

**Independent Schools Council of Australia**

**National Conference 2004**

**PEACE**

**EDUCATION**

**A Challenge**

**to**

**Educational Leadership**

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In 2002, I attended a meeting hosted by the (Ministry of Education) Registered Schools Board (Victoria) in which those schools up for their cyclical review briefed as to what form their review would take.

We were instructed to take some time out, to remove ourselves from our schools and the busy day-to-day, and thereby bring some perspective to our analysis of our schools. To take a bird's eye view of their strengths, weaknesses, eccentricities, functioning, success and failures. I am not sure of the list exactly, but am fairly sure that it did not include eccentricities.

Having dreaded this review, and the manner in which it would be conducted, and the amount of time that I would need to put into it, (time that I had assumed would be entirely wasted), I was completely taken aback by this opening. Perhaps my reaction was naive, but I was pleased that, well, this review might not be such a waste of time after-all. I viewed this exercise we were set to begin with as potentially valuable.

The next presenter was not so interesting, so I began to flick through the enormous folder we were given... and realised then that the review was not going to be such an interesting project after all. The following presenter confirmed this for me. Her presentation concerned depth of

tan bark, swings (not allowed), tree roots, signage, marked exits, low branches, wet areas, storage, lock up areas... etc.

I contemplated all this, and then took the first speaker at her word, and took a distant perspective to this list of requirements. And put up my hand:

I began politely, I hope, saying that I really thought this taking of perspective, this third person analysis of our schools was an excellent format from which to review them, but had they thought about applying the same third person perspective to their review process.

Imagine I arrived from a different planet (this probably was a bit much. I had been asked to think outside the box and had apparently jumped off the planet) and looked at their list of requirements for the running of educational institutions... well, I would have to conclude that we were running institutions for total incompetents inclined toward self harm.

So I posed the following question:

Can you enlighten me as to your third person perspective on the review process?

The reply was short and sharp: you have to comply or you will be de-registered. I guess perspective only goes so far!!!

In preparing to speak here, that encounter has often re-occurred to me, as something that needed to be included, and I would like now to try and add some perspective to what we do in schools. I will draw from some of the thought of the deschoolers – those who have challenged the overall effect of schooling on our way of life. Ivan Illich is perhaps the most widely known of the deschoolers. Let me begin though with a few reflections.

Over the last few years I have been lucky enough to travel extensively in Asia and West Africa, and have seen children and teenagers performing tasks and contributing to the livelihoods of their family and village in ways unimaginable in Australia. Riding through the steppes of Mongolia I often encountered children (6-12 years old) out in the wild with their goats, leading them over mountains to fresh pastures. In Nepal, I remember staying with a family who considered themselves lucky to be able to send their 7 year-old to school. He walked three hours per day for this privilege, often with a sheer fall of hundreds of metres to one side, no barrier, signs or warnings. I have been checked into guesthouses by teenagers, served in shops and guided through ravines by boys and girls who would not even be allowed to walk to school in Australia. Children and teenagers who are competent, helpful, considerate and resourceful. Young people who show leadership, initiative and a problem-solving attitude. Are Australian

children so unable? So incompetent? Surely, with our massive advantages in terms of wealth, infrastructure and resources we should be the ones leading the way, not the other way round. Competence and empowerment should not diminish with advantage.

The contrast here between those empowered children in the third world and the disempowered manner with which we treat children of the same age in our own country is stark. Let us ask ourselves what is the main cause of this disempowerment of the young? And why do we treat children and young adults the way that we do?

Now, in talking of peace education, I am not going to state that school is the sole influence on the next generation, nor that schools can fix all the problems of society, but that schools do, to some degree, contribute to the disempowerment of today's children, tomorrow's adults.

I have included in the notes a brief philosophical exploration of peace and violence for those who are interested, which I will not explore here. My master's thesis also explores peace education further, and I am happy to distribute it to anyone who is interested. However, for now, let us define peace education as education that empowers, and everything else as a form of structural violence – those aspects of school structure that disempower the individual.

## **Violence**

Violence is not seen as innate, inherent in man, but as ultimately, in the final analysis, conditioned by external circumstances (Galtung, 1975, p. 77).

Violence takes various forms, the most commonly acknowledged form being direct or personal violence, violence between people, person against person violence. This may be physical or emotional, frequent or infrequent, even intended or unintended. The thing that identifies this type of violence is that there is an actor.

