



Introduction

I.E.S
NUESTRA SEÑORA
DE LOS REMEDIOS



Looking Afresh

Christopher Clouder

There is always that edge of doubt

Trust it, that's where the new things come from

If you can't live with it, get out, because when it is gone you're on automatic, repeating something you've learned.

From "The Edge of Doubt" by Albert Huffstickler¹

In Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince* the eponymous child travels the universe and visits a series of planets to learn about the vagaries of adult behaviour. The sixth such planet was inhabited by an old gentleman who wrote voluminous books. He declares himself to be a geographer and he defines his occupation as that of "a learned man who knows where all the seas, rivers, towns, mountains and deserts are located".² (Saint-Exupéry, 2000) The prince is impressed, as he seems to have encountered a real profession at last, having visited the previous planets only to be disappointed. But on asking the geographer more factual questions about the planet that he inhabits the only retort he gets is "I can't tell". The boy remarks that this is an odd reply from a geographer and is then told, "It is not the geographer's job to go around counting off the towns, the rivers, the mountains, the seas, the oceans and the deserts. The geographer is far too important to go sauntering about. He does not leave his desk. There he sits and receives the explorers. He asks them questions, and notes down what they recollect from their travels." But he also believes that explorers are not to be trusted and have to be subject to an enquiry to establish their credentials, as they might be lying or even drunk. If they pass this hurdle they then have to furnish proof of their discoveries. The conversation continues with the prince telling of the flower that lives on his planet and to his astonishment the geographer states "We do not take note of flowers." The prince protests that they are prettier than anything else, but the geographer maintains they are not like mountains that stay established in one place and do not change, thereby making them worthy of mention because they are eternal, whereas a flower is ephemeral and dies.

The writers in this analysis of social and emotional education across our planet, as both explorers and educational geographers, exemplify this dilemma. Whatever happens in the classroom is ephemeral; it can only happen there and then with that particular combination of people and circumstances. We can take note of it and attempt to describe it. We can develop theoretical grounding for its practice and its antecedents, imply the outcomes and then seek to measure them. Other educators can try to replicate that particular lesson, as though it were a mountain, but the streams of time, cultural evolution and diversity declare its ephemeral nature. Our intellectual curiosity needs to preserve the world in aspic in order to dissect it and thus understand, knowing full well it will always be an incompleting task that is ultimately beyond us. "Look up at the sky.... And you will see how everything changes... And no grown-ups

will ever understand the significance of this!”³ (Saint-Exupéry, 2000) The beauty of the flower is in its very transcendence and that is analogous to the satisfying joy of educating and learning “If someone loves a star of which there is only one example among all the millions and millions of stars, that is enough to make him happy when he looks up at the night”.⁴ In the story the flower is threatened by a sheep, the very sheep the child in his wisdom and awareness of transience asked the writer to draw and create on their first encounter. “Here then is the great mystery. For you who love the little prince, as for me, nothing in the universe can be the same if somewhere –we do not know where– a sheep we have never met has or has not eaten a rose”.⁵ (Saint-Exupéry, 2000)

As we study and research social and emotional education we run the risk of either constructing our own inquisitive sheep that destroys the ephemeral beauty that it sees, or, of becoming a geographer, where only what is replicable or tactile can count as having any value. Explorers, too, can be drunk with enthusiasm and find only the products of their wishful thinking. The line between the two is narrow indeed. As educators we need to evaluate and analyse our

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practices and outcomes in order to gain a clearer picture, test our theoretical assumptions and to improve our schools. Furthermore what can be learnt in one situation can inform and be adapted for another through exchange of experience and deeper insights. In the research into Social and Emotional Education (SEE) we are touching on fundamental human values and expectations and therefore our enthusiasm for any seemingly effective approach should be tempered with careful consideration and an ethical perspective. Our initial publication, *Social and Emotional Education. An International Analysis*, as does this second one, gave a picture not only of schools, students, parents and teachers but also the cultural context within which they, as learning communities, lived and operated.

