

Near the end of our time I asked participants to fill in a questionnaire (it took several hours!) which helped them integrate the learning and was very useful to me as leader feedback. Everyone had gained in self-confidence. The majority enjoyed other people more and felt they had grown in awareness, responsibility, creativity and openness. In fact they knew and liked both themselves and others more.

For next year the college is providing an excellent carpeted room. And another local college has asked for a Sensitivity Training Group.

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## Michael Hecht

### CHANGE IN TEACHING - a tentative assessment

I identify three strands in the activities which 'Change in Teaching' is fostering:

1. Personal development at the level of the encounter between individuals and in groups. This bears on behaviour in the classroom. Let me call it therapy.
2. Participation in (at least information about) whatever goes on that affects the present life of children and young people. In so far as Change in Teaching is aiming at student teachers, I call this 'learning sideways through the windows', to supplement what students in training are being taught downwards from their lecturers. In so far as this is active participation, frequently for the benefit of the deprived, I call this 'gathering up the fragments.'
3. Critique of the present and projection of a reformed educational programme, in respect of content and method. This requires visionary fervour in the first place and then intellectual justification. If we have the first we shall find the second. But we shall have to draw on the widest funds of experience and ideas, throughout the world.

I want to comment on each of these strands.

**1. Therapy.** Clearly these activities are desired, urgent and beneficial. Without them inter-communication is not only difficult for many people, it is also liable to remain trapped in old grooves. But I want to ask: WHY have these activities become necessary? My answer is: because the central core of the academic tradition is dead. Those academics in whom it still lives know that it has died. But it is most clearly dead

in those who think it is still alive, because they have been institutionalised, as we say of orphans. It is among those young people who have successfully come through the whole system that the blockage is most likely to occur. They know at the end of their schooling, often not until the final year at university, that something has got to be undone, released inside themselves. Some of those who failed or opted out have suffered less damage in this socio-psychological and intellectual sense. It is not enough to blame the prevailing socio-economic atmosphere. No doubt that is poisonous enough to make people numb. But the point remains: education has failed to counteract that poison. You may object, rightly, that at the level of human relations conditions in our schools are not as bad as in America. The point still remains that those conditions are kept bearable at excessive expense or waste of human energy at the level of the individuals, both the teachers (who are exhausted) and the pupils (who restrict their personal involvement). But the CONTENT of our schooling does nothing to help.

The central core of the academic tradition used to be called the humanities. Its purpose was to create human beings out of raw biological material. Even the most primitive cultures develop the means for doing this. These means are called cultural amplifiers. Our cultural amplifiers are not working inside the schools for the benefit of the present generation or in relation to the present situation. It is significant that the major cultural amplifier of our time - music - is banned from the academic programme. Let us be quite clear about this point: if people are surviving schooling, and most people obviously are, at the basic human level, then it is no thanks at all to the content or methods of the educational programme, and it is at the expense of a collusion between teachers and children in maintaining restrictive practices for the sake of social cohesion. This is the meaning of the behavioural patterns which hit the young teacher within a few weeks. 'It's a game the children play. You must accept it,' say the older teachers. NO. Because if you allow YOUR behaviour to be determined by this game, then you will be acting in collusion with the children in diverting your energies away from the fullest involvement in the educational content of what you teach, because that is the way they will take you. I have seen this kind of restrictive practice working at university. Try to introduce a living activity to replace a ritual and you are up against the opposition of both students and teachers. The reason is obvious. They both know it is a ritual, governed by examinations. Rituals are boring but, in a degrading sense, easier to perform than live activities. Make no mistake about it, the system is not only objectively present around us, it is also at work within us, even the most dedicated reformists. 'Le systeme se defend.'

Having said how urgent and valuable these therapeutic activities are, I must say with great emphasis that they are not justified if they help people to accept present conditions. There is a real danger that any activities outside the academic core (art, drama, music) may be welcomed either as 'education for leisure' or as a 'safety valve'. Both these attitudes must be stamped on very hard. The role of the Arts at the present time is this - they are a means, perhaps the only means we have, of channelling very powerful human forces right into the central core of the academic citadel in order to revivify it. The recent history of British art schools is as significant in this respect as the current sabotage of art education is sinister. There is already erosion of the drama teacher's slogan 'drama is a method, not a subject'. All the power lines of the

educational structure are working to force drama into a subject - departmental separation, examinations, status seeking. This MUST be resisted.

**2. Gathering up the fragments.** It is very noticeable, and entirely praiseworthy, that many of our members are concerned with the deprived, the recalcitrant, the immigrant, the gipsy child. Obviously these are the worst hit. We should add the so-called non-academic, the so-called retarded. There is great expense of energy, vision and sheer humanity directed to help in these directions. Again I say, we must not allow the task of gathering up the fragments to deflect us from the primary aim - to besiege and capture the academic citadel. And again the same point arises - the methods being developed to cope with these emergencies or fringe situations certainly include the methods which will help to revivify the academic tradition. Some of our best teachers are deliberately specialising in remedial teaching because they see that area as the proving ground of advances in method for all teaching. The point I am making is this: the established content and methodology appears to be still functioning adequately, since people get A-levels and even degrees. The question is how do they do it? With their brains? Part of their brains no doubt. But principally through sheer obedience. Obedience is not one of the Ten Commandments, it is one of the three monastic vows. I am not advocating disobedience. Obedience is powerfully beneficial in some fields but not in the intellectual field. What appals me about English grammar schools is that they do not distinguish between social and intellectual discipline. The result is the destruction of the cultural heritage. Shakespeare is a clear example. Listen to teachers guffawing over what kids write on Shakespeare. See the contempt with which the kids regard Shakespeare. Yet the teachers don't strangle the kids nor do the kids murder the teachers. In fact relations are often quite good, at least social cohesion is maintained. What gets destroyed is Shakespeare. The academy has turned the cultural heritage into a golden calf for the sake of social cohesion. And the schools, via the examinations, are grinding the idol down into dust.

**3. Educational Reform.** What are we doing and thinking about the content and methods of the educational programme? So far we seem to have only one concept - the integrated day. It is already working to some extent at primary and early secondary level. Maybe we should just leave it to do all the work and tell ourselves 'slowly it will gain ground and move up the age scale'. Is this enough? I think not. It is up against powerful physical obstacles - the shape of everything from the time-table to the building, the structure of everything from books to examinations. Must we wait another generation for this concept to operate all the changes we want? And anyway, doesn't the concept of integration imply the present existence of separate subjects, and the vested interests of rival teachers? And does it not further require an inner reformulation of each subject area so that the integration of studies can be accomplished? Surely it does. So part of our work under this third heading must be devoted to a fundamental critique of what is at present going on in each subject area. As long as people can say 'My subject is OK as it is', integration will be seen as an innovator's fad, a passing fashion. Besides, the whole weight of university organisation is against it; and we cannot wait for the university to change before changing the secondary area, certainly not now that everyone will be staying on until 16. In other words, the schools must, in some respects, throw off the tutelage of the universities - as in Sweden.