This thesis does not concern itself with direct or personal violence, but with structural and to some degree, cultural violence. However, before examining structural violence, it is probably best to give a definition of violence itself.

Galtung defines violence thus:

Violence is present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realisations are below their potential realisations (1975, p. 110-1).

This very broad definition of violence obviously incorporates the traditional, narrowest view of violence, that violence is somatic deprivation (deprivation of health, with killing the extreme) at the hands of an actor who intends this to be the consequence. Galtung however wants to include a lot more than just this, since

without a broad definition of violence too little is achieved in the name of peace - peace defined as the absence of violence. Galtung (1975, p. 111) intends his definition of violence to include highly unacceptable social orders, orders that he does not think are compatible with the concept of peace. Peace, held up as an ideal, as something worth striving for, must include more than just the non-beating of one person by another, or the non-beating of one State by another. Violence defined as the difference between the actual and the potential, or more specifically, as the cause between the actual and the potential, is not without difficulty, something Galtung (1975, p. 111) is aware of. Violence thus works in two directions, it may increase, or may impede the decrease in the difference, between the actual and the potential. Violence is present when the avoidable occurs, when the potential, in other words, is higher than the actual.

### **Structural Violence**

Structural violence occurs when the society or community is constructed or organised in such a way that certain individuals or groups are denied the realisation of their potential. Central to this is the level of insight and resources present in a community. If insight and/or resources are monopolised by a group or class or are used for other purposes, then the actual level falls (or exists) below the potential, and violence is present in the system (Galtung, 1975, p. 111). Structural violence is present in the system when the system produces less than it is capable of. The great difficulty here is the meaning of 'potential realisations' with particular reference to mental aspects, a difficulty Galtung (1975, p. 111) acknowledges, but does not discuss.

The concept of guilt, so far unmentioned, is important here, as guilt demands that there be an actor, and an *intention* to act violently. Guilt is central to our (Western) ethical system, and also our system of jurisprudence. Galtung's theory of structural violence is, however, quite different, with no mention of intention, his theory of violence is entirely located on the consequence side. Galtung, commenting on systems such as ours, states that any system directed against *intended* violence will easily fail to capture structural violence in its nets – and may hence be catching the small fry and letting the big fish loose (1975, p. 115). This is so because personal violence, violence where there is a guilty person, is nearly always an event, an occurrence, and there is very often a person complaining about it. It registers as a non-typical happening. Someone has been hurt, and someone has done the hurting. Personal violence shows (Galtung, 1975, p. 117) as it represents change and dynamism, while structural violence does not. Structural violence is silent, static. In a static society personal violence will register, whereas structural violence may be seen as about as natural as the air around us (Galtung, 1975, p. 117). Galtung (1975, p. 117) also runs the alternative argument, that in a highly dynamic society, structural violence will show as its static state stands out against the movement of society. Revolutions, in general, concern themselves with structural violence.

A violent structure is person invariant, in that the structure is clearly violent regardless of who staffs it, and regardless of the level of awareness of the participants. The structure will persist through changes in person: the violence is built into the structure. The human element in this is that the structure *only* exists so long as it is upheld by the collective and concerted actions of human beings, and as such, all, not just the top dogs, contribute to its operation, all are responsible, as all can shake it through their

non-cooperation. The greatest agent of oppression in most cases is the self, because to the extent that the tools of oppression have been internalised, the person has been persuaded not to perceive their own, and others, oppression.

Oppression, internalised over time is a result of long term propaganda, brainwashing and indoctrination. This indoctrination does not have to be negative, in that the individual be punished for their non-cooperation, or denied a range of actions by the structure, in that their actions are curtailed. Indoctrination can be positive, in that a person is rewarded when he does what the influencer considers right. The strange thing (Galtung, 1975, p. 113) about this type of manipulation is that while that actual (overt) constraints on a person's movements may be decreased, the person may still be effectively prevented from realising their potential. Galtung states that this system is better in that it gives pleasure rather than pain, but worse in terms of being more manipulatory, less overt (1975, p. 113).

The difference between violence that is personal or direct, and violence that is structural, is that direct violence hits human beings as a direct result of the actions of others, while structural violence hits them indirectly because repressive structures are upheld by the efforts<sup>1</sup> of other persons. Structural violence would be a mere abstraction if it were not upheld by the system, through actions that do not directly 'hit' another, but deny them the possibility of acting, progressing, moving or thinking in certain directions. These actions, while violent, may perhaps not be perceived of as such by the person performing them, as their social background, their social selves, expects such an action of them. The 'issue' of colour, for instance, is a mere

abstraction unless it is upheld by the actions of an individual or individuals.

