

I am ARTHUR FRENCH, M.A. (Oxon). I am retired (aged 87), and I spent almost all my career in teacher education (initial or in-service), in England, in East Africa, with a year in Teachers College, Columbia U, NY.

I believe that adequate attention to education in personal relationships is basic to all eight of the issues you raise. The article which follows tries to support this by describing my experience.

Education

Forgotten Opportunities

In 1949 I was invited to go and work on the headquarters staff of the West Riding of Yorkshire Education Committee, under A B Clegg (later 'Sir Alec'). My task was to set up and run a loan collection of all kinds of teaching materials, but the question of how best to use them was much in our minds, and I found myself a member of a team offering courses on the content and methods of schooling. It was an exciting time.

I still have a report on "*Ten Years of Change*" in West Riding Education - an illustrated book of 180 pages covering 1944-1954. One of Clegg's key ideas was that education should be less "imposed on the child", and more "drawn from the child". If you take this seriously you have to give more attention to the nature and development of the child's inner life - thoughts, feelings, values - and relationships with other pupils and with teachers.

A new subject, called "Movement", had a profound effect. It was an exploration of the range of available body-language, its links with inner life, and its effects on others. It gave opportunities for enriching the children's vocabulary for feelings and behaviour. It led to a radical renewal of the content of Physical Education, and to a more important place for Drama and Dance in the curriculum. The rhythms of some movement led to experiments in aspects of Art, and to a widespread interest in italic handwriting!

Children were encouraged to evaluate their own work. "What do you feel about what you've done? Is there another way you could try? What's the best work you have seen in the class? Does that suggest anything you could do?" They often learned to work together.

These ideas were spreading systematically from school to school. When one school had made considerable progress, the advisory team would invite other interested teachers to come and watch, and to work alongside teachers more experienced in the new methods and content. In more substantial courses, advisers would 'borrow' a class of experienced children! Primary Schools responded first, but the ideas began to spread in Secondary Modern Schools.

It wasn't just the curriculum that changed. There was a different atmosphere in many of these schools. Children worked more willingly on their "Three Rs". I remember one primary school where I photographed and filmed some of the excellent Drama. They were also getting the best results in the area in the "Eleven-Plus". In one of my favourite secondary modern schools, the headmaster wouldn't have a school uniform 'imposed on the child', because he thought that the way children dressed should be a part of the curriculum. Relationships between staff and pupils were personal and influential.

Alas! About that time people started setting up 'comprehensive schools'. I was much in favour of 'mixed ability' groups; but I remember an HMI speaking to a group of us: "Grammar schools need a few hundred pupils to maintain a viable Sixth Form, and they only take about 15% of the age-group - comprehensive schools will need to be about six times as big." The new schools had well over 1000 pupils, and often well over 100 staff. It took teachers all their time to get to know their colleagues: personal relationships with pupils became more and more tenuous. Moreover, for the first few years at least, the head teachers and subject specialists inherited from the grammar schools wielded a disproportionate influence. Nobody realised what was being lost by failing to work on a 'human' scale. I believe that the cultural gulf between generations which surfaced in the 1960s can be traced, in large part, to this.

In 1955 I was invited to work in teacher education in East Africa, where social and school conditions were very different: but that's another story. I came back to south-east England in 1969, and the following year I began work for an LEA in the in-service training of teachers there.

It seemed at first as if Clegg's work in the West Riding had never been heard of. A newly-appointed HMI from 'up north' came into my office, and said (rather unprofessionally, perhaps) "How *complacent* schools are around here!" Yet there were interesting and hopeful things going on in the neglected 'affective' side of education. The National Marriage Guidance Council (later called "Relate") had some brilliant people, offering to teachers excellent courses on personal relationships (not just on sex!) using methods which could be used with pupils too. TACADE (an organisation concerned with tobacco, alcohol, and drug addiction) had a man who did similar courses of wide application. Other bodies (including the Church of England) were exploring new techniques of group work which could have been used by teachers to help develop the 'personal relationship' aspects of teaching.

Some of us were encouraged by the proposal to appoint extra teachers to schools as 'professional tutors'. We hoped they might be trained to develop team-work in the staff and group-work among the pupils, showing the importance of feelings and relationships. In 1973 I was helping to run a course at Sussex University on "The Role of the Professional Tutor", when the oil crisis blew up, and government money for the professional tutor project vanished.

Back in schools, we did our best to carry on the work. At the secondary school level, Lancashire County Education Committee (up north again!) had sponsored and published a scheme, "Active Tutorial Work", for dealing with the personal side of life in tutor group time. I heard a report from Derbyshire of form tutors there who, after successfully using 'ATW', chortled and said: "I could use these methods in my subject teaching!" A few teachers down south took it up, but adults really need time to work together on their own relationship problems before they can use the methods with children. Enough time was rarely available.

At the other end of the school age-range, I remember the deputy head of a First (5 - 8) School, who had been working on feelings with their older children, and wanted to see whether it was worth trying it with 5-year-olds. She spent some time getting them to talk about pleasant feelings, and eventually asked: "Are you ever frightened?" She told me how the atmosphere of the class changed when one small boy said: "I'm frightened when I wet my bed!" The children almost visibly and audibly relaxed and opened up, as they realised that they could trust *this* teacher to listen to their personal problems. Work on feelings can free children to do their more 'academic' work, even at age five.

As we went on with our efforts, bureaucratic pressures, stemming from political attempts at 'top-down' reforms (so-called), bore increasingly on us. In 1983 I was told that my in-service training centre was being closed down, to be replaced by something which would be "more of an instrument of central policy"! I took early retirement. A few months later I called in to my old office, where there was an exhibition of children's work done under the initiative of a 'peripatetic advisory teacher'. It was very impressive, and I asked the secretary to congratulate the teacher for me. "Oh," she said, "she's having to give up her advisory role, because it doesn't fit the new bureaucratic structures!"

This wasn't quite the end of my hopes. In 1990 I moved to Devon. Through a friend, I found a primary school which was taking relationships seriously. They used a technique called "Circle Time". The children achieved self-discipline. When a student teacher was so impressed by the atmosphere of the place that he asked if he could bring colleagues for a visit, the Head asked the top class to organise the event. They did so, brilliantly, and were surprised that anyone should congratulate them on it. Eventually, the Head retired, ill. I suspect that the tensions of running a school like that, in times like this, must have played a part.

I am still convinced that many of our current problems with young people could be relieved by education which took the inner life and relationships more creatively. Truancy; vandalism; unhealthy peer-group pressures; attitudes to sex, drugs, money; racial prejudice all could be influenced by one programme, instead of pouring public funds into rules and regulations and their enforcement ("imposed on the child"), and publicity campaigns.

Aged 87 now, I can do little except challenge younger adults to take this more seriously.

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