WHAT DO WE TEACH? TEACHING PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT   Philosophers of education are often accused of being impassioned people working within an area which others often view as 'passionless'. Few seem to know what it really is that we are attempting to do. This paper is therefore an attempt to share our ideas about what it is that we teach here at The University of Waikato. [1] *It is also something of a plea to defend this teaching, particularly against neo-liberal injunctions towards courses having to display practical application and a transparent 'utility'. At the heart of this struggle is the erosion of what ultimately constitutes the nature and purpose of the educational endeavour itself. Explaining what we see this nature and purpose as being, is therefore, a central theme of this paper.*

INTRODUCTION

Philosophy of education is a mystery to most. The fault may be partly our own. There is little popular literature available which serves as an accessible user-friendly guide to the discipline. When philosophers do put pen to paper, the prose is frequently 'wordy' and often sharply punctuated with perplexing language. Published material is neither pitched at a level which satisfies the demands of the able and eager student, nor which enables the inexperienced (and often unwilling) student to even minimally engage with the ideas. Still worse, the biggest problem we face is that the 'traditional' philosophy of education is not our own.[2] Our own particular theory of education is a curious blending of affirmation and critique; an interrogation of key ideas from educational 'giants' such as John Dewey, R.S. Peters and John Rawls. As a consequence of this, and because our ideas are only just now beginning to be published, existing material fails to accurately represent what is essentially our own unique concept of education. It is not surprising then, that few people, not least our colleagues, know what it is that we do.

   An additional problem which we face is that philosophy is often construed as a vague subject.   This charge is often accompanied by the label, 'impractical' or 'irrelevant'.   Why should a student - particularly a School of Education student - take a paper in educational philosophy when they could well prepare themselves better for their teaching career by taking another curriculum option? Astute students, well imbued with a vocational sense of purpose, weigh up the merits of a CV entry titled, "Freedom, Education and Social Control" versus one such as "Technology Education".   They know which one represents a better career investment.[3]

Or so they think. The purpose of this paper is to provide some insight into what it is that we in philosophy are attempting to share with our students. The difficulties which we face are also outlined, as these difficulties are themselves fundamental to the wider problem which could be thought of as the problem of becoming 'educationally aware'. Being 'educationally aware' can be loosely defined as being conscious of the learning potential of every social interaction. Such a definition immediately expands the concept of education itself, moving 'education' far beyond the narrow boundaries of the school - or any institution for that matter. Sociologists would label this realm the realm of 'informal' learning. It is this expanded learning realm which we encourage our students to explore. To us, it constitutes a domain which is arguably the most powerful, though at the same time the most neglected, in the theorising of educators. It is also by exploring this domain as a 'legitimate' focus of educational concern that we believe our students come to realise that education entails a very personal journey. Our courses therefore invite our students to engage in many forms of personal reflection. We are all the products of our past learning, and reflecting on the nature of this learning is therefore, our initial starting point.

EXPANDING THE CONCEPT OF EDUCATION: THE STORY THEME

Though it is easy to find agreement among both our students and our colleagues alike that education is a much greater enterprise than simply schooling, we find that it is remarkably difficult for people to move conceptually away from the "education-equals-schooling" equation.[4] There is a strong gravitational pull between the two ideas, so much so that most of our initial teaching involves trying to think of shorthand ways of breaking this inevitable link.

At the 100 level class,[5] I have found success through adopting a 'story theme' for my introductory session. I begin by talking about the nature of our learning in general terms. Most of it has not been the product of stand-up-the-front teaching as in formal educational settings. It happens quietly in the background and touches every aspect of our lives. Most of our learning is passive and involves us absorbing stories - stories especially about ourselves: about what we can do and what we can not; about what matters to us in our lives and what does not; and about who we are (or think we are). The film, "Muriel's Wedding", provides vivid examples that I draw on in class. In this film, Muriel is represented as having only one ambition in life - that of marrying and having children. Her unhappiness with her own perception of who she is has been invisibly formed by her domineering father's perception of her, reinforced by the opinions of both her siblings and her classmates. Underlying gender issues too become immediately apparent. Muriel's sense of 'worth' is constructed around her marriageability. Marrying would 'prove' her normality, not simply to herself but to all those who would doubt her 'femininity'. This is what Muriel has learned.