Galtung's broad concept of violence is aimed at combating this type of violence, by showing unjust social systems for what they are, upholders and perpetrators of violence. An example will help here:

A clerk denies a man entry into university because of his colour, or a woman entry because of her sex. In these examples, violence is being done, since these people are being denied the actualisation of their potential. However, without a critique that goes beyond personal violence, the violence that is done may not be seen for what it is. The clerk has been so conditioned by his society, by its expectations and beliefs, by his perceived identity within it, by his construction of his social self, that he fails to perceive that he is, by the action of denial of a place, upholding a system that is violent, and thus doing violence. Structural violence is person invariant, in that there may be twelve clerks doing this task, or a new clerk every year, but nothing changes. The goodness, or niceness, or Church attendance, or political affiliation of the clerk, in doing this task, is irrelevant.

Intention, so central to discussions of personal violence, is absent here. The person is simply doing his job. Neither they, nor their colleagues or friends, nor society at large, see their action as one of violence, or as one of oppression. The tools of oppression have become so internalised that their action/inaction is not challenged, their social selves accept the structure as part of the way things are, the way the world is, or works. Their culture supports their view of the world, its people and functioning, and their place and tasks within it.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Effort' here is typically just doing what one has always done, as simple as just going to work and

The Civil Rights Movement, the Women's Liberation Movement, the Tibetan Freedom Movement and the Deschooling Movement are either presently involved, or did involve themselves in a struggle to rid the world of various forms of structural violence. As such the Dalai Lama is not being especially caring or enlightened or magnanimous when he claims to have no argument with the Chinese people, with individual Chinese people involved in the administration and governance of Tibet. He is just stating the fact that the structure *is* violent, and as such is *person* invariant.

## **Peace**

Peace seen as more than the absence of personal violence is premised upon a positive view of human nature, human nature seen as essentially good. This is necessary for the existence of freedom, for the personal pursuit of empowerment, a negative view of human nature would entail either overt or covert control, threats and the use of force or indoctrination, to subdue personal violence, the destructive inherent in the negative. A positive view of human nature allows peace to lead to peace. Peace as the sense of something of worth or value, more than just an absence, peace defined positively, positive peace.

Peace is generally defined both positively and negatively, a two-sided definition of peace. Peace, the absence of both types of violence: personal violence and structural violence. Galtung defines the absence of personal violence as negative peace, and the

absence of structural violence as positive peace (1975, p. 130). Peace is therefore connected with both conflict and development.

Positive peace, defined positively, is an egalitarian distribution of power and resources. As such, peace is not only a matter of controlling and reducing the overt use of violence (Galtung, 1975, p. 130), but is again intimately connected with the realisation of potential, sometimes referred to as vertical development. Such a definition of peace assumes, a priori, an optimistic view of human nature. If man were conceived of as essentially barbaric or evil, brutish, as in a Hobbesian world view, then the maintenance of society would require, if not the frequent use of direct violence, at least as a minimum, a society controlled by an oppressive structure, a structurally violent regime.

Man, conceived of as basically good, allows for the creation of a society in which structural violence is reducible, if not eliminable. Man does not need to be controlled by means of violence. It therefore becomes possible to modify the structures of society to bring about a more just, more enlightened, more peaceful world. When human nature is seen as good, then it is the structures of society that cause the corruption that reduces the potential. *Peace is possible*, and if we do not have it, it is because something or somebody is against it (Galtung, 1975, p. 149). In the creation of a society founded on and through peace the conditions under which tendencies toward violence are actuated should not be built into the structure. Structural violence needs to be replaced by positive peace. Toward this end structures that reduce man's potential, structures that reduce the human actualisation of potential, must be reduced and eventually eliminated.

## **The Hidden Curriculum as Structural Violence**

The hidden curriculum was a term coined by the deschooling movement to explicate the structural violence it saw inherent in school. Remember structural violence does not imply evil intentions, but only a systemic way of treating people that diminishes their potential. The hidden curriculum refers to the gulf between what schools claim to do, and what they actually do. There has been a lot written on this, but here I am only going to touch on three aspects (as time is already running short), these being: institutionalised values, learned dependency (in the handout) and medium as message. Please, interrupt me as I proceed if you are unclear as to what I mean by these.

