Lessons for the Elephant's Child:
Analysing a Radical, Successful and Catholic School

Jim Bright

Abstract

This article provides reflections on a liberal Catholic School that was described as becoming a "powerhouse of educational innovation and success". In particular, it refers to the personal experiences of the author attending that school in the late 1970s and the educational philosophy of the school described by the Principal in his book Educating the Elephant's Child (Hastings, 2010). In particular, the central role of relationships as a basis for learning and knowledge is described with reference to the philosophy of Martin Buber (1937). A range of innovative features of the school are described reflecting its liberal nature such as the extensive use of Christian names, the approach to discipline and worship are explained in terms of child-centred education that emphasised curiosity and questioning. Principled approaches to matters such as uniform, subject choice, examinations and obedience are explained within a coherent educational, philosophical and theological framework. Implications for contemporary education and educational leaders are presented with particular emphasis on the importance of a strong, well thought through and coherent educational philosophy allied to a commitment to acting out those principles. It is concluded that these qualities along with the courage of the Principal were major factors in the distinctive nature and success of this Catholic school.

About the author

Professor Jim Bright (ACU) has published widely in the area of career development, particularly as co-author of the Chaos Theory of Careers. He also runs a career development practice and has written a weekly column for Fairfax newspapers for six years.

Introduction

Bishop Bright Grammar School was established in 1966 in Royal Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, England. In the 1970s this state grammar school became part of the comprehensive system and merged with a poorly performing Secondary Modern School, Dormer, to form Trinity School. The Principal of the school until his retirement in the 1980s was Peter Hastings. During his tenure the school came to national attention with several television programs featuring the school, its approach and its students' work. There were at least two attempts by Conservative councillors to have him sacked; priests stormed out never to return and he was denounced to the Prime Minister and the Secretary of Defence (Hastings, 2010). It was a stimulating school for me to attend as a pupil in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Principles of the new Catholic School

The school was established at a time when there was significant concern about the state of Catholic education in the UK. The recently released Declaration on Religious Freedom in 1965 provided the foundations to a new approach to Catholic education. In particular, Peter Hastings seized upon the approach to teaching methods contained therein: "Truth is to be sought after in a manner proper to the dignity of the human person and his social nature. The inquiry is to be free, carried on with the aid of teaching or instruction, communication and dialogue. In the course of these persons explain to one another the truth they have discovered, or think they have discovered, in order to assist one another in the quest for truth. Moreover, as the truth is discovered, it is by a personal assent that anyone is to adhere to it" (Hastings, 2010, p. 24).

This provided the impetus for Hastings with the opportunity to establish a school based upon the principle of a shared search for meaning that acknowledged uncertainty as opposed to the prescriptive and didactic methods more typically employed at that time. It placed a greater emphasis upon the process of learning itself rather than the accumulation of facts. Experiential learning, experimentation, and learning how to make decisions were the cornerstones of this new approach.

Hastings cited Alves (1968), as providing a "watershed" argument on the Christian formation of children in a keynote speech that included the following:

> "If a school exists for the specific purpose of 'bringing up children so that they may become Christians', and if, in order to achieve this, it only employs staff of thoroughly orthodox views, and 'controls and manipulates' the school environment with the purpose of 'protecting' its pupils from any unacceptable influences or ideas, then I would claim that it is not being true to the ideals of Christian education. Schools should be places marked out by the excellence of their staffing; there should be no room in such a school for anyone whose personality cannot contribute positively to the creative web of relationship which ought to form the context of a child's searching after truth; there should be no room in such a school for anyone who seeks to limit or inhibit the child's spirit of free enquiry which must be maintained as the driving force in this search. (Dangers and risks there may be in such a free enquiry, but any damage to the child's spiritual welfare is not as inevitable from this source as it would be under a system which suppressed enquiry, trying to teach answers instead of stimulating questions). In other words the Church should accept as its responsibility the task of providing schools where good teachers can produce a good environment in which children can search after truth, the full unlimited truth, the truth that takes into account the mystery and wonder and hope of man's experience as well as the hard facts revealed by cold analytic enquiry. It is in such an atmosphere that children can grow up into 'mature manhood measured by nothing less than the full manhood of Christ' (Eph. 4, 13) - and this is surely the true aim and definition of 'the Christian formation of children". (Alves, 1968, as cited in Hastings, 2010, p. 23)

The school was heavily influenced by developments in psychology at the time including Kohlberg's work on moral development (e.g. Kohlberg, 1958), which in turn was influenced by Piaget's stages of intellectual development (e.g. Piaget, 1967). Kohlberg's work emphasized the use of Socratic questioning and teachers, without the use of indoctrination, can foster moral development.

Another centrally important approach was the widespread adoption of Nuffield Foundation courses and support for teachers in developing this method. Taiwo (1973) summaries the Nuffield approach to Science in the following terms:

a) to teach science as a method of inquiry

b) to encourage children to think critically

c) to popularize science

d) to let the child have the widest possible range of practical experience and

e) to provide a well-integrated experience.

Taiwo emphasises "above all" that the child is the "focal point" of attention throughout the curriculum (Taiwo, 1973, p. 480).

The principal saw his approach as incorporating then new ideas in psychology from Piaget, Kohlberg, Bernstein and others, with the Nuffield method, the School Council and aims of the Vatican Council. The result was a school that was (for its time) radically student-centred, and based on mutual enquiry (of teachers and students) in a search for truth, where understanding and knowledge were to be challenged and personally considered before being accepted.

Relationships

Relationships become central and essential in adopting this approach to education. The school fostered a culture of a community of scholars - teaching and support staff included. Respect for each individual as a person, a co-operative as opposed to a competitive approach, and looking out for each other were key. Thus the personal relationships of knowing and loving were at the forefront of the school's approach.

While these ideas may not seem contentious, particularly from a contemporary perspective, it was the acting out of these ideas rather than their profession that distinguished Trinity School in those years. There was one very obvious way in which this sense of relationship was present within the school based upon the philosophy of Martin Buber (1937).

Buber (1937), identified two fundamental forms of relationship, I-Thou and I-It. The I-Thou relationship is the human and Godly relationship. "AS EXPERIENCE, the world belongs to the primary word I–It. The primary word I–Thou establishes the world of relation." p. 3. Terms such as "He" and "She" belong to the "It" or person, whereas Thou belongs to the Individual in relation with another. From this point it becomes natural that as persons have names, we should address people by their names.

In the spirit of acting out and experiencing relationship, calling everybody, teachers included, by their Christian names was perhaps one of the most immediately striking aspects of the school. Further, I can attest to the claims by Hastings (2010) that this did "help enormously and produced better behaviour in a relaxed and happy atmosphere" p. 48.

If we experience God through our relationships with our fellow human beings, then having the opportunity to practise and develop these relationships, to act out rather than to profess allows the child the opportunity to be in relationship with God. Thus the child can explore, experience and possibly approve that relationship.

All genuinely adult relationships are based upon the I-Thou and not the I-It relationship. Terms such as "Sir", "Professor", "Doctor", "Miss" are about "I-it", and thus the opportunity for true relationship and to practise true relationship is missed. Where does this leave authentic learning where we "assist one another in the quest for truth?

More prosaically there is no evidence that addressing teachers in formal terms leads to better academic or personal outcomes. Most of the arguments presented in favour of honorific, surname or "Sir/Miss" forms of address are made on the basis of notions of deference or obedience. From the perspective of relationship, these forms of address serve to reinforce barriers and hierarchies and to threaten authentic relationship. They represent a move away from joint discovery and acknowledged vulnerability in the discovery of truth.

At first it was challenging for me to address teachers by their first names. I went to Bishop Bright from a traditional school using "Mr" and "Mrs", and a home where an authoritarian father from a North Country background would frequently refer to me as "Youth" or before that "Child". However it took less than a week to be comfortable in calling my form teacher "Angie", my history teacher "Hugh" and my Principal "Peter". It served to make me feel immediately welcomed as a part of something very exciting and special, a person in a community, not a student undergoing a process. Teachers who saw children as "It" and not "Thou" did not last long.

The value of a first-name terms culture was noted by Swain (1993), who reported on a vocational school where it resulted in "exceptional" student-teacher relationships of great strength.

As Hastings puts it "although the search was on for staff with great expertise in their subject areas, they needed to be staff who liked children, who were capable of entering into real relationships with persons, and who realised that they were first and foremost there to teach children, not physics or history or art. So the search for teachers was weighted towards those who could offer love and communication, the base of relation. The need was for thought, language for the interchange of thought, and love arising from that interchange. Christian relationships are not founded on sloppy, dewy eyed sentimentalism" (Hastings, 2010, p. 49).

Boundaries and Buildings

In the pursuit of loving relationships, Hastings recognised that a school was more than a collection of classrooms, laboratories, gyms and yards, rather a community. The relationships he wanted to foster did not begin and end in the classroom. Hence teachers would eat with the students in the dining hall - no top table separation here! My recollection is that the teachers queued for their lunch alongside the students, though we understood if they needed to jump the queue. Whether that is accurate or not, is beside the point because this is the impression of collegiality it created for me.

All classrooms, where practically possible, were open for students to use during breaks and after school. Obviously some were off limits such as design shops and science laboratories. However, the computer laboratories were not only open, but we were encouraged to use the computers during our breaks. This was unheard of in 1979, and still to this day, schoolrooms containing valuable technology, i.e. technology valuable to an inquisitive student, is locked away and only accessible under close supervision during lessons.

It was common for visitors to find students playing badminton or table tennis till late into the evening, or for students to be in the Art room, or classrooms during breaks. This generated a sense of ownership of our school and our equipment, and generally led to a high level of respect and relatively little in the way of damage or sabotage. The most extreme sabotage that I can recall, was when I witnessed some students in the year above me soldering a "Not" gate computer chip to the circuit board of the school computer, to see if they could reverse the white print on black background screens! Even this was a reflection of the spirit of curiosity and learning through doing that ran through the school.

Classes

What became evident quickly within the school was the absence of hierarchies for their own sake, and this extended to lessons, which were heavy on discussion and argument. This was encouraged and contributions were welcomed and nourished. There was no token economy of merits, stars, league tables or other such symbols and devices that reduce education to a "horse race" (Hastings, 2010, p. 52).

The preoccupation with comparison and competition comes at the expense of collaboration. Indeed one of the most common complaints about group work in school is the immediate concern about the distribution of marks - thus group projects are not about collaboration, helping and learning together for each other, rather they become exercises in maximising individual outcomes. Appeals to the notion that the world of work is a competitive place rather overlooks the point that employers continue to cry out for truly effective team players!

This emphasis on relationship also meant an absence of exams until 4th year (Year 9) and even then these were only for practice for the public GSCE and O level exams taken a year later. There was also minimal "setting" by ability for certain classes and no "streaming" whatsoever. Hastings (2010) recounts an anecdote of a visit of a group of student teachers who asked a class of children whether there should be some form of streaming. The mixed ability class containing both Oxbridge aspirants and borderline special needs cases apparently was astonished, with one student remarking that such a system may work elsewhere, but here "we are clever, it isn't necessary"!

Another feature of the teaching approach was the implementation of a wide range of options from the first year within the school. These include subjects like Photography, Trampoline, Film Making, Computers and many more. The timetable was constructed around the options chosen by the students. The idea being that the students to as large a degree possible, pursued their interests and teaching was arranged around this. Not only did this increase engagement, it also reinforced the notion of the school being there for the children's needs, and not to meet the demands of administrative elegance.

In many respects Trinity was operating in the top half of the Hart (1992) Ladder of Participation. The Ladder of Participation has 8 "rungs". The bottom three rungs are collectively described as the Non Participation zone and comprise the rungs of "Manipulation", "Decoration" and "Tokenism". Manipulation involves forcing children to pay attention irrespective of their interest or knowledge. Decoration refers to children being treated essentially as decorative items or a passive audience for the whims of the teachers. Tokenism occurs when children are given inconsequential tasks to do. The five rungs above that are collectively described as "Increasing degrees of Participation". Starting with the lowest rung in this zone, the rungs are: Assigned, but informed (teachers do need to pay heed to children's concerns about what they are asked to do); Consulted and informed (limited consultation where the adult controls the degree and nature of the consultation); Adult initiated, shared decisions with youth (children are 50-50 partners in decision-making); Youth initiated and directed (adults role is support children's decisions); and Youth initiated, shared decisions with adults (children have full equity with adults).

It is still the case that many schools remain proudly in the lower rungs of the Participatory zone, namely "Assigned and informed" and "Consulted and informed".

Uniform

The most outward sign that Trinity was different to other schools in the area was the lack of uniform. In contrast to the other schools, this was actually a unifying aspect. Within Trinity it was another example of exercising autonomy and learning how to be an adult. By treating the students as adults, they learned to practise decision-making. As Kohn (1998) points out "kids don't learn much of value in an environment where they are excluded from decision making" (p. 9). Furthermore the uniform is a potent reminder of the boundaries between teachers and students. In all but the most traditional schools, teachers have been freed from their gowns, but students have typically been bound to their uniforms.

Applying the principle of the school being run for the students and not for administrative efficiency meant that objections along the lines that uniforms helped to identify truants, rapidly weighed less heavily than the benefits of student autonomy. Predictably, the argument that links wearing a uniform to showing respect or being obedient is not substantiated as the school had the lowest police contact of any school in the County.

The lack of uniform did not mean a lack of rules. Paradoxically, the most important rule was that clothing must not represent membership of a gang. During the 1960s the most visible gangs were Mods and Rockers, and from the 1970's onwards various forms of fascists. This did lead to the banning of Doc Marten boots, which at the time were emblematic of racist groups.

Rather than the anarchy the more strait-laced predicted, the policy worked exceptionally well. Students did not feel the need to parade their wealth or status through their clothes and the culture of the school was one where such displays were likely to be treated with derision. Instead many, if not most appeared to come to the same conclusion as Wittgenstein and wore pretty much the same "uniform" of jeans and a sweater every day.

It was another potent sign of being treated as both an individual thou, and an adult in training. It is likely that the teachers at Trinity thanked the principal for his policy because it removed the hours spent on the trivialities of hair length, style, sock length and colour. It is interesting how contemporary school uniforms can be oddly discriminatory in the way they treat boys and girls (for example girls may wear white socks and boys cannot). It is also interesting that many schools now use uniform-free days as fundraisers for good causes. That these events are increasing in popularity and are repeated hardly speaks to the breakdown of civilisation that conservatives fear from a no uniform policy.

Uniform is a custom that most schools insist upon at significant administrative and parental cost, and more importantly even greater cost to the student's opportunity to practise autonomy. It is a practice that is unsupported by strong evidence. Indeed, Brunsma (1998) reporting on data from the US 10th grade National Educational Longitudinal Study in 1998 concluded, "student uniforms have no direct effect on substance use, behavioral problems or attendance. A negative effect of uniforms on student academic achievement was found." Brunsma (2004) replicated and extended these findings in a well controlled study finding uniform had a significant negative effect on reading, and less pronounced but negative effects on maths, science and history. Yeung (2009) similarly found no support for uniforms in his large-scale review "There is little to no evidence that school uniforms raise achievement. If anything, the impact appears to be negative" (p. 849). This is hardly resounding support for uniforms in schools.

Discipline

On reflection I was destined to enjoy a school where the philosophy on obedience was summed up by the principal in these terms: "Obedience is a two-edged sword.... This incapacity for making decisions in moral areas did not start in religious houses, nor was it confined to Catholics. Obedience may sometimes be a virtue; it may sometimes be a freely bestowed gift; the obedience that comes from constant training, whether as adult or as rigidly controlled, perhaps beaten, child, is destructive of that person and should be frightening to us all" (Hastings, 2010, p. 163).

What flowed from this emphasis on relationships was that respect emerged from relationship, experience and conscious deliberation and acceptance. This approach meant in practice there appeared no "rules", or very few. However, if you broke any of these, exclusion was a likely consequence. There was for example, a zero tolerance approach to violence and bullying. However, at the same time, smoking areas were provided for students - or at least smoking on the pavement outside school was tolerated. The result was relatively few people in the school population smoked: students learned from each other that it was uncool.

There were no "rules" about where to walk, but flows of students in corridors and staircases spontaneously emerged, and students were disciplined if they thoughtlessly or wilfully disrupted this flow. Thus students learned not blind obedience, rather to question, reflect and, in most cases, accept a sensible approach to their behaviour. In so doing the students learned how to control themselves through wise decision-making, rather than learning submission to coercion.

There were no prefects. Every child was exhorted to consider the implications of their behaviour on others. Relationship was the critical factor and this would have been undermined by elevating students to positions of power and created a culture of unquestioning, obedience, coercion and dependency. In the same way there were no houses or house or school captains and no annual awards. Having sat through teeth gritting ceremonies in schools were seemingly all of

the gongs were routinely awarded to the same coterie of highly coached and competitive children, I am pleased that the divisions and resentment that these create in parents and students alike were absent. It would have been contrary to the ethos.

This approach was entirely consistent with the doctrine of "testing all things" and the understanding that authority was not above being challenged. Indeed it is our moral responsibility to challenge, to ask the awkward questions, because it is through this process that we get closer to the truth. Learning that it is not only acceptable but essential to this, is a critical lesson. It provides the basic outlook for scholarship and the central idea in the scientific method.

Once this lesson is learned, the focus can shift to practising this questioning and learning how to do it effectively, courteously and respectfully. The focus can also shift to who should be obeyed. This raises an interesting possibility in the realm of bullying. If the school culture is one where those with power (i.e. the teachers) exercise a rigid authority and are to be unquestioningly obeyed, it is not difficult to see how bullies who gain power through coercion, threats or force of personality, may find some ready followers in their obedient student ranks.

Theology

The School appointed a full-time chaplain from the Dominican order. The approach was to build up a church by sacraments, his words and counselling and was modelled loosely on the role of a University chaplain. The pastoral role was extended beyond the students to their families and this helped cement the strong community feel within the school.

The chaplain was a popular figure within the school who arranged walking holidays in the vacations with other staff and students. He was given timetabled contact with all entry-level students simply to build relationships with them rather than convey specific religious instruction.

Mass was conducted in a small chapel and was voluntary. On major days there would be a whole of school mass that was keenly anticipated by students. The approach was one of celebration and included "rock" bands playing music and ended with dancing. These masses were not compulsory and because of that were attended by the overwhelming majority of students.

Academic theology was rigorous and the school employed 8 theology graduates. The Catholic Education Council listed the school amongst 20 with particular theological interest. Guy (2012a) relates this incident in the school that captures the liberal Catholic ethos underpinned by rigorous academic thinking: "Peter's insistence on religious freedom meant that attendance at school mass was voluntary and his policy brought him into conflict with local priests, one of whom accused him in a meeting of denying children the sanctifying grace that compulsory attendance would bestow on them. He responded that the reverend father misunderstood the theology of grace, resulting in the priest's storming out, never to return to the governing body."

The principal related this anecdote to illustrate the questioning approach championed by the school "After a few years children from one of the parishes came to me and said: 'The school gives the Cup and Kenilworth gives the Cup - why doesn't our parish priest give the Cup?' So I said: 'Ask him.' They came back disillusioned; when asked the priest had replied: 'Because if the Cup were given every time then it would lose its significance'. When the children had then asked him why the Host did not lose its significance by being given every time, he lost his temper. So much for dialogue" (Hastings, 2010, p. 355).

Technology

Trinity School was way ahead of its time in terms of technology. Computers were freely available for students to use and learn from in the late 1970s. In the early 1980s several students built their own computers, and a significant number of the better off students purchased home computers. This is almost 30 years before the laptop for each student policy!

The language teachers had access to a large language laboratory - in a room big enough for a large class of students to sit in individual booths, and practise their languages while also being able to communicate individually with the teacher at the front of the room.

There was a colour photographic dark room, and in later years a professional theatre. All of this occurred in a non-selective, comprehensive school with no fees. This early adoption of technology and its implementation centrally and coherently within teaching was very advanced for its time. Until the vicissitudes of funding prevented it, the school offered "O" and "A" levels in Electronics. Students had the opportunity to build computer peripherals at a time when most people hadn't seen a computer.

Outcomes

The Chief County Inspector reported that Trinity School was the only one in the county where the students' average reading age increased against chronological age. Despite not judging students by exam results the school enjoyed very high levels of academic achievement reflected in exam results. Within my own year, there were several students who ultimately went on to complete PhDs. One, a friend of mine, had been brought up in state housing in a poorer part of the town. His parents had worked in labouring roles, and money in the large family was tight. Nonetheless, my friend got a place at Oxford University and is now an academic at a prestigious university. Several others went to Oxbridge that year too. Others from my year have become Producers for the BBC (an exceptionally difficult and competitive role to obtain), lecturing in the Arts, working for Microsoft in Seattle and working as senior teachers. In the main these people were not from middle class families. Staff members have gone on to Head Schools, run University Theological Training colleges, and have received Official Honours for their work.

Wilby (1988) provided a portrait of the school in the national newspaper, The Independent:

> "Trinity School is a scruffy, split-site comprehensive badly in need of a coat of paint. There is no school uniform and few restrictions of any sort on personal appearance, judging by the incidence of jeans, earrings and punk hairstyles. The children and teachers call each other by their Christian names. The prospectus, under the heading 'discipline', states that 'the school attempts to treat children with love'. In apparent defiance of the 1944 Education Act, there has been no compulsory act of worship, let alone a daily one, for 21 years. 'Not, you might think, a school that many parents would care for. Yet this Roman Catholic comprehensive school is one of the most oversubscribed schools in Warwickshire. The creation is extraordinary. Other schools, though not often Church schools, introduce new ideas here and there. Trinity seems to introduce them everywhere and years before anyone else. 'Biotechnology, robotics and aeronautics are among the subjects taught. From the second year, pupils can opt for media studies and make their own films and television programmes. Pupil musicians have worked with the London Sinfonietta. There is a theatre, from which one production has been shown on ITV. 'As well as Latin and classical Greek, five modern languages are taught and the school plans satellite facilities to catch foreign broadcasts. The satellite will also be used to pick up programmes from Australia, New Zealand and the USA to help with a new A-level English language course. The maths department uses, with apparent success, an individual learning scheme, which involves every pupil in the class working on different problems. Sixthformers are sent on work placements far and wide - to BBC and ITV stations, to Sellafield in Cumbria, to the Royal Observatory in Edinburgh. 'It is a noisy school - because it encourages children to talk and to discuss things - and it buzzes with excitement."

Conclusions

Trinity School under the leadership of Peter Hastings was a successful, happy and innovative place. It is rare for a comprehensive non-selective school to attract the media attention it did - several national television programs were made about the school. There was a national broadcast of a school play (about nuclear disarmament) - and it was this that apparently resulted in Peter being reported to the Prime Minister!

However behind the obvious differences such as uniform, informal communication and minimal formal rules, was a deeply thoughtful and consistent educational philosophy driven by an equally scholarly and passionate belief system rooted in the Catholic faith. Peter drove and applied his philosophy with deep commitment, and against a background of significant opposition. The depth of this opposition emerged after his departure, with the gradual erosion of his approach by his successors - for example with the introduction of a school uniform. A visit to the school website illustrates the degree to which things have changed. Exam results are proudly splashed on the home page. At least the dress code is consistent for both sexes: girls are not allowed to wear white socks.

Peter Hastings died in 2012, two years after publishing a book that encapsulated his thinking. It is called *Educating the Elephant's Child*. The title relates to the story by Kipling that features a child who is insatiably curious, determined to find the truth, will ask endless questions and challenges unreasonable authority. He accepts the consequences of his actions and uses effectively what he has learned. Peter used to read *How the Elephant Got its Trunk* to each new intake, to highlight that questioning can be difficult and uncomfortable, but is very necessary.

Implications for Contemporary Education and Educational Leaders

There is much of interest to be learned from studying the example of Peter's school, and from his very readable book. What Peter achieved as a Catholic educator helped pave the way for some of the educational practices children benefit from today. Creating an educational community as academically effective and authentically Christian as Trinity required, not only courage, but a clarity of vision allied to a formidable intellect, and I am convinced it was these qualities underpinned by his deeply felt and well reasoned faith that were instrumental in the leadership of a remarkable school.

The essential principles of a child-centred education based in relationship, and based on questioning everything and accepting in an adult manner, are just as relevant today as they were when he started in 1966. It would be easy to dismiss the school as an historical quirk, something that would be impossible to reproduce in an age of outcomes and accountability, but that would be to underestimate the formidable barriers that Peter faced. The challenge for progressive Principals is to be creative in finding a way to articulate that vision, and to fearlessly implement, experiment, fail, learn and implement again, continually and boldly. It is important to act out their philosophy in every interaction and relationship within the school, not just espouse it.

Educational leaders are assailed by demands for exam benchmarks, and popularist cries to improve respect and discipline. The typical response is a retreat into orthodoxy, which generally means ever more rigid uniform policies, a clear separation between teachers and students reinforced by formal terms of address, and an emphasis on rules and regulations. Peter's example demonstrates that taking almost the polar opposite approach – by placing the child first, encouraging them to challenge everything and accept things on their terms – including authority, was an effective alternative.

The essential idea of relationship and love being at the heart of a school risks being lost by Principals who feel obliged or prefer to act as Chief Executive Officers having little or no regular contact with students. This sets the tone for the school as a whole where the pastoral role is essentially outsourced to deputies.

Examinations and benchmarks such as NAPLAN have encouraged a mentality of coaching and cramming that belies the shift of emphasis onto outcomes and a distrust of process. It is a form of either-or thinking that pervades most schools today. Rather than excusing this rush to results as simply "playing the game" or claiming it to be the new reality, the Trinity example shows that a strong and consistent approach to process – the process of challenging ideas, self-exploration and discovery yields strong academic performance and superior disciplinary records.

Contemporary leaders would do well to study the example of Trinity and other schools like it, and to challenge their own thinking. How many of the practices in place in their schools are born out by the evidence, how many are uncritically accepted and how many are blindly implemented or persisted with while maintaining vague notions of tradition?

Contemporary leaders have tremendous opportunities to provide an authentically Christian and Catholic education by taking advantage of technology in education. While the child-centred opportunities for learning using information technology are evident, there is a fundamental challenge to the fostering of relationships as a basis for schools, if the primary interaction in learning is a student engaging with a computer. These are not insurmountable problems, and social phenomena like crowd sourcing, distributed cognition and social networks, provide ample avenues to restate the importance of relationships in school.

Final Words

The school had a profound impact upon my thinking and reading Peter's book made me realise how much of his educational philosophy I had learned and acquired through it being acted out and my experiencing and accepting it rather than having it drilled into a passive and disengaged child. Interestingly, my major academic work of the last decade has been on the application of Chaos Theory to career development (e.g. Bright & Pryor, 2005, 2012; Pryor & Bright, 2011). The ideas of emergent order (as opposed to top down imposition of structure), the creative edge of chaos, the central role of failure (Pryor & Bright, 2012), and the role of spiritual belief in career decision-making (Pryor & Bright 2011; Pryor & Bright, 2004) all seem to be almost a logical extensions of the teaching philosophy of Trinity.

In his obituary in the Times Educational Supplement, Guy (2012b) wrote "Trinity became a powerhouse of educational innovation and success. Teachers were known by their first names; Peter banned homework in the early secondary years unless it was investigative; he believed passionately in mixed-ability teaching. Learning was experiential - practical classes dominated." However the final word should go to Peter:

> "In my final years an increasing number of Catholic parents in Warwickshire and neighbouring authorities, one couple from as far away as Devon, were moving house to come to us because, so they said, it was, with its 55% of nominally Catholic intake, the only really Catholic school they could find; other Christian parents were saying that it was the only Christian school they knew; others, not Christian, said it was the most human school they had discovered. I was content to go to bed on that" (Hastings, 2010, p. 42).

Acknowledgements

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