To use another example, 'Kate'[6] has learned other lessons in her life...

And the drinking, well, everyone did that. My father sat around with his friends drinking beer and playing cards while he looked after us. I never connected that with the lack of furniture in the house or with him trying to set our house on fire one night while we were sleeping...My grandparents drank... I never connected it with the fact that my nana was so sick much of the time, or that she didn't seem to care when I told her Grandad had touched me in a place he shouldn't have.[7]

This extract comes from a New Zealand Listener article titled, "Breaking the violence chain". It has proven to be a very powerful piece of writing, accessible to students at the first year level because it is both short and punchy. The key message within this story is that the choices people have in their lives depend upon whether they are seen as real possibilities for them. The life we choose to live depends on the mind that we develop to do the choosing. Some choices are cancelled out by the narrowness of our pre-adult learning. Kate's situation illustrates this dilemma...

The next few years I spent learning to be like everyone else. I desperately wanted to belong somewhere and these people [the gang] were all I had. I learnt to dress right - no colours, only denim, leather, black. I learnt not to show emotion until I really felt no emotion. I starved myself to try to be thin enough and learned to judge myself against other 'boobs' and 'butts'.8

Other types of narrowing occur in even more invisible, yet possibly closer-to-home ways. I share two further cases with the students, at the same time encouraging them to think of their own similar examples:

The partner of one of our philosophy students had the desire that his daughter would become a doctor. Whenever the child did something praiseworthy at school he would reinforce this idea in her mind by suggesting that all that talent would go far in medicine. The problem is obvious. If this child hears this story enough, she may be unable to exercise 'free' choice in the future. For some people, parental expectations of this kind are a very real influence and ultimately a constraint on life choice.

I tell the students about a video clip from the Holmes show called the 'Bug Boy'. Here, a small boy (he's only about five years old) becomes the centre of attention because of his love of bugs and beetles. He spends all his time collecting them. One of the shots from the video clip is of the boy (fossicking alone) around the bushes in the school playground while his classmates play on the jungle gym. His mother is then interviewed and says she prefers him doing this to mixing with the other kids who just play those violent games (he only sticks pins through his bugs!!). Anyway, as the story unfolds, lo and behold, we find out what his dad does...

You guessed it - he's an entomologist at the city museum. Now isn't that a coincidence!

From examples such as these, students begin to get a sense of the very real ideological and psychological forces which may have constituted not only these people's histories of learning but their own as well. Dewey[9] had a good expression for this type of learning. He called it, "collateral learning". This is the world of learning far greater than the world of schooling yet this is the world which remains almost invisible as a recognised and legitimate educational domain. Perhaps the closest theorists have come to identifying this space is to name it the "hidden curriculum of learning". Yet even this title is inadequate for at least two reasons: firstly, because it is once again so suggestive of the formal schooling process, and secondly, because it appears to imply deliberate agency - someone consciously manipulating and controlling the process of learning. As these examples reveal, there is definitely no negative intent at manipulation or control.[10] The strength of Dewey's phrase is therefore obvious. So too is the story theme.[11]

Such simple examples tend to initiate all sorts of other examples from the students themselves. Thinking of the genealogy of decision-making, both for oneself and for others, is often an awakening. To some, the choice of a teaching career was 'natural': they had come from a family where they had always had responsibilities for looking after their siblings; they had been told that they were 'good with children'; possibly one of their parents, uncles or aunts was a teacher. The origins of our 'wants' and 'personal desires' is the result of an amalgam of social contribution and individual settlement. Though lives appear to be lives of 'self'-determination, it is remarkably surprising how 'other'-determined they can, in actual fact, be.