### **Institutionalised Values**

Teaching and schooling are not synonymous with learning; learning comes from within, schooling from without. Merging these, teaching and learning, as schools do, pre-empts the individual's self-determination, replacing it with an institutionally determined course, redefining worth for the individual as something determined by another. This phenomenon is common to both rich and poor who are both institutionalised into the need for school - the abdication of

personal authority to the other, be it a government department or individual or group certified as the proper authority. Defining what is legitimate and what is not becomes the domain of the other... and within this institutionalised worldview, self-reliance becomes suspect; learning on one's own is irresponsible, unreliable (or just unbelievable!); and community organisation, when not supported by the state, a form of aggression or subversion (Illich, 1971, p. 10). Legitimacy becomes devoid of all personal values and individual beliefs and is transferred to those able to gain the 'rubber stamp' of the state - official recognition and certification.

In accepting the institutional values of schools, personal values are, to a great degree, pushed aside. The myth that everything can be performed, measured and certified, very much part of the ethic of school, invalidates belief in self and empowers institutional judgements. Self-reliance and individual responsibility are eroded as personal values are usurped by institutional ones. What I believe, think, honour, want and value is continually diluted... leaving a list of things and habits that are said to be 'for my own good'.

School prepares for the alienating institutionalisation of life by teaching the need to be taught (Illich, 1971, p. 63).

This is Illich's most frequently stated message. The claim here is not concerned with the acceptance of *particular* institutional values, but with the accepting of institutional values per se – and the accompanying reduction of personal autonomy. The self is lost to the institution, its control and its definitions of worth. In this regard school makes *alienation preparatory to life*, depriving education of reality and work of creativity. Teaching the need to be taught is the first step in the preparation for a life of institutionalised alienation. The hidden curriculum of all institutions is the manipulation of man's world view, an ethic that society *will not free itself from* until we give up the pervasive belief that others must be *manipulated for their own good*.

School is founded on the assumption that someone else, a teacher, educator or education department bureaucrat knows better than you do, knows what you need to learn, what you *really* want, and what is good for you. In the total provision of the learning environment that is school, the learner has no choice but to accept the authority's judgements, *non-compliance is not tolerated*. Non-compliance is failure. Those who reject school are ostracised as social outcasts, not only by the school, but by society at large, to be shunned. "Don't play with her..." they cry, "she's a bad influence." The rite of school is established as necessary - excommunication for the non-believer.

Those who do comply, who take on the works, ways and values of the institution, who mimic and reproduce that which the institution esteems, are rewarded with honours and promotion. School is the institution that first and foremost promotes institutional judgements. Through its monopoly on promotion and success, it is schools more than any other institution, that promote the institutional value of the authority over the other: the state, the institution, the professional, the schooled; all of them disempowering the individual. Schools institutionalise society, or 'school' society into the acceptance and the honouring of its institutions, institutions that continually usurp and negate the independence of the individual.

In school, children learn not only the values of the school, but to accept these values and, thus, to get along in the system (Reimer, 1971, p. 30). In the past this was called indoctrination. Now, only bad schools indoctrinate; good schools teach basic values. The difference here seems not to be in what is taught, but in the overt methodology, that if one is *not* telling a child what to think and do and value, then the child is not being indoctrinated. All schools, however, teach the value of being taught – not learning for oneself – what is good and what is true (Reimer, 1971, p. 30). Indoctrination however, need not be overt, and is probably more effective if it is not. A system of rewards, positive reinforcements of the values of the school will corrupt over time the values and personal assessments of worth of the child, until their

values become those of the school. Rebellion in the end becomes impossible, as there is nothing and nobody to rebel against, except maybe yourself?

Schools are thus central in the creation of a citizenship that accepts the role and right of institutions in the governing of their lives, teaching conformity to the institution of school, and thus later to the other institutions of society.

Through lack of time I will not present another, I feel, important element of the deschoolers criticism of school, what they call learned dependency. I have included it in the notes as I feel it is important. Today we will jump to the contentious issue (in peace education) of the assumed separation of content and method.

### **Learned Dependency**

Deschoolers believe that the process of institutionalised education takes the creation of an individual's own education from him or her, and places it into the hands of the bureaucracy, discriminating in favour of school. Illich states what he believes to be the most critically needed principle of educational reform:

the return of the initiative and accountability for learning to the learner or his immediate tutor (1971, p. 24).

