

A Personal Credo in Relation to Education

I BELIEVE ... in individual differences, both as a fact of human existence and as a reason for human existence. Thus, each human being is a unique product of heredity and of both pre-natal and post-natal environment. It follows that:

- i) neither social nor genetic engineering in isolation can provide equal educational opportunity.
- ii) my apprehension for the future is that recent advances in genetic engineering, coupled with a totalitarian policy of social engineering aimed at rearing children in standardised institutions, could reach an approximation of a clone society. Then indeed there would be equal opportunity but at a level determined by a super clone?

I BELIEVE ... that, within the current UK political system, equal opportunity in education is a "philosopher's stone", avowedly sought after but impractical to achieve.

I BELIEVE ... that we should seek to meet the differing needs of children through differential resources, different curriculum, and different institutional (and non-institutional) contexts for learning.

I BELIEVE ... that educationists (from classroom teachers to Secretaries of State) have put considerable effort over many years into attempts to "improve" the education offered to UK youngsters, and that this has been against a backdrop of an under-resourcing and a low national status for the educational system. Unfortunately the outcomes have not been commensurate with the effort: we witness, for example, a multiplicity of formats for the organisation of education that is related merely to geographical habitat rather than to the individual needs of children, and for a significant proportion of older pupils a curriculum that lacks relevance both to their present and to their future.

I BELIEVE ... that two hurdles in the path of efficient education are:

- i) the under-utilisation of parents in the learning process,
- ii) the imposition by society on the education system, and on teachers, of responsibilities for a range of social, care and control functions, which might be more effectively discharged in other contexts or by other professionals working within school contexts, and which have certainly not been recognised properly in terms of additional resourcing.

I BELIEVE ... in the resilience of children and young people and that, within broad limits, they will adapt to - and overcome the obstacles imposed by - our perennial well-meaning attempts to provide a "better" way of transmitting our culture, our knowledge, our skills, within a context of developing "individual potential" and "social accountability".

It follows from the personal beliefs stated above that:

(select not more than seven of the following propositions and indicate your choice(s) with a cross. Time allowed for this question is a full adult life span.)

1. This man is a right wing reactionary.
2. This man is a left wing radical.
3. He is an angry young man.
4. He is an angry old man.
5. He is a starry eyed optimist.

6. He is clinically depressed.
7. After seventeen years as a pupil/student client of the educational system in England and Scotland, and more than twenty-five years as a practitioner within the system, this man's beliefs on the macro-strategies of education are as blinkered or as clear sighted as the conditioned attitudes of you, the reader, dictate.