I consolidate these messages for the students: to equate education with teaching is both simplistic and naive. It not only invites a purely institutional gaze, but also serves to render invisible much more potent sources of learning. It is this territory which is shaping the choices that we are able to see and exercise both within our present and our later lives. It is this territory which therefore demands much deeper exploration. To shift the conceptual focus away from a concept of teaching and towards a concept of learning is only the first step towards breaking the education-is-schooling mindset. Students now need to consider the extent to which we can legitimately understand and control this newly considered learning domain. Why is it necessary to be aware of the unconscious residue of learning which has gone before us: that sediment of value and reasoning which has fashioned who it is that we are today? And what difference does it all make anyway?

EDUCATION: MAKING CHOICES VISIBLE

To Kate, struggling through her childhood and teenage years in a world of abuse, making conscious the unconscious was everything to her. To realise that her world wasn't 'normal' and that she could change the way she lived meant that Kate experienced a very real sense of liberation. An awareness of the forces which had been constraining her life enabled her to think of her

future in ways which allowed choices now to be both conscious and considered. It meant the possibility of real control: of real choice.

We often reflect with sadness on the sacrifice of young lives taken during times of war. But haven't millions of people been leading lives of sacrifice without even knowing it? Take the women who for years have stayed at home, destined to a life of child-rearing as their own mothers had before them. Anything other than this type of life was for them a lifestyle unconsidered. The social pressure was so great as to render invalid other options anyway, so much so that any other sort of life could never even be imagined much less become a real and personal possibility. Think also of the men who have worked their lives away in poorly remunerated jobs, getting more and more dispirited with their lives over the years. They too have felt the discontent like the housewife, unable to know how to challenge or change the course of their life's direction. Where were their choices?

This new concept of education involves making choices visible by exploring the whole phenomenon of choice-making and the means by which our choices can become subtly and unwittingly eroded. In our part two and three courses[12] we encourage our students to keep a diary into which they enter their own reflections of the course and sketch their own history of choice-making.[13] Rather surprisingly, the experience is often the first where they have ever had to consciously consider their lives in this particular way. Up until now, it is as though events within their lives had simply mysteriously unfolded around them. They were 'spectators' rather than actors, at the same time completely oblivious to their own position of powerlessness.

I now share the most poignant example of this phenomenon that I have come across in my teaching. The following excerpt comes from the final assignment of one of our philosophy students who had been asked to account for the emerging beliefs and feelings she has experienced in taking our 200 level course. Details have been slightly changed in this extract to preserve the anonymity of the student.[14] Although this extract is rather long, I include it in its entirety to preserve the integrity of the writing as a whole. The entry begins...

> I feel the need to call this diary assignment "Awakenings". Like Robert deNiro, in the movie of the same name, I have been given the opportunity to become conscious; to be moved out of a "nowhere" space. The catalyst of my awakenings was being challenged to think, reason, question and examine my life, my history. It was being given the time and the freedom to examine the influences on me as part of a family and part of a society. It was asking, how do you know where you're going, when you don't know where you've been?
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> It wasn't until I did this course[15] that I realised how all the major decisions in my life had revolved around other people's attitudes - my family's and that of society. To understand 'me' meant to

understand my family. They were strongly religious, so I was also brought up holding these beliefs and values.

I became pregnant when I was twenty. I wasn't married. I knew my parents would be ashamed because of their religious beliefs. Because abortion couldn't therefore be an option, I went ahead and had my baby. However, being a 'solo mother' meant that I would be a 'burden' on society and would justifiably be punished by scorn and ridicule. Therefore, to please society and my family in particular, I agreed to get married. What I wanted didn't really matter.

At this point, I really had no idea what I wanted. I'd never made a decision on my own. I'd just done what was expected of me as a dutiful daughter, as daughters are meant to be. I knew I wanted the baby, but nothing was positive about it. I had 'sinned' so I was basically ignored by my parents. I remember going into a baby shop to buy 'baby gear' with my mother who promptly told the shop assistant how embarrassed she was because I wasn't yet married. The shop assistant shared her grief briefly with her. Incidents like this made me feel so ashamed, so I stayed inside my house as much as possible for the rest of my pregnancy. I ordered equipment through the mail, or sent my boyfriend out to buy things.

As soon as my son was born, I went back to work. At least I wouldn't be a burden on the tax-payer that way! I wanted to stay at home with my child - too bad! I'd made my bed, and now I had to suffer. I also bought a house. Why? Because my parents said I needed to provide a secure life for my child in some way, since he didn't have a father! (That one always amused me!)

I worked full time and three nights a week part time all my baby's pre-school years to cater for his security (a mortgage and creche fees). By the way, my parents never baby-sat. It was my mistake: I had to pay for it. However, despite my parents' distance, I made sure that my baby never went without. He was always the best-dressed, cleanest, most toy-endowed child among his peers. After all - he couldn't then be identified as a child of a solo mother. He would be 'marked' for life!

Gradually, as expected, my 'marriage' began to fall apart so that by the time my son was five years of age, I entered a new relationship. And it was great for the first year. I now know why. I did everything he wanted me to do, even when it felt uncomfortable. I cooked his meals, did his washing and literally waited on him. If we had an argument, I would back down. I was always evaluating my actions to try and work out what I had done wrong so that I could improve myself. Even after the first time he hit me, I thought that I really had deserved it.

> As time went on, I became more and more unhappy and really began to wonder what the real problem was. I read books like "When Love Goes Wrong" and "Men Who Hate Women and the Women Who Love Them, In Secret". Both were full of descriptions that I recognised well. Both talked about the history of role-typing as social indoctrination. Both talked about making choices and the need to come to terms with one's indoctrination.
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> I have named this diary report "Awakenings" because it has been my journey of discovering 'me'. It is about the pain, the sorrow and ultimately the satisfaction in moving out of my "nowhere" space - listening to other people's opinions to help me form my own. For me, making judgements and taking responsibility for them is a relatively new experience. But for the first time in my life I feel that I own my life... AND I LIKE IT!!!

As in this example, for many, the residue of values and ways of reasoning passively acquired has meant a life of domestication rather than liberation. Choices have been narrowed, not expanded. Possibilities have been negated rather than nurtured. Is it any wonder that inequalities of class, race and gender are still being perpetuated within our society? For nowhere is this type of learning seriously examined as a major determinant of future life chances. While educationists concern themselves with a narrow schooling focus, these much more significant life issues go largely unexamined. The message behind this example is clear. Finding ways to maximise the ability of individuals so that they are capable of developing the purpose, meaning and fabric of their own lives for themselves in an effective way, is surely the most pressing of all our educational concerns.

THE EDUCATION/INDOCTRINATION DISTINCTION

At this point, the concept of indoctrination is introduced. Though this concept has previously been employed within the literature as a pejorative term, the practice of 'indoctrinating' being censured - especially with regard to classroom practice and appropriate pedagogy - our use of the term is much broader than this familiar definition suggests. We use indoctrination as the term describing the sort of harmful learning being suggested in the cases above. It describes types of learning which may potentially rob people of their ability to determine their own values and purpose in life. The 'harm' is therefore measured against each person's ability for future self-determination. Establishing whether a learning experience will be harmful therefore involves a good degree of foresight: a measure of predicting the likely consequences of forms of learning, especially in the formative years. As educationists, our ability both to foresee and control such harm is therefore critical.

Indoctrination can therefore be thought of as the inverse of education. Insofar as education is an expansive process allowing an individual to make informed choices about their life, indoctrination restricts choice and

influences a person's reasoning to the detriment of their future capacity for self-determination. Instead of the individual gradually taking control of their own reasoning, being able, as they should, to provide personal justifications for the beliefs which they hold in their adult state, the indoctrinated individual simply adheres to a given set of beliefs; uninspected, unproblematic and often held for the most inappropriate of reasons. Like Muriel and Kate, these may be beliefs about what constitutes 'normal' family life, appearance or 'femininity'. For others, these can be a diversity of beliefs ranging from views about intelligence or 'worthwhile' leisure activities, of racial dispositions, 'appropriate' gender roles or 'suitable' career opportunities. A factor held in common, however, is that these views were acquired rather than activity selected. When asked to justify their beliefs, the individual can usually submit none, other than to acknowledge that they had not really thought about the reasons why they held these views. Alternately, like the student in the diary review above, people are simply so busy living their life that they never really take the time to stop and simply even examine its direction.

We call this problem of inherited beliefs and values the problem of 'the loop'. The period of infant dependency for humans encourages our caregivers to direct our upbringing in all manner of ways. Historically, the process of learning has become incrementally more and more exacting because of the need for each generation to know more than the last. As a consequence, there has been a tendency to try to speed up the learning process; of giving ready-made solutions to the next generation as opposed to allowing them to experience their own decision-making and problem-solving first-hand.[16] The development of the skills to enable an individual to provide their own reasons for upholding certain ideas about society and the world around them has thus been inadvertently preempted. Encouragement is more usually given for the young to model their reasoning, desires and activities upon the pattern of reasoning, desires and activities of their caregivers. This is the 'loop'. Future choices will be necessarily constrained by these inherited and acquired patterns of viewing the world. These acquired beliefs, values and attitudes will more than likely attract our future sympathies, if only because this has become the most privileged outlook: this outlook has simply became second nature to us, so much so that it often goes uninspected and unexamined - that is, until we try to step outside it or to actively reject it.

Some further examples here are appropriate. I share some very personal stories with my students...

> My father was a keen and supportive rugby follower, as many kiwi males tend to be. All during my youth, I remember the subtle and not-so-subtle pressures which were put on my brother to participate in the sport, both at school as a player and in the weekends as a spectator. Despite these pressures, my brother chose instead to pursue different pastimes with a more cultural and intellectual flavour. This decision meant that there was an inevitable distancing between my father and brother. Living in a small New Zealand community, attending an all-male school which prided itself on its

rugby prowess, my brother found himself at the same time ostracised from his schoolboy peers. Though it is true that there are today more and more opportunities for people to pursue their other interests, the disproportionate time in which the media still pays tribute to this sport in the name of national unity leaves one inherently pessimistic for the possibility of future social change.

Figures are often quoted about the high incidence of youth suicide in this country. I tell the students of a very talented schoolboy I knew who wasn't really very academically gifted. He did, however, have a strong love of art and particularly excelled at working in ceramics. He soon became renown within his secondary school for his talent, his carefully crafted old cottages regularly attracting comment both within the school community and beyond. Sadly, despite his artistry, he found himself unable to secure a job when he left school at 15. After a long two years, despondency and depression took over and he eventually decided to take his own life. Unemployment to him had meant an inability to live up to parental and social expectations. He had learnt the hard message that the only worthwhile 'talent' was the talent of finding a well-paid job.

I was recently speaking to a friend whose wife had been taken by cancer. Theirs was the generation responsible for the 'baby boom': all their peers had married in the sixties and had since had families. They, however, had chosen not to have children (primarily for medical reasons). My friend then commented how usual it is to hear how 'difficult' it is for families with children. His own comment was how much more difficult it was for those without. Not too surprisingly, my friend and his wife had spent their whole marriage feeling they had had to justify their difference. Living outside expected social norms can often prove to be a very uncomfortable experience.

Along these same lines, I ask the students to consider those individuals who choose not to marry. Many can sympathise with occasions of trying to explain to others why a brother or sister is still single in their thirties. Usually, the assumption is that they're gay. Why else wouldn't they be married?

Just like a barometer, the measure of social control being exerted upon individuals is usually felt by the degree of discomfort which we experience in having to 'swim against the tide'. Those who reject the rugby culture feel it. The jobless and childless feel it. Those who choose not to marry feel it. Society both constructs and reinforces a robust image of the 'worthwhile life' which unconsciously permeates the entire fabric of the way in which people think about both their present and future options in life. Who we will become is predetermined, in large part, by what society deems is 'worthwhile' for us to become. The pre-existing social arrangements into which we are brought up

in large part determines the future boundaries of our choosing potential. Society allows us choice, but only within boundaries which it prescribes and deems legitimate.