Schools, as creators of social reality, do not stop with children, they also create school teachers. Before there were schools there were caretakers of children, gymnastic disciplinarians enforcing practice, and masters with disciples. None of these assumed that learning would result from teaching, while schools treat learning as if it were the product of teaching (Reimer, 1971, p. 37). In limiting learning to what is taught, individuals are disenfranchised from their personal experience of the world, and the learning experiences that it provides. Everything of worth, everything the school values, is that which the teacher and the school provide, that which they specialise in. Everything else is either incidental and trivial - or worthless. What counts is what schools provide.

The deschoolers' attack on the learning and teaching element of schooling is therefore much deeper than simply regarding it as irrelevant, they actually claim that it is anti-educational. The enslaving of education as solely within the domain of the school is seen as discrediting the enormous learning opportunities that life itself provides, as well as the learning process itself. If learning becomes solely the mastery of the curriculum, then there is nothing outside of the school that is worth knowing or discovering. Similarly, teachers know all that should be known, and so there is nothing for the learner to discover for themselves, learners thus begin to see themselves as passive recipients of knowledge, knowledge that they cannot learn by themselves. The 'real' experiences of life, self-directed, purposeful, meaningful life and work (Holt, 1976, p. 7) and the lessons it gives are relegated to second place, behind the taught 'book' learning of school, knowledge that one cannot gather for oneself, knowledge that is in the domain of another, the expert.

In this, schools are claimed by deschoolers (Holt, Illich, Postman, Reimer) to actually oppose true learning, learning that is not only personal and experiential, but also part of the dynamism of the individual. Schools replace this dynamism and natural desire to learn with a cynical contempt for the process of (school based) instruction. Postman quotes from a student who must do an exam for a second time as some students have cheated the first time around... the student is worrying about doing worse.

You study for the big day and then you take the test and then you forget what you studied (1972, p. 58).

This contempt for the learning process, so typical of school students, has its roots in the fact that the student has no authority or input into his learning. Prescribed learning, schooling, leads necessarily to dependence, and frequently to a scornful attitude towards learning. Defining *learning* as what goes on in school is thus anti-educational, as not only does it deaden the desire to learn, but, by contrast, in defining life as anti-educational, and as such a waste of time, school removes the student from his greatest possible learning source.

This attitude seems to be bred in schools, where all 'learning' is done with the explicit object of further gain, or progression within the school system, or into the workplace. Learning for the simple joy of learning, as children learn before they first go to school, through play, observation, experiment, and practice, learning about the world as it effects and acts upon them, seems anathema to the school. The exclusive franchise held by schools and teachers retards every individual's learning path.

The natural and equal right of each man to exercise his competence to learn and to instruct is now pre-empted by certified teachers (Illich, 1971, p. 29).

The current system of schooling is pre-packaged and pre-formed with the expectation that the learner will arrive at the school, much like the traditional employee arrived at their new job, all ready to fit into the mould and routine ready and waiting for them. Student input is at best infrequent, with the school and the teacher deciding what, when, where and how the student will learn. The omnipotence of the institution denies the student even the possibility of asking *why*. All are denied the right to learn as they wish to learn, and to teach, to share knowledge and skills; to actively participate in the personal pursuit of knowledge and empowerment. The sector that schools exist in, and therefore by necessity exist for, are the areas that schools call learning, teaching and academic - by implication relegating all else to the non-educational. All that is non-school is non-educational, all those who are unschooled, uneducated, and all schooled and non-schooled alike are still schooled into a belief in the *authority* of schools, authority that costs them individuality and autonomy, authority that disempowers the individual and empowers the schooled state.

This situation has changed little since medieval times when kings could force their subjects to attend to the theological edicts of the church; now modern educators force their disciples through mandatory schooling laws, truant officers, juvenile courts, welfare officers, teachers and the police into a state where their judgements are totally subjugated. All initiative and control to do with the acquisition of knowledge - both facts and values - is assumed by the state, and all learn to deliver their autonomy to

the state. Illich claims that by making men abdicate the responsibility for their own growth, school leads to a kind of spiritual suicide (1971, p. 65). Initiative is taken from the schooled.

