conflicting utopias are the lifeblood of democracy after all.'[31]

What the project is and would do

We will develop different forms and practices of education for human solidarity, rooted in evidence and the real world of educational practice and schools.

The world in which we live seems to be one in which ethics and care are more important than ever. Indifference, hardening of attitudes and divisiveness among people are very evident. There are many different and complex reasons for these trends. We are interested in focusing on how education can return to wider and more humane purposes. Our school systems have focused increasingly on information transfer, education for economic purposes and individualism. We are interested in a wider human purpose. We are interested in education for human solidarity: an education which develops the ability to care, share and think about each other, and to understand how the wellbeing of each and the wellbeing of all are inseparable in our world.

---

[31] Bregman, R. (2017) *Utopia for Realists and how we can get there.* London: Bloomsbury. Pages 20-21

Young people learn through experience. Schooling must provide experiences which enable young people to grow with a sense of respect, tolerance and empathy for others; engage with peer and adult relationships characterised by care and reflection; and reflect and engage on moral and ethical issues, and the related issues of justice, fairness and equality. We ask: what role can schools play in developing how persons engage and think ethically?[32]

Principles of education for human solidarity

We propose these purposes for such education:
- To develop understanding and compassion for others
- To place relationships at the centre of
>> School structures
>> Of curriculum
>> Of learning and teaching
>> Of assessment
- To learn to dialogue
> Since conflict and controversy are inevitable, we want young people to learn to be able to disagree in friendship and critically evaluate ideas with respect.
- To learn to act in our worlds small and large – developing agency
- To do it with others
> This principle suggests co-agency, and that it is not the lone pupil or the solitary teacher at work here – it is about working with others.
- To develop the capacity to trust and love each other

---

[32] Kohlberg (1981), Gilligan (1982) and Noddings (1984: 1992:)