The recent international conference which was held in Auckland titled 'Beyond Dependency' illustrates this point well.[17] From the very title of the conference itself we are left in little doubt that the conference organisers view welfare dependency as destructive, not only to the individual but to society in the wider sense. Simultaneously, a parallel assumption presented is that the measure of 'worth' of the citizen comes from their value as a productive member of the community. 'Productive' here is taken as meaning 'economically productive.' What this equation automatically does is to therefore render invisible the work of thousands of women (and men as well) who engage in childcare activities and family support functions. These 'options' are effectively discounted as legitimate forms of 'productivity' within the community. Only paid work is to 'count' as a social contribution.[18]

By way of summary then, freeing individuals to pursue their own good in life without 'educators' unnecessarily imposing life purposes, personal preferences and tastes, or any one 'good life' on the developing person must be the principal aim of education. For to speak of education as anything less would be to simply pay lip-service to the moral importance of valuing the life of an individual as a life which is his/her own. Concern with 'self'-determination is simultaneously concern about processes by which 'other'-determination occurs within the history of one's learning. Therefore, the study of education must necessarily involve the study of indoctrination - at least if what we presently call 'education' is to actually represent the positive promotion of maximum choice and autonomy for the developing person.

To conclude these few lectures, I pose a final searching question to my students. It is perhaps the most interesting question that they will have to consider, particularly for those among them who have chosen teaching as their future career. I ask them that if we were able to design a learning environment where individuals could be brought up equipped with the skills and judgements capable of making their own life choices - choices with regard to what they were to value and regard as their personal 'good' - would this environment in any way resemble our present schooling system?

SCHOOLING AS INDOCTRINATORY

It seldom takes long for our students to realise that a significant void exists between the stated function of schooling institutions and their actual gatekeeping function within our society. In this regard, Illich[19] was right when he advocated that the schooling ethos itself contributes significantly to the dispossession of the individual. For seldom does our schooling equip us with the intellectual or emotional tools to determine our own unique 'good life'. Conversely, there are every grounds to believe that schooling itself contributes to individual indoctrination. Only those choices which are socially and morally acceptable within the dominant economic and cultural milieu are presented as viable and legitimate possibilities. Learning of this

kind in this environment is instead suffocated by the shroud of economic rationality. In this regard, is there any wonder that 'making a life' is subordinate and secondary to the more utilitarian goal of 'making a living?'[20]

The reading which I recommend to my students which best captures the nature of this discontent is the first chapter of John Taylor Gatto's book which is so aptly named, Dumbing Us Down.[21] This chapter is in essence the speech which Gatto ironically gave on the occasion of being named "New York State Teacher of the Year" for 1991. Here, Gatto eloquently outlines what he terms his 'seven lessons.' These are essentially the lessons of human dispossession. Confusion; class position; indifference; emotional dependency; intellectual dependency; provisional self-esteem; the knowledge that one can't hide: together these constitute the features of 'other'-determination which Gatto so passionately disavows. The following extracts capture the flavour of the last of these four lessons:

> The fourth lesson I teach is emotional dependency. By stars and red checks, smiles and frowns, prizes, honours, and disgraces, I teach kids to surrender their will to the predestined chain of command. Rights may be granted or withheld by any authority without appeal, because rights do not exist inside a school...unless teacher authorities say they do.[22]

> The fifth lesson I teach is intellectual dependency. Good students wait for a teacher to tell them what to do. It is the most important lesson, that we must wait for other people, better trained than ourselves, to make the meanings of our lives. The expert makes all the important choices...[23]

> The sixth lesson I teach is provisional self-esteem.... The lesson of report cards, grades and tests is that children should not trust themselves or their parents but should instead rely on the evaluation of certified officials. People need to be told what they are worth.[24]

> The seventh lesson I teach is that one can't hide. I teach students they are always watched, that each is under constant surveillance by myself and my colleagues. There are no private spaces for children, there is no private time... The meaning of constant surveillance and denial of privacy is that no one can be trusted, that privacy is not legitimate.[25]

Educators like Illich and Gatto, to name but two, are not simply criticising schools for what they teach or how they teach it. Their concerns primarily revolve around a schooling system which ultimately disenfranchises individuals of their potential to be individuals - in every respect. The most blatant example is the "schooling-is-about-getting-a-job" mindset which is itself both a self-referential and self-justifying 'loop'. By this way of thinking, one's ability in reading, writing and all manner of learning is subsequently

measured according to this final end. These 'essential requirements' will enable us to become productive citizens, the promise being that the more learning we display the greater the ultimate choice we will have of a job destination that is of our making. And the penalty for getting it wrong is usually a job that is neither of our making nor of our liking. Interestingly, never is there any consideration of 'choosing' a life without paid employment as a dominant goal!

As for my students who find the 'possibility' of not working so strange and foreign, this itself is a highly pertinent way to illustrate that the messages are, indeed, effective. I conclude this topic by arguing that schooling practices are, in effect, social engineering practices. I reiterate what Gatto is arguing: The greatest triumph of compulsory mass schooling is that only a small number of individuals can even imagine a different way to do things. Kids have to go to school, don't they? They have to learn to add and subtract, don't they? They have to learn all these things so they can get jobs, don't they? In Roman times, the slave-owners used to teach their slaves to read and write to increase their value at auction.[26] Is it any different now?

I leave my students with the final word from Gatto:

> Whatever an education is, it should make you a unique individual, not a conformist; it should furnish you with an original spirit with which to tackle the big challenges; it should allow you to find values which will be your road map through life; it should make you spiritually rich, a person who loves whatever you are doing, wherever you are, whomever you are with; it should teach you what is important, how to live and how to die.[27]

FINAL WORD

It is indeed ironic that proposed changes to the degree structure[28] within our institution are causing many people to question the relevance of our courses, particularly to teacher education students. For us, there is no element of surprise in this at all. It is a natural perspective to adopt for those who would equate education with schooling and teacher education as a focus requiring a narrow and intensive period of classroom based learning. As suggested in this paper, it all depends on what one ultimately sees as 'relevant' and how one conceives the purpose of education itself. Like those with the ability to experience the mysteries of the 'Magic Eye' puzzle books, we have often felt that few have grasped the domain of learning which makes up this realm of 'other dimensionality'. Most find themselves unable to even detect the void, trapped as they are in a uni-dimensional surface realm of meaning. And it is this gulf which is primarily the reason why it is that we have remained misunderstood. We have been talking past each other. It is therefore our fervent hope that this paper goes some way towards alleviating this problem. For what courses could be considered more 'relevant' than those which deal with life itself.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The 'we' in this article refers to three of us who teach in the area of philosophy of education here within the School of Education at the University of Waikato - "PhilosEd" as our group is designated. Dr R. Graham Oliver is the senior philosopher among us and it is essentially his theory of education which we so passionately espouse. Haley Richmond is the other member of our team, a former student of Graham's and now an Assistant Lecturer in our department.

2. My own paper represents a very meagre attempt to summarise some of the key points in Oliver's very substantive theory of education. For a much more comprehensive and philosophically rigorous explanation of this theory, the reader is referred to the following unpublished papers: Oliver, R. G. (1990), "Harm and responsibility in the educational domain: an analysis of the concept of indoctrination"; Oliver, R. G. (1990), "The content of education and the pursuit of the worthwhile life"; Oliver, R. G. (1994), "The ideological reduction of education"; Oliver, R. G. (1994), "A meta-theory for education".

3. Sadly, this is also the perception of the educational enterprise which some of our colleagues hold. Recent external pressures facing tertiary institutions, especially Universities, have led to their embrace of the 'market ethos' with all that this entails. An excessive emphasis on 'vocationalism' is but one of the features of this new and narrow focus.

4. This problem is rife, particularly within the discipline of philosophy of education itself. An excellent paper which addresses the problematic nature of this self-imposed confinement is that of J R Muir titled, "The Evolution of Philosophy of Education Within Educational Studies" (*Educational Philosophy and Theory*, Vol. 28, No, 2, 1996, pp. 1-26).

5. I have taught in our department's 100 level courses since 1995. The Bachelor of Education students take the strand 1031.111 Educational Perspectives, while students enrolled for a Bachelor of Arts degree or a Bachelor of Social Sciences degree take the strand, 1031.101 Educational Studies.

6. The author of this article is not identified, so 'Kate' will be used here as a pseudonym.

7. Anonymous (1994). Breaking the violence chain. New Zealand Listener, 8 October, p. 36.

8. Ibid.

9. Dewey, John (1916). *Democracy and Education.* New York: The Macmillan Company.

10. Parents, especially, act out of love and concern for their children's well-being. This positive concern is defined as 'paternalism'. Haley Richmond has researched the problematic nature of paternalistic practices for education in extensive detail. See, Richmond, H. (1995), "Paternalism and Education: the problem of indoctrination in educational authority," unpublished Master of Social Science thesis, University of Waikato.

11. Within the field of counselling, growing recognition is being given to the importance of reflecting on one's life as a life which has been constructed

through a blend of stories; stories which have had both a negative and a positive influence on personal growth, development and well-being. The narrative therapy approach within counselling specifically favours this orientation. See, for example, Gerald Monk's edited work, *Narrative Therapy in Practice: The archaeology of hope* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997).

12. At the part two level our offering is the course, 1031.205 The Problem of Indoctrination. Students then have two offerings available to them at the part three level, 1031.305 Freedom, Education and Social Control and 1031.319 Education, Indoctrination and the Good Life.

13. Although the keeping of a diary is a requirement of the course, we make it very clear to the students that their diary itself is private and will not be requested to be submitted at any time during the course. What we do require of the student at the completion of the course is what we term a 'diary assignment.' For this assignment, the student is asked to comment on features of their diary entries taken throughout the course. Here, they are asked to record a summary of the emotional and intellectual impact of the course experiences on their own ideas and ways of thinking.

14. The student subsequently offered her consent for her story to be shared with other students.

15. This student is referring to our 200 level course - 1031.205 The Problem of Indoctrination. It is a course which is one of the compulsory options for student teacher trainees. With the recent discussions regarding the structure of the Bachelor of Education degree, its position among the bachelor offerings is sadly very tenuous.

16. To make this a little clearer for the students, I present them with two models of education which I label the 'telling' or 'gift model' and the 'choice model.' With the former model, education is perceived to be a process by which people are initiated into society and who are 'told' or 'given' pre-selected social values, often historically justified as 'useful' or 'worthwhile'. In contrast, the 'choice model' is one where the whole flavour of 'education' is that of a personal journey, one in which individuals are not furnished with a pre-conceived set of values or 'goods' but are instead equipped with the ability to determine their own sense of meaning within their life.

17. This conference opened on 16 March 1997 and was hosted by the New Zealand Social Welfare Department at the Auckland Sheraton Hotel. The conference attracted so much criticism from opposition groups - not least because of the $1700-a-head admission charge - that an alternative conference titled, "Beyond Poverty: Citizenship, Welfare and Well-being in the 21st Century" was co-ordinated and run at Massey University's Albany Campus.

18. For an excellent discussion of this issue, see Marilyn Waring's (1988), *Counting For Nothing : What men value & what women are worth.* Allen & Unwin/Port Nicholson Press, 1988.

19. Illich, Ivan (1971). *Deschooling Society.* New York: Harper & Row.

20. Hunter, Ian (1994). *Rethinking the School: Subjectivity, bureaucracy, criticism.* St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin.

21. Gatto, John Taylor (1992). *Dumbing Us Down: The hidden curriculum of compulsory schooling.* Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, pp. 1-21.
22. Ibid, p. 7.
23. Ibid, p. 8.
24. Ibid, pp. 10-11.
25. Ibid, p. 11.
26. As with so many of the ideas expressed within this paper, I acknowledge Graham Oliver's insightful comments here.
27. Gatto, ibid, p. 75.
28. Here, I am referring to recent Ministry of Education initiatives to cut tertiary funding for institutions servicing students who are undertaking a Bachelor of Education degree. Where there is presently a four year funding provision, it is highly likely that this entitlement will be cut to three years in the future, thus inevitably forcing institutions to streamline their offerings.