Enlightenment, the power to discover, reason and progress through one's own effort is being snuffed out in schools, where knowledge has become the assimilation of an externally provided and pre-packaged curriculum, and promotion brought about by the rehashing of others thoughts and ways. To conform is to 'get ahead'. The role of the teacher is central to the enforcement of conformity, as he combines the role of the umpire, judge and counsellor (Reimer, 1971, p. 37). This provides him with the authority to declare right and wrong, assign grades, and give or deny promotion.

Guilt and penance, for failure to conform, similarly lie at the teacher's feet. The state grants the school nothing less than omnipotence, on whom the helpless student has no option but to rely. Dependency is taught at school.

Learned dependency is part of the hidden curriculum of schooling, through its promotion of respect for 'certified' authority, the regurgitation of past masters, the repression of desires and beliefs, and teaching the student conformity and docility. In this, Illich's (1971) claim that the overt curriculum is irrelevant is accurate. Whether the class is in Chinese Literature, French Politics or Jewish History, the setting and the interactive process, and the option to partake or not, is not controlled by the student. The structure is not of the students making, and whatever it is, conformity to its precepts is to some degree necessary... its practices, routines, attitudes, belief systems, dress codes, behaviours and form of assessment. To do one's own thing is *not* an option.

All of these teach an abdication of the person to the institution, a dependency on the structure with regard to thought and action. That is, acceptance of the process of schooling implies the psychological transfer of responsibility to the institution and acceptance of institutional values. And in accepting the institutional values of school, personal values are relinquished. The myth that everything can be performed, measured and certified - essential for assessment - denies the value of what the student feels, the place of the emotional in their person, and in their growth and learning. In losing the sense of what they feel, they (the schooled) also lose confidence in their judgements. Self-reliance and individual responsibility are eroded through the lack opportunity to act on one's own volition. What a person believes in, thinks important, wants and esteems is constantly diluted... leaving a list of things and habits that a person 'should' want, things that "*are good for them.*"

Deschoolers see the suppression of the human spirit as part of the weaponry of schooling, a system that inculcates social behaviours desired for a manageable, conformist society: respect of authority, to carry out work not of one's choosing or favour, to be punctual and orderly, to work for distant rewards, to repress emotions in public... (Huberman, in Lister, 1974, p. 55). Huberman (in Lister, 1974, p. 55) similarly sees and is critical of the lack of external motivation in schools, the lack of independence, the uniformity and arbitrary use of authority. These though are not seen as accidental defects or failings of the school, but as part of a deliberate purpose, a purpose identified by many deschoolers as the deliberate creation of a docile citizenry. Holt (in Lister, 1974, p. 43) states:

What this all boils down to is, are we trying to raise sheep – timid, docile, easily driven or led – or free men? If what we want is sheep, our schools are perfect as they are. If we want free men, we'd better start making some big changes.

Undoubtedly, the educational process will gain from the deschooling of society even though this demand sounds to many schoolmen like treason to the enlightenment (Illich, 1971, p. 31). A system of schooling, structured in conformity, docility, dependence and abdication of the personal to the institution is stifling, and surely nothing short of anti-educational. The enlightenment, remembered for hundreds of years as a period of great learning and progress was a period of new thought, new ideas, new thinking, new ways. Nothing new, it seems, happens in school.

Illich (1971) argues that re-enlightenment requires us to divest ourselves of the myth of the authority of schools, and to reclaim the right to think, learn and discover for ourselves. This is to be done by rejecting institutional values, rejecting the notion that the authorities know best, and insisting that the individual has the right to define his own life, regardless of whether this fits in with an authority's prescribed set of expectations and values.

### **The Medium is the Message (Marshall McLuhan)**

The medium is the message is the claim that the assumed separation between content and method is both naive and dangerous (Postman, 1972, p. 30). Postman (1972, p. 30-1) believes that the critical content

of any learning experience is the method or process through which the learning occurs, and that it is virtually irrelevant what is said; it is what is done that is critical. In discovering what types of behaviour classrooms and schools promote, it thus becomes necessary to observe what one has students do in them.

So what do students *do* in school? Well, mostly they are required to sit and listen to the teacher, to believe the teacher and all school authorities, and to remember what the teacher says. They rarely make observations, formulate definitions, or perform any task that goes beyond a summary of what someone else has said before (Postman, 1972, p. 30). The entire school process is thus teacher and institution centred, rather than student and individual centred, in which authority is omnipotent and conformity is required. And what lessons do students take from this:

- that passive acceptance is the most desirable response,
- that discovery is beyond the power of the students,
- that recall is the highest form of intellectual achievement,
- that the voice of authority is to be trusted,
- that independent judgement is to be avoided,
- that one's own ideas are inconsequential,
- that feelings are irrelevant,
- that everything has a right answer,

*and that you as an individual do not count.*

**No time, no time, no time!!!**

Care, compassion, thoughtfulness, consideration, respect. These are qualities and practices that can and do arise in values education classes. Essays are written, games played, exercises done, and posters created that list these (and many other good qualities).

I would now like to read you a brief passage from Totto Chan, the story of a small girl and her alternative school in Japan, in the 1930s.

This following section is titled "The Headmaster"

When Mother and Totto-chan went in, the man in the office got up from his chair.

His hair was thin on top and he had a few teeth missing, but his face was a healthy color. Although he wasn't very tall, he had solid shoulders and arms and was neatly dressed in a rather shabby black three-piece suit.

With a hasty bow, Totto-chan asked him spiritedly, "What are you, a schoolmaster or a station-master?"

Mother was embarrassed, but before she had time to explain, he laughed and replied, "I'm the headmaster of this school."

Totto-chan was delighted. "Oh, I'm so glad," she said, "because I want to ask you a favor. I'd like to come to your school."

The headmaster offered her a chair and turned to Mother. "You may go home now. I want to talk to Totto-chan."

Totto-chan had a moment's uneasiness, but somehow felt she would get along all right with this man.

"Well, then, I'll leave her with you," Mother said bravely, and shut the door behind her as she went out.

The headmaster drew over a chair and put it facing Totto-chan, and when they were both sitting down close together, he said, "Now then, tell me all about yourself. Tell me anything at all you want to talk about."

"Anything I like?" Totto-chan had expected him to ask questions she would have to answer. When he said she could talk about anything she wanted, she was so happy she began straight away. It was all a bit higgledy-piggledy, but she talked for all she was worth. She told the headmaster how fast the train went that they had come on; how she had asked the ticket collector but he wouldn't let her keep her ticket; how pretty her homeroom teacher was at the other school; about the swallows' nest; about their brown dog, Rocky, who could do all sorts of tricks; how she used to go snip-snip with the scissors inside her mouth at kindergarten and the teacher said she mustn't do that because she might cut her tongue off, but she did it anyway; how she always blew her nose because Mother scolded her if it was runny; what a good

swimmer Daddy was, and how he could dive as well. She went on and on. The headmaster would laugh, nod, and say, "And then?" And Totto-chan was so happy she kept right on talking. But finally she ran out of things to say. She sat with her mouth closed trying hard to think of something.

"Haven't you anything more you can tell me?" asked the headmaster.

What a shame to stop now, Totto-chan thought. It was such a wonderful chance. Wasn't there anything else she could talk about, she wondered, racking her brains? Then she had an idea.

She could tell him about the dress she was wearing that day. Mother made most of her dresses, but this one came from a shop. Her clothes were always torn when she came home in the late afternoon. Some of the rips were quite bad. Mother never knew how they got that way.

Even her white cotton panties were sometimes in shreds. She explained to the headmaster that they got torn when she crossed other people's gardens by crawling under their fences, and when she burrowed under the barbed wire around vacant lots. So this morning, she said, when she was getting dressed to come here, all the nice dresses Mother had made were torn so she had to wear one Mother had bought. It had small dark red and gray checks and was made of jersey, and it wasn't bad, but Mother thought the red flowers embroidered on the collar were in bad taste. "Mother doesn't like the collar," said Totto-chan, holding it up for the headmaster to see.

After that, she could think of nothing more to say no matter how hard she tried. It made her rather sad. But just then the headmaster got up, placed his large, warm hand on her head, and said, "Well, now you're a pupil of this school."

Those were his very words. And at that moment Totto-chan felt she had met someone she really liked for the very first time in her life. You see, up till then, no one had ever listened to her for so long. And all that time the headmaster hadn't yawned once or looked bored, but seemed just as interested in what she had to say as she was.

Totto-chan hadn't learned how to tell time yet, but it did seem like a rather long time. If she had been able to, she would have been astonished, and even more grateful to the headmaster. For, you see, Mother and Totto-chan arrived at the school at eight, and when she had finished talking and the headmaster had told her she was a pupil of the school, he looked at his pocket watch and said, "Ah it's time for lunch." So the headmaster must have listened to Totto-chan for four solid hours!

Neither before, nor since did any grown-up listen to Totto-chan for as long as that. And, besides, it would have amazed Mother and her homeroom teacher to think that a seven-year-old child could find enough to talk about for four hours nonstop.

Totto-chan had no idea then, of course, that she had been expelled and that people were at their wit's end to know what to do. Having a naturally sunny disposition and being a bit absent-minded gave her an

air of innocence. But deep down she felt she was considered different from other children and slightly strange. The headmaster, however, made her feel safe and warm and happy. She wanted to stay with him forever.

That's how Totto-chan felt about Headmaster Sosaku Kobayashi that first day. And, luckily, the headmaster felt the same about her.

With this story in mind, let us re-visit the values presented above. Care, compassion, thoughtfulness, consideration, respect. Do we exhibit these when dealing with our students? Are these part of the medium of our dealing with those in our care? When Johnny or Scott or Tai or Madeline want a hug, do we give it to them? When they want to tell us a story that lasts 20 minutes, do we listen? When they propose an activity that does not fit into any Key Learning Area (or the timetable) do we run with it? Does the institution practice what it preaches?

### **In Conclusion**

Is there any hope for school, as an institution to work for peace, to be a bringer of peace education?

In short, I think so, definitely. I work in one, so I better say this! The secret lies in the connection between peace and personal empowerment. It is the mass production of non-autonomous

personalities that jeopardises peace in the world. So care must be taken, care to analyse what we do, to put it under the microscope, asking how does this impact on empowerment, liberation and peace. How does this program, this timetable, this allocation of responsibility, this use of authority empower our students?

I would like to finish by moving this discussion away from the theoretical, and give some examples of program and practices (the school structure) we at Fitzroy Community School run in an attempt to make our school an institution that builds peace, that is empowers the children it touches.

### **Camps**

- 2-5 days duration with no electricity, showers, classes and few, if any organised activities
- required student contribution: wood collecting (all cooking is done on the camp fire), the carrying in and out of their own gear, helping (or doing, depending on age) the dishwashing and camp cleaning during and at the end of camp.

### **Skill mastery rather than time serving**

- let the children go when the task is completed or the skill mastered.

## **Unsupervised Free Time**

- leaving the students free to negotiate their own means of cooperating, sharing, turn-taking and dispute resolution
- Example of turns on the swing at camp
- This affirms that the child can look after themselves

## **Multi-Age Streaming**

- Classes on Thursday with preps to year 6 students all together, doing their own work, or working in groups, or helping each other.
- The breaks down barriers based on age and streaming, or in our case perhaps avoids them even being built.

## **Student Taught Classes**

- Give older students authority to run their own classes (in our case this is teaching younger students). This has for us included lesson planning, budget, curriculum development and cooperation with peers
- Our planning meeting with the year 6 students, having just completed their first term as teachers, talking over successes and failures, difficulties of implement the curriculum,

discipline, generating the engagement and interest of their students was truly amazing, they were dedicated, committed, thoughtful and cooperative. One of the best curriculum days I have ever attended.

### **Really Challenging Projects that produce real results**

- last year we camped out of Ballarat, in tents, no electricity, hot water, or any other modern conveniences and build a cabin with the students
- this project brought growth, strength and confidence to them, as individuals, and promoted group cohesion and a commitment by all to make the group a positive and enriching one for all, all of the time

### **Student Initiated Projects**

- it is important to let student have input into their lives, and their school experience, so projects initiated by students should not be summarily discouraged
- projects over the last year have included: extra camps, pyjama days (just for fun), discos (staff welcome too!), fetes (parents welcome of course) and many other smaller, one-off events. They have just asked us if they can paint the bus... to make it a hippie machine. I needed a few breaths to

overcome what this would do for the re-sale value, and agreed.

### **Time to Listen**

- the structure of our school, small classes and small total roll allows us the time to listen to the children, to share in their joys, frustrations, hopes and stories. No, this is not an edict, we don't have to do this, we are not super-indulgent and sometimes we are either disinterested or just busy. But, sometimes it is important to listen and let the child see that you care and that they are important to you and that they are capable of bringing something original into the world.

Our world needs new solutions and individuals who can and will deliver them. If we produce only conformist automatons, we are only contributing to the problem. For the sake of progress then, let us promote caring and individual empowerment. We do this by ourselves showing caring and respect for individuality in the lifestyle of our schools.

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