However one lesson we have been able to draw from all our work is that there is no recipe and that all our combined perspectives still only lead to a partial picture. “In the twentieth

century the specialists gathered around the cradle, and the child became a scientific object. The paediatrician's biological child has nothing to do with the psychologist's scientific child. Psychologists know nothing about children in institutional care and are astounded by the relativity of the historian's child".⁶ (Cyrulnic, 2009) We have to categorise in order to conceptualise - putting the world into nineteenth century natural history butterfly specimen drawers in a museum according to their perceived order of species and variations. Yet these distinctions are, in reality, false, as our world is an interconnected and interdependent metamorphosing muddle. In order to find the new connections that are relevant to our contemporary lives we have, in the art of education as well as in the art of being human, to be constantly creative and questioning.

As the world is being transformed around us so we also evolve. Childhood today is not the same experience as it was for previous generations. Implicit in this is that the institutions and facilities which society provides for the education of children should change too. Evolution, whether in the realm of nature around us, or within our species as human beings, progresses by fits and starts and not in a neat and comprehensible straight line, as life adapts itself to the challenges of its environment and reciprocally affects it. For instance a paper was published in the Proceedings of the Royal Society at the beginning of 2011 that reported that because of disturbance caused by the noise in the urban environment songbirds were evolving the techniques of their songs. Silvereyes, which have a wide repertoire and sing in sentences, have heightened the pitch of their tunes in urban settings from 40 decibels to 80, a significant change, and also slowed the pace so they could be more readily understood.⁷ (Sydney Morning Herald, 2011) However its country cousins have not needed to adjust in the same way. So the species eventually divides into new communities through their differing method of communicating. In our fast changing world it is not surprising that we can observe such changes in ourselves and in our societies too, and these changes deeply affect our children.

*Trends in Education 2010*⁸ (OECD, 2010) gives some telling insights into the possible ramifications of these changes. The greater urbanisation of humanity has potentially huge social, economic and cultural implications. It is expected that by 2050 around 70% of the world's population will live in cities, whereas in the last few years it has reached a record 50%. Inhabitants in large cities across the world will have more in common with each other than they will have with rural communities in their own country. Alongside this the exponential development in modern technology gives us ease of communication across the globe. We seem to possess the world in our pockets. This allows increasing interaction, collaboration and dissemination of information as well as creating new areas of creativity, but it also speeds up the pace of life. OECD countries find themselves with an ageing population because of an

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increased life expectancy as well as lower birth rates and both have an impact on public expenditure that can lead to constraints on the educational budget due to significant increases in pension and health costs.

In most OECD countries income inequality is on the increase, as is relative poverty and the number of households characterised by child poverty. The negative impact that this has on childhood well-being is well documented. In these 'western' countries the economy is increasingly knowledge-intensive and developing countries with their relatively young and dynamic populations take on more and more of the actual production of goods. Women are much better qualified than a generation ago and have in fact become a majority in completing secondary and tertiary education. With the growth of the norm that both parents are economically active there is less time to spend with children within the family and many children live with one parent or in patchwork families with a consequent effect on the child's social and psychological development. Rates of child obesity are going up. This effect is exemplified in a U.K study of the physical condition of ten year olds conducted by Essex University and carried out over the ten year period of 1998–2008. The results showed that in that period of ten years there was a decline of 27% in the number of sit ups that the ten year olds could do, as well as a fall in arm strength of 26% and a 7% drop in grip strength. Whereas one in 20 could not hold their own weight when hanging from wall bars in 1998, this increased to one in 10 by 2008.⁹ (Cohen et al, 2011) There has been an increase in the number of children being treated for mental and behavioural disorders. *"We should wonder why depression has become a disease. It is a disease of society that is looking desperately for happiness, which we cannot catch. And so people collapse into themselves"*.¹⁰ (Bruckner, 2011) Simultaneously the expectation placed on children to do well academically has also intensified and educational policies in many countries are geared to achieving this. Niels Bohr, the Danish physicist, famously stated, *"Prediction is very difficult, especially about the future."* Of course wariness is needed when extrapolating these trends. Nevertheless, some of their implications are with us now.

The present OECD General Secretary, Angel Gurría, pointed out in a speech given to the Educational Round Table at UNESCO headquarters in 2009, that we are currently facing the greatest job crisis of our lives, especially for young people. *“Our economic growth is increasingly driven by innovation, making skills obsolete at a much faster pace than before – The response lies in education. The key to success is no longer simply whether you can reproduce something you have learned, but whether you can extrapolate from what you know and apply your knowledge in a novel and changing setting”*.¹¹ (Gurría, 2009) Conventional education in schools has used methods that break problems down into manageable parts and have taught students how to solve each section individually. Modern economies will require a synthesising of different fields of knowledge and the ability to make connections between ideas that had previously seemed unrelated. The implication is that teachers will have to increasingly collaborate across disciplines, thereby transforming the school, and children and students will require new learning techniques. Through sources such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS)) *“...we have also learned that change is possible ... by moving from uniformity to embrace diversity and individualising learning”*.¹² (Gurría, 2009) Although this is a liberal market-economy orientated outlook, based on valuing human beings as producers and consumers as well as individuals, it is nevertheless yet another influential voice added to a growing sense that educational practices have to change. Looking at the uncertain cultural and economic environment into which we are now being plunged it is not surprising that greater consideration is being given to the salutogenetic role of schools. We can see greater bio-distress on the horizon and our children need to be prepared for such times. Yet such changes involve risk, as Gurría also acknowledges *“Breaking the status quo is not easy Overcoming active resistance to change in education policy is one of our central challenges”*.¹³ (Gurría, 2009)

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In times of uncertainty we become more aware of human resilience, whether social or individual. Resilience has been used mainly as a term to designate children who have grown up in unpropitious circumstances or have undergone traumatic experiences and who have a set of qualities that have enabled them to find a process of successful adaptation and transformation in the face of such risk and adversity. Nevertheless it is a human propensity that we all have to a greater or lesser degree, “*We are all born with an innate capacity for resilience, by which we are able to develop social competence, problem solving skills, a critical consciousness, autonomy, and a sense of purpose*”.¹⁴ (Benard, 1995)

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Decades of research have shown that there are common characteristics of family, school and community environments that can provide protective processes or are factors that enable children to manifest resilience. These are: caring and supportive relationships, positive and high expectations and opportunities for meaningful participation in the making of decisions that affect them. Other factors that support resilience play a role in the early years of a child’s life, such as having a mother with no long term health problems, positive parental attitudes towards seeking advice and support, an enriching home learning environment, living in a household with at least one adult in full-time work and satisfaction with local services and neighbourhood.¹⁵(Kelly, 2010) Although many of these factors need to be there in the early years when the child should be warmly ensconced in their family, schools can also play a role in building resilience through creating an environment of caring personal relationships. However, “*social and cultural factors that play a deciding role in determining what are good or bad outcomes, make the notion of resilience a contextually specific and culturally biased construct*”.¹⁶ (Unger, 2003) To build resilient schools requires that all the teachers make or are given the time to develop professional relationships with other members of the school community as a whole, and a fundamental recognition that each situation is unique.

Resilience refers to personal features that determine how adversity and stressful conditions are dealt with. More resilient individuals are more likely to respond to adversity in ways that

are less damaging to their physical and mental health. Boris Cyrulnik suggests that an apt metaphor for resilience is knitting. “*The ability to knit together a feeling of selfhood appears to be a major factor in the aptitude for resilience*”.¹⁷ (Cyrulnik, 2009) and he states categorically, “*Resilience is a mesh not a substance*”.¹⁸(Cyrulnik, 2009) Evidence of how such a fabric can be woven comes from programmes such as ‘The Song Room’ in Australia, which is a project that has effectively supported the development of resilience in socially and economically disadvantaged children by using the arts within school settings. An evaluation report by the highly respected Professor Brian Caldwell, and launched by the Commonwealth Minister of Education in Canberra, has highlighted the difference that the provision of an arts education can have on student engagement with their studies and schooling, as well as in helping to develop happier, well-rounded students. Students that participated in The Song Room programme longer-term showed significantly higher grades in their academic subjects (English, mathematics, science and technology, and human society) than those who had not participated; achieved significantly higher results in reading and overall literacy; had significantly higher attendance rates; and were more likely to be at the top two levels of the Social-Emotional Wellbeing Index in respect of the indicators of resilience, positive social skills, positive work management and engagement skills. The research also showed that schools participating in Song Room programmes had better school attendance rates than non-participating schools, with a 65% lower rate of absenteeism for students who had participated in The Song Room programmes.¹⁹ (Caldwell et al, 2011) Through using the art of pedagogy as well as the arts themselves children’s lives can be transformed. “*The point I am trying to make, the whole point of my hypothesis, is that the work of art is not an analogy – it is the essential act of transformation, not merely the pattern of mental evolution, but the vital process itself*”.²⁰ (Read,

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1951). Art is not an extra to be added to a school curriculum, so that the students can either just relax or have a good time between the lessons that “really count”. Rather it is a prerequisite to any balanced attitude to life and healthy living. For children it is an essential factor of their experience of growing that enables them to develop and change towards finding the sources of their own well being, physical and mental health and the ability to live harmoniously alongside others.

"I believe that art can play –and indeed has an ethical responsibility to do so– a more active and critical role in representing and questioning the complexities that are part of the global world and, although it does not have the power to change anything, it has the capacity and the presence to refocus issues and propose reorientations to society".²¹ (Power, 2009) Joseph Beuys once said that "Creativity is national income" and in an age of economic turbulence and uncertainty with soaring youth unemployment, job insecurity and blighted career prospects we should be turning our attention to how to prepare children and young people for such a world. "As the future unfolds, schools will emerge as critical sites for promoting health, environmental vitality, academic growth, student well-being, and connections across communities... Creating resilient schools will require educators, families and other citizens to develop new capacities".²² (KnowledgeWorks, 2008) Schools, too, can be resilient organisations as they acknowledge and develop social and emotional education, for teachers and children alike, and explore the research on which it is based. It underpins the traditional knowledge curriculum "Learning cognitive and emotional self-regulation helps young children with other activities and is proving a better predictor of later academic success than IQ tests"²³ (Prince et al, 2009) and it is allied to a respect for the inner life of each individual child. The schools of the future will have to meet the new world challenges of responsive flexibility, enhanced collaboration and transparency through their own methods of innovation, adaption and openness. Health, learning and the environment are converging in our school communities and creating unprecedented challenges for all involved. 'The general conclusion is that education can certainly help improve health behaviours and outcomes. This can be done by raising cognitive, social and emotional skills, and early launching of these competencies would not only be an efficient way of improving health but also an effective way of reducing health inequalities when targeted at disadvantaged groups".²⁴ (Miyamoto et al, 2010)

Educational institutions that are based on the industrial or factory model inherited from the 19th century, with their top-down hierarchical structure, will clearly be found wanting as the movement towards a more creative culture in schools gather pace. Most innovations that really meet the needs of today's learners are likely to take place outside traditional institutions. As governments across the world use the financial crisis as a pretext for increasing the focus in education on effectiveness of student outcomes, reduce autonomy and increase privatisation²⁵ (Douterlunge et al, 2010) it should be apparent that these are only short term measures that mask the fundamental changes in educational practice that are really needed. The ideals of social cohesion then run the risk of becoming empty promises, adding to the general cynicism. "Unless we can begin to see that our inherent discontent and drive for increasing competence run up against our interdependence or connectedness, we humans may not survive the next millennium".²⁶ (Young-Eisendrath, 1996) The clock cannot be turned back. The realm of education has become com-



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petitive, especially between nations. This is understandable in a climate of economic turbulence and anxiety. Yet our contention is that this can also be a disservice if we are serious about creating an education that provides sustainability and is primarily concerned with the well being of our future citizens. The opportunity could be used in a more constructive and far-seeing way and our two publications highlight how this could be done

The texts in this second International Analysis survey the situation in a further five countries where educators are seeking new approaches to social and emotional education. This is an area occupied by pioneers who are searching for what is relevant to our times, and who inevitably achieve differing levels of success, due to a variety of cultural factors. But since 2008, when the first Botin Foundation International Analysis was published, there has been a growing body of evidence that strongly supports our common assumption that a creative and integrated approach to social and emotional education can serve the wellbeing of the child more extensively than the traditional models have done. The final chapter in this publication on the evaluation results of the Botin Foundation’s Responsible Education programme fully supports this approach and shows remarkable benefits, within only three years of its initial implementation. Worldwide educational research is coming to similar conclusions. These results in Cantabria are in line with the previously mentioned Song Room outcomes and are also to be found in *Reinvesting in Arts Education* (PCAH, 2011)²⁷ where findings of neuroscience using advanced techniques are cited that show that: music training is closely correlated with the development of phonological awareness, which is an important predictor of reading skills; children who were motivated to practice a specific art form develop improved attention and also improve general intelligence; links have been found between high levels of music training and the ability to manipulate information in both working memory and long-term memory ‘Policymakers and civic and business leaders, as reflected in several recent high level task force reports, are increasingly recognizing the potential role of the arts in spurring innovation, providing teachers with more effective classroom strategies, engaging students in learning, and creating a climate of high performance in schools’.²⁸

When Saint-Exupéry was asked how the child-hero had entered his life, he said that he had looked down on what he thought was a blank piece of paper to find a tiny figure. ‘*I asked him who he was.*’ he explained. ‘*I’m the Little Prince*’ came the reply.²⁹ (Schiff, 1996) When we look at our educational practices do we have the courage to see them as a blank piece of paper and allow our imaginations to work so that we hear what the children and young people of today and of the future actually need in school, rather than living with presupposed and anachronistic models from the past? To do this we have to accept our unfinishedness as teachers, educators and carers, as we live and work with children who experience more fully the unfinishedness of their human nature than we, as adults, do.

Man’s biggest wealth
is his incompleteness.
With this I am wealthy.
Words that accept me the way
I am – I don’t accept.

Forgive me.
But I need to be others.
I intend to revitalize man
By using butterflies.

From “Mist Biography” by Manoel de Barros³⁰

For children the joy of exploration, learning, curiosity, wonder and awe are still fresh and pervasive as long as their environment is conducive to their healthy growth and development. Whether we create butterflies or sheep is immaterial as long as when working with and alongside our children we can keep our imaginations alive. Scandalously for such a century as ours,

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with all our immense capacities, not all children have anywhere near this level of good fortune and suffer abuse, deprivation and gross exploitation. Yet there are grounds for hope as the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals has shown, by awakening the international community to the fact that improvement is possible through united action. The number of the world's children in primary education has increased from 84% in 1999 to 90% in 2008. The number of children of primary school age who were out of school fell from 106 million in 1999 to 67 million in 2009, which is a net increase of 7 percentage points despite an overall increase in the number of children in this age group. But in the latter part of this period the rate of progress has slowed, making the goal of universal primary education by 2015 a dim prospect.³¹ Child mortality for those who are under five years of age has been reduced by 33% in the last ten years, in other words 12,000 fewer children are dying each day.³² Although the results so far are not all that were originally hoped for this does show we can improve the lot of our children by working across the historical barriers of culture, ethnicity, and prejudice. We cannot expect an ideal world but we can certainly work to make it better. *“What we are awkwardly groping for today is an art of living that includes an acknowledgement of adversity but does not fall into the abyss of renunciation: an art of enduring that allows us to exist with suffering and against it”*.³³ (Bruckner, 2010) And the common sense place to start is with childhood. This is not only a matter of health-enhancing and fulfilling education but of human rights - the right to develop human capabilities that encompass the individual power to reflect and be mindful, to make choices, to seek a voice in society and enjoy a better life.

The United Nations officially published general comments on article 29 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child where they state that this article *“insists upon a holistic approach to education... that... reflect an appropriate balance between promoting the physical, mental, spiritual and emotional aspects of education ... The overall objective is to maximise the child's ability and opportunity to participate fully and responsibly in a free society. It should be emphasised that the type of teaching that is focussed primarily on accumulation of knowledge, promoting competition and leading to an excessive burden of work on children, may seriously hamper the harmonious development of the child to the fullest potential of his or her abilities and talents.”* Our work in this publication, as in the former one, is a celebration of the initiative and endeavours of many colleagues and parents who think along these lines and support each other with new questions, challenges and visions. We look forward to working with the growing number of like-minded people with goodwill for all the world's children who are willing to join us in this necessary reformation of educational practice on our own planet.

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