

# WHY TEACHERS IN

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*"This is a manifesto for change—a demand for another way to help teachers grow—a rationale for the development of teachers centers in the U S "*

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JOHN COE, the perceptive, articulate head of primary education in the County of Oxfordshire, is fond of telling the story of Edith Moorhouse, one of the great, early leaders of the movement toward informal education in that lovely county, sitting evenings at her home with a small group of primary headmistresses and teachers—knitting and talking about children. There were no elaborate lists of goals and objectives to be achieved, deadlines to be met, nor tests to be given. Rather, there was good talk about children, how they learn and grow, and what this might mean to teachers.

Teacher education in Britain is obviously much, much more than Edith Moorhouse sitting, knitting, and talking with a group of teachers. The British have their teacher training colleges and their university departments of education, complete with re-

quired courses and electives, papers and examinations, "passes" and "failures."

Nevertheless, it is of the greatest importance that we recognize the qualities of informality, equality and mutual respect, intimacy, warmth, and responsiveness that were present in Edith's Oxfordshire cottage during these meetings. They do, in my judgment, symbolize some major differences between the direction teacher education has taken in England and in the U.S.

Clearly, we see the origins of the "teachers center" in these meetings. Similar events were occurring in Leicestershire, in the West Riding of Yorkshire, and elsewhere in Britain, despite the existence of "conventional" modes of teacher education. Why this happened (and is happening) in Britain on a reasonably large scale while this movement remains in its infancy in the U.S. can only be explained by examining a number of other differences in the way the educational enterprise is conducted in Britain.

## Change Begins in the Local School

For example, the British "Schools Council for Curriculum and Examinations," now generally referred to as "The Schools Council" was organized in 1964—about the same time that various American curriculum reform projects were being funded by the

<sup>1</sup> This article is drawn from Vincent R. Rogers, "A Manifesto for Change," which appeared originally in Marilyn Hapgood *Supporting the Learning Teacher* New York Agathon Press, 1975 pp 1-10

# CENTERS THE U.S.?

VINCENT R. ROGERS\*

federal government in what we refer to as the "curriculum revolution" of the 60's. Nowhere can the contrast between British and American approaches to curricular and methodological change be contrasted more sharply. The Schools Council began with the basic assumption that each school should and would take full responsibility for the development of its own curriculum and pedagogy—based essentially on the needs of the children in a given, local community. The Council would give every possible assistance in the task, but change begins in the local school. The contrast with American approaches during the same period needs no elaboration here—the story is all too familiar to most of us.

If curricular and methodological change are largely a *local* responsibility in Britain, so also are they almost exclusively the province of the *professional* educational community. The general public, the universities, the educational publishing industry all played a relatively minor role in the evolution of British primary education as we know it today. This is not to say that parents, publishers, and university scholars had *no* influence on the shape of primary education in Britain, rather, their influence was (and is)

minimal by American standards. And, it is still safe to say that *local professionals*—for better or for worse—bear the burden of developing and improving primary education.

Curricular and methodological change came (and continue to come) then in Britain, on a local level fostered and inspired by professionals. We must also keep very clearly in mind that when we say "professionals" we include in the most significant possible way the classroom teacher. The materials developed in the most famous of the Schools Council projects, the Nuffield Maths and Science programs are "cases in point" (It should be made clear at once that *teachers* played a major role in the development of these programs as members of development teams.) These materials are designed to stimulate teachers—to help them grow, become more flexible, more spontaneous, and more responsible for making day-to-day curricular and methodological decisions. The British have faith in the classroom teacher as the ultimate change agent, she or he is the *sine qua non* of meaningful, lasting change. This, too, contrasts considerably with generally accepted strategies for change in American schools.

Hand-in-hand with the development of a truly professional role for classroom teachers is the evolution of a similar role for the British "Head Teacher" or principal. Clearly, a good deal of the autonomy and flexibility of many classroom teachers stems from parallel freedoms (and responsibilities) for heads. As most Americans know, there are few citywide or countywide curricular or methodological decisions made that bind all of a district's primary schools to a given procedure or set of materials. The head is expected to take the lead in these areas in her or his school—and most of the heads who have provided the magnificent leadership we have seen so often in Britain's finest informal primary schools have utilized *their* freedom to bolster the role of the teacher as a responsible, flexible, decision-making *professional*.

## Attitudes and Practices Vary

Perhaps a more subtle, yet no less significant difference between educational tradi-

\*Vincent R. Rogers, Professor of Education, University of Connecticut, Storrs

tion in Britain and America involves what the British would call the "pastoral function" To quote Tim McMullen,

Parents may cavil at masters' interference and excess of authority, masters may object to being involved in burdensome trivia about clothes and manners and hair and behavior on buses whatever the objections, whatever the shortcomings, the fact remains that the intention of English schooling is more whole, complete, and inclusive than that of any other country.<sup>2</sup>

This concern quite possibly accounts for the willingness of many British primary school teachers to take a broad view of education, valuing the total growth of the child, and placing much emphasis on the role of art, music, dance, poetry, and drama—as well as the "3 R's." Similarly, this may explain the British preference for small schools where teachers may get to know children (and each other) well, where there is much *human* response to children's problems and needs and where the possibility for assessing and aiding the total growth of the child exists more fully than it does in what the British sometimes call "the American factory schools."

In any case, the establishment view of education in Britain is child-centered and open. The Plowden Report gives a semi-official blessing to the sorts of changes that have been growing gradually in British schools for 30 years. An open teacher may be encountering difficulty with a conservative head—but her or his battle is somewhat less lonely than it would be in most American schools, because it is widely acknowledged that primary schools in Britain *should* be more child-centered, more informal. Clearly, this gives a kind of support and direction to primary teachers in Britain that is sadly lacking in our own schools.

These attitudes toward children, learning, curriculum, the role of the teacher, and the role of the head all contributed toward—indeed almost dictated that alternate modes of teacher education be developed in those

areas where child-centered, informal education was valued in the schools. One result was the development of the Teachers Center in Britain as a viable, powerful, and effective force in the professional and personal lives of many British teachers.

As these attitudes toward children, learning, and teachers developed and took hold in Britain, a considerably different view dominated (and probably still dominates) American education. It would be difficult to be inclusive here but let me suggest the following as attitudes, beliefs, and practices that appear to contrast sharply with British views and procedures:

1 Despite talk of local initiatives and decentralization, we tend to make educational decisions on a *systemwide* (indeed, sometimes on a statewide) basis rather than on a truly local level. We appear convinced that change can take place on a massive scale, and we still talk of "changing the schools" in Washington, D C., or Chicago, or New York. The federal government has never grasped the idea that universal or monolithic approaches to any educational problem are seldom appropriate for *all* the children in a given community, and the principle of localism is simply not widely supported in the U S.

2 American teachers and administrators are far more vulnerable to outside, non-professional pressures than are their British counterparts. The pressures may come from political groups, churches, or other special interests as well as from the massive American education industry of textbook publishers and manufacturers of educational materials and equipment.

3 We hold greatly differing views of the role of teacher and principal in our society. Teachers are not encouraged to act in truly *professional* ways, as decision makers and agents for curricular change and adaptation on a local level. Therefore, many American teachers seem to lack the confidence, the positive self-image, if you will, of their British counterparts. They are often told they are not very good—not very able—and many come to believe it.

<sup>2</sup> Unpublished report from British Schools Council, June 1967



An art specialist with the Advisory and Learning Exchange in Washington, D.C., introduces a group of teachers to graphic ways of teaching weaving to young children. This workshop was conducted at the Advisory, which serves teachers in public and private schools in the District of Columbia. The Advisory is supported by the Ford Foundation as well as by local foundations.

Our principals do not generally have the power to behave autonomously in their schools as do British heads. Neither do they tend to see themselves as *educational* leaders; rather, they most often function as school managers, leaving truly professional decisions to those higher up in the administrative hierarchy.

4. America's Schools and Colleges of Education are dominated by essentially behavioristic educational psychologists who tend to hold a rather narrow view of the learning process. American students at either the graduate or undergraduate level are unlikely to study (unless they do so on their own) the views of Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, Erik Erikson, and others. Clearly, the general acceptance of such approaches as performance contracting, programmed learning, and behavior modification in our schools is evidence of the powerful influence of the behaviorists.

5. Over the years we have built a vast educational bureaucracy. We have curriculum directors and coordinators, specialists of

all kinds, assistant superintendents and vice-principals, etc., etc. Clearly, some of these positions are staffed by very able people. Nevertheless, the overall effect has been the crippling of truly local initiative, the development of a subject-centered, atomized approach to education, and the creation of a largely authoritarian approