Education, support and the development of the whole person
Ron Best*

Centre for Research in Beliefs, Rights & Values in Education (BRaVE), Roehampton University, Froebel College, London, UK

Introduction
This issue of the journal brings together six educationalists with distinctive concerns about the range and quality of support needed and given to children and young people who experience difficulties in managing school or college. Their foci are very different: the impact of fathers (present or absent) on the young person's attitude and adjustment to schooling (Geddes); sexual orientation and the role which teachers and counsellors can play in the quest for a personal and public identity (Cooper); schools' support for children coping with death and loss (Holland); the concept of emotional well-being and how it may be promoted in schools (McLaughlin); the task of the school in developing resilience in young people (Johnson); and the supreme importance of relationship in everything that a school does to promote personal, social and emotional development (Harris). This collection does not, of course, claim to cover all the challenges facing education, but it does typify the kinds of issues which teachers, counsellors and others in support roles in education find themselves dealing with, and they do remind us of the British tradition of schools (and their staff) being in loco parentis, and therefore concerned with the all-round well-being of their students. But as Harris points out, such a concept of education is one head of a monster which, at the other end, pressures schools to produce outcomes which have little to do with what it is to be a person.

My purpose here is to say something about this ‘monster’, to identify some current trends and challenges, and thus provide a context for the papers which follow.

Teaching the student: supporting the person
The contrast is vivid indeed between the concept of the person entailed in the idea of education as promoting personhood, of facilitating learning experiences which will lead to human flourishing, and of initiation into intrinsically worthwhile activities, and the restricted and highly selective notion of the student or pupil which is in most people’s minds when they think of their experience at school or college. The former conceives the person as a whole which is more than the sum of its parts, but whose parts are manifold including the intellectual, social, emotional, moral, political, bodily and sexual selves, and (we may add) the self as a learner (Watkins, 1985,
p. 180) while the latter sees the individual as merely a learner, and one whose learning is pretty much restricted to the cognitive domain.

Of course, schools vary in the degree to which they accept their mission as something more than the transmission of knowledge. There are some which are truly humane and person-centred, employing a genuinely holistic vision of the person in which manifold ‘selves’ are properly integrated in the learning experiences on offer, but they are most likely to be found in ‘fringe’ institutions such as Steiner–Waldorf schools (www.steinerwaldorf.org.uk) or the schools promoted by Human Scale Education (www.hse.org.uk). They are, in short, schools which are able to avoid the worst excesses of the increasingly centralised state system. Not that the state should not provide education; on the contrary, education as a public good is the entitlement of every citizen and the responsibility of fulfilling this entitlement properly falls to the collectivity. The problem is that the state system in the UK is (and has been for generations) slave to the epistemology of the ‘subject’ or ‘discipline’ as a body of objectified knowledge external to the learner, and acquired through traditional pedagogies.

Such a perspective runs deep and is one dimension of a fundamental contradiction in education: on the one hand, the liberal tradition that distinguishes education from (mere) instruction or training, emphasising understanding and judgement as equally or more important than (mere) factual knowledge; on the other, curricula and pedagogy which reduce everything pretty much to subject knowledge – facts, and to a lesser extent, skills – transmitted from teacher to pupil. Such a reduction (and the mind-sets of those who accommodate it) has serious consequences for the degree to which the curriculum can really be geared to the developmental needs of the individual as both learner and person.

This can be seen in the chequered history of the National Curriculum. The general aims of the National Curriculum for England for 2000 are summarised in the handbooks for teachers (DfEE/QCA, 1999a, p. 11, 1999b, p. 11) as follows:

Aim 1: The school curriculum should aim to provide opportunities for all pupils to learn and to achieve ...

Aim 2: The school curriculum should aim to promote children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and prepare all pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life.

In the more specific aims which follow are the development of the ability to ‘develop pupils’ integrity and autonomy’, and ‘to form and maintain worthwhile and satisfying relationships based on respect for themselves and for others’, and a range of personal qualities including ‘valuing ourselves, our families and other relationships’, ‘the virtues of truth, justice, honesty, trust and a sense of duty’, ‘being able to manage risk, cope with change and adversity’, ‘self-esteem’ and ‘emotional wellbeing’ (DfEE/QCA, 1999a, 1999b, pp. 10–12). Clearly, these aims are in harmony with the extended notion of education as much more than the acquisition of factual knowledge and the accompanying cognitive skills. Emotional health, personal well-being, morality and a sense of identity and self-worth are notable, and the rhetorical force of such statements is considerable. The reality, however, is very different.

In 2004, the philosopher of education John White took the aims, programmes of study, attainment targets and contribution to learning across the curriculum of all 13 current National Curriculum subjects, including RE, PSHE and citizenship, and compared them against the overall aims (White, 2004, pp. 8–9). The results were (to
say the least) ‘patchy’: ‘The best match tends to be found in subjects only recently
troduced into the curriculum: design and technology, ICT, citizenship and PSHE. Many longer established subjects tend to be problematic in various ways’ (White, 2004, p. 9). This is an understatement. The examples which he proceeds to give indicate that the more traditional academic subjects of the National Curriculum often bear a scant resemblance to what one might expect from the broad statement of aims. Nor, it seems, do they contain much by way of opportunities for cross-disciplinary learning.

White’s analysis also confirms my own view that the introduction, over the years, of citizenship education and the non-statutory framework for PSHE has re-dressed the balance somewhat, but the degree to which this is enacted may be limited. The citizenship schemes of work provided by the Qualifications & Curriculum Authority (QCA, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c) might easily be received and ‘delivered’ by teachers as yet another body of knowledge rather than as a locus for open-ended, critical and impassioned debate and action on the part of the young people. There are other aspects of the curriculum where a welcome emphasis is given to the personal, such as sex and relationship education (DfEE, 2000) and the Social & Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) initiative (http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/publications), but neither have the status of National Curriculum programmes of study and the latter is as yet not a requirement. In-so-far as the curriculum engages with the notion of the whole person, it seems always to be peripheral, and/or a ‘bolt-on after-thought’ rather than lying (as is should) at the heart of what schools do.

As for the preparation of teachers to deliver all this, some universities have resolutely rejected the concept of teacher training in favour of teacher education, insisting that there is much more to becoming a good teacher than the accumulation of knowledge and the acquisition of skills required to ‘pass it on’. But with the advent of the Teacher Training Agency (now the Training & Development Agency for Schools) in the early 1990s, preparation for teaching became almost exclusively a matter of learning the content of the National Curriculum and how to transmit it, how to assess pupil performance, and how to create an orderly and manageable classroom environment in order to be able to do so. There is precious little time for student teachers to study child development or to give critical consideration to the aims of education, let alone to consider what is involved in the promotion of the development of all facets of the person in a way which a truly person-centred education would.

A pastoral perspective

The pastoral tradition of UK schools, emphasising as it does an extended role for the teacher and the value of children as ‘more than empty buckets to be filled with knowledge’, has long provided some kind of ‘softener’ to the knowledge-centred, assessment-driven character of UK schooling. While at one time, and perhaps for some people still, this concept meant principally taking responsibility for the welfare and happiness of a group of children (typically, the ‘tutor group’ or ‘form’), getting to know each member as an individual and providing guidance, counselling and moral support when things go wrong, there is more to it than that.

Thirty years of thinking, research and debate have led to an extended concept of pastoral care as entailing a ‘pastoral curriculum’ in which young people are prepared for the ‘critical incidents’ (Hamblin, 1978) which they will encounter in life (including those which happen in the school), and in which they acquire knowledge, skills,
attitudes, values and dispositions relating to their own developing personhood. The pastoral tradition recognises also the potency of the ethos of the school, with its ‘hidden curriculum’ of attitudes, values and interpersonal relationships, in forming the morality, character and resilience of the individual child. Developing the school as a community (and in the community) is therefore also of great importance.

The kind of holistic vision of education underpinning such an understanding of pastoral care was developed some years ago by Jasper Ungoed-Thomas, formerly Her Majesty’s Inspector of Schools (HMI) for religious education. Ungoed-Thomas (1997) describes what he calls ‘the first virtues of education – truth; justice; respect for persons; responsibility’ – and argues that each of these is embodied in a different strand or element of the ‘good school’: the personal; the whole school curriculum; the school as an institution; and the school as a community. More recently, Graham Haydon (2006, pp. 22–23) has written about the ‘ethical environment’ provided by the school as the context in which personal and social development are either promoted or hindered. This concept may be used ‘to encompass all the ideas available to us that are relevant to our thinking about how to live’ (p. 23), and these obviously vary among sub-cultures and may be situation- and institution-specific. Tellingly, he points out that teachers and others working in schools must understand that while their work may be shaped and constrained by the ethical environment within which they labour, they are, themselves, engaged in the production (and reproduction) of that environment; they have, therefore, a moral responsibility to sustain what is good, and promote improvement of that which is poor, in that environment. This is a responsibility of a quite different order to those of supporting the individual and delivering the curriculum. Both these writers are alerting us to the need to envision schools as much more than the site for the delivery of the curriculum or the provision of individual counselling and support.

**Things are changing**

It is possible to see recent developments in government policy as leaning towards a more humanistic and holistic conception of education. I have in mind here not only the emphasis given to the social and the emotional in SEAL, but to the *Every Child Matters* (ECM) agenda (DfES, 2004) and the concepts of ‘personalised learning’ and the ‘extended school’. According to the current guidance provided by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF, formerly the DfES):

> The Every Child Matters: Change for Children programme is focused on giving every child the support they require, whatever their needs, abilities, background or circumstances. As such these outcomes tie in closely with the emerging emphasis on personalised learning which is a key aspect of the new relationship with schools.

A personalised approach to supporting children means:

- Tailoring learning to the needs, interests and aspirations of each individual
- Tackling barriers to learning and allowing each child to achieve their potential

High educational standards and well-being go hand in hand. Pupils can’t learn and thrive if they don’t feel safe, or if health problems are allowed to create barriers. Conversely, doing well in education is the most effective route out of poverty and disaffection (DfES, 2007a).
The ‘extended school’ is seen as a key part in the plan to integrate learning, teaching and the promotion of personal well-being:

A key way of delivering Every Child Matters outcomes, an extended school works with the local authority, local providers and other schools to provide access to a core offer of integrated services:

- a varied range of activities including study support, sport and music clubs, combined with childcare in primary schools.
- parenting and family support;
- swift and easy access to targeted and specialist services;
- community access to facilities including adult and family learning, ICT and sports grounds.

These will often be provided beyond the school day but not necessarily by teachers or on the school site … (DfES, 2007b)

An optimistic reading of such statements suggests a long overdue recognition of the need for schools to accept three, key responsibilities: responsibility for ensuring that the education of the child takes account of the abilities, aptitudes and developmental needs of each individual conceived of as a person; responsibility for working collaboratively with other agencies in providing care and support for the child; responsibility for greater integration with the community in expanding provision beyond the conventional curriculum and the traditional school day. These responsibilities have been the focus for a great deal of discussion, not least in the spate of publications examining the implications especially of ECM (e.g. Reid, 2005 and the special issues of Pastoral Care in Education 24(2) and Education 3–13 35(3)). An irony is that the village colleges of Cambridgeshire of 50 years ago displayed many of these features, and the community school movement of the 1970s (e.g. Midwinter, 1973) was engaged in precisely such a project before the policies of the Conservative Government and the ‘work-to-rule’ actions of the teachers’ unions in the 1980s, the advent of the National Curriculum, its assessment system and the resultant ‘league tables’, and a punitive inspection regime under the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) in the 1990s effectively put paid to it.

That said, we do seem to be at a point in time where the question of how schools should respond to the needs of children ‘as more than empty buckets to be filled with knowledge’ has a better chance of being taken seriously by the policy-makers than has been the case for a quarter of a century. And taken seriously it needs to be, for there is a growing concern for the mental and emotional well-being of children and students in schools and colleges.

**Mental health issues**

According to Aggleton, Hurry and Warwick (2000, p. 5):

It is clear that there is a dramatic increase in the prevalence of most of the mental health problems … as young people move into the teenage years. Alcohol … and drug use … emerge as fairly commonplace behaviours from 14 years onwards. The average time for the onset of anorexia nervosa is in the mid teens, for bulimia in the late teens and the early adult years … Suicide and deliberate self-harm are reportedly very rare before the age of 12 years and rise in frequency during the mid to late teens, suicide being the second most common cause of death for 15–24 year olds in the UK … The reported
prevalence of both anxiety and depression increases markedly during adolescence ... [while] certain contextual factors associated with mental stress, such as sexuality and homelessness, also only emerge as young people reach the age of about 14 to 16 years.

A fact-sheet produced by the charity *Mind* informs us that

(t)he three most common groups of childhood mental health problems are emotional disorders (such as depression, anxiety and obsessions) ... hyperactivity (involving attention and over-activity) ... [and] conduct disorders (involving awkward, troublesome, aggressive and antisocial behaviour. (Mind, 2007)

Such problems are by no means restricted to teenagers and young adults. According to the Royal College of Psychiatrists (2003), 2% of children under 12 years of age are affected by depression. Citing the Office for National Statistics report of the 2001 Census, the charity *Young Minds* reports that ‘1 in 10 children and young people aged 5–16 suffer from a diagnosable mental health disorder’ and that of just under 80,000 children and young people who suffer from severe depression, 8,000 are under the age of 10 (Youngminds, 2007).

It may be that there are few disorders known for adolescents that do not occur at younger ages. Contrary to the impression often given (and exemplified in the quotation from Aggleton et al. above), my own modest research into school support for young people who self-harm found a number of cases of self-harm by children of primary school age, one as young as six, while there is growing public concern about eating disorders (obesity as well as starvation) amongst younger children. None of which will come as a surprise to those involved in child psychiatry, in child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) or in educational psychotherapy (Salmon & Dover, 2007).

At the other end of the spectrum, the mental health of students in higher education is also receiving more attention. According to a report published by the Royal College of Psychiatrists (2003, p. 6), ‘[t]here is evidence, particularly from the evaluation of student counselling services, that the number of higher education students presenting with symptoms of mental ill health has increased in recent years’. The report goes on to observe that ‘[h]igher education is associated with significant stressors, including the emotional demands of transition from home and school to the less structured environment of college, independent study and examinations, and financial pressures’ (p. 7). These are likely to be exacerbated by the government’s policy of widening participation which brings into the system young people for whom not only are the intellectual and financial challenges greater than for earlier generations, but who arrive at university from homes where there is no tradition and little understanding of what higher education involves, and thus lacking the experiential base for the moral support of the student. It is perhaps unsurprising that there is increasing research into support for students with mental health issues in higher education, including suicide (Stanley, Mallon, Bell, Hilton, & Manthorpe, 2007) and deliberate self-harm (Best, 2007a, 2007b).

While psychological, emotional and behavioural difficulties have long been a concern to those involved in the guidance, counselling and pastoral care of children and students in schools and colleges, it is my impression that these have not often been conceived of as ‘mental health problems’. I suspect that for many teachers in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, to have thought of a child as having a mental health issue would have meant they were ‘mentally ill’ or even ‘mad’. A number of recent
publications suggest that awareness of degrees of mental health/ill-health is growing in education. Half of the articles in one recent issue (and it was not a themed issue or symposium) of the journal Pastoral Care in Education were explicitly concerned with mental health. These included: a review of the evidence concerning young people’s seeking of help with mental health issues from a range of caring agencies (Rothi & Leavey, 2006); a report of a Scottish study which examined the tensions between school structures and cultures and the promotion of mental health and is critical of the limited extent to which schools makes proper use of inter-agency workers (Spratt, Shucksmith, Philip, & Watson, 2006); and a critique of the rhetoric–reality gap between the promotion by bodies such as the Mental Health Foundation, of the view that schools have a key role to play in providing a therapeutic response to pupils with mental health issues, and the reality which is that, despite the work of CAMHS and others, most schools are poorly prepared to play it (Finney, 2006).

Significantly, one teachers’ union recently funded a study entitled Identification and management of pupils with mental health difficulties: A study of UK teachers’ experience and views (Rothi, Leavey, Chamba, & Best, 2006). Data from 221 questionnaires and 30 interviews with teachers in primary and secondary schools in England and Wales indicated that teachers ‘often feel unable to discern between mental health problems and emotional/behavioural difficulties . . .[and] are concerned about the impact [of] inadequate support for pupils with mental health needs . . .[and the way that] inadequate support for children with problems affects the wellbeing and performance of all pupils’ (p. 9). Here, too, the need for more positive collaboration with outside agencies (and specifically CAMHS) is raised, as is the need for better training, support and awareness-raising for school staff.

In summary
The work of educational institutions in supporting children and young people has a number of dimensions.

First, there is support for learning involving the ‘scaffolding’ (Wood, 1988, p. 80) of the student’s learning activities, providing the framework of questions, prompts, explanations and demonstrations which permit their advancement from what they already know and are able to do, through what they are unable to achieve without support, to what will ultimately be within their grasp without further assistance. Such support is too often seen as a matter of providing for students with specific learning difficulties of one kind or another – often dyslexia and comparable conditions such as dyscalculia and dyspraxia – when in fact it is integral to all teaching. Such scaffolding is not visibly to do with moral and emotional support, but a secure, positive and trusting relationship between teacher and pupil is a prerequisite for its success (Carnell & Lodge, 2002).

Second, there is the kind of support which teachers, counsellors, educational psychotherapists and others in caring roles provide for students who encounter problems of a personal, social or emotional kind. This is too often equated with challenging behaviour, classified as EBD or diagnosed as ‘ADD’ (Attention Deficit Disorder) or ‘ADHD’ (Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder), but in fact everyone has personal–social–emotional problems from time to time. Support with such problems has two justifications: it serves to ameliorate, if not remove, psychological obstacles to successful scaffolding and effective learning, and it assists the student to manage their emotional and psychological development as persons. Here, personhood
as the achievement of an integrated personal and public identity (see Cooper in this issue), developing strategies for coping with the residue of ineffective attachments (see Geddes in this issue) and traumatic life experiences (see Holland in this issue), and building resilience in the face of adversity (see Johnson in this issue) are important aims. If the apparent increase in the numbers of children and young people with mental health problems is anything to go by, this kind of support is going to be increasingly important – and will need to be more ‘clinical’ than hitherto – in the years to come.

The third kind of ‘support’ is proactive. The development of resilience, self-efficacy and personal identity is not a matter only for counselling, therapy or ‘casework’ by pastoral teachers; it is also something which can be taught and therefore should have its rightful place in the curriculum. Some of the newer curriculum subjects such as PSHE and citizenship education, and curriculum components such as sex and relationship education, SEAL and values education (Haydon, 1997) may be the vehicles for teaching children essential factual knowledge about their own growth as persons as well as developing the capacity for rational and moral autonomy, empathy and perseverance. But as we have seen, there seems to be an historical resistance built into curriculum development in the UK in which the affective is often ‘squeezed out’ by a concept of education dominated by intellect alone, a situation which is inimical to the conception of education as, ultimately, about personal development and well-being (see McLaughlin in this issue). The questions here are as ever: what should we teach and how should we teach it?

Fourth, the ‘ethical environment’ (Haydon, 2006) is the context within which individuals receive (or not) the kind of moral support which one associates with strong and caring communities. Here are learned the lessons of the ‘hidden curriculum’ of shared values, beliefs, traditions, sentiments and predispositions which underpin (and drive) the social life of the student. From the quality of relationships to which s/he is exposed, the student learns what it is really to be a person with an identity, a citizen of the community, one among many, valued (or not) for oneself (see Harris in this issue). Here is the source of the self-concept, self-esteem and self-efficacy. Here, the arena in which the capacity for self-conscious and autonomous morality is nurtured or stunted.

Each of the papers which follow examines these four kinds of support and provides valuable insights into the needs of children and young people for whom the challenges of personhood are both logically and practically prior to both curriculum and pedagogy. I commend them to you.

Notes on contributor
Ron Best is Professor Emeritus and former Director of the Centre for Research in Beliefs, Rights & Values in Education (BRaVE) at Roehampton University. He is a founder-member and immediate past-President of the National Association for Pastoral Care in Education (NAPCE) and chairs a voluntary community counselling service in Surrey. He is currently researching educational responses to deliberate self-harm amongst university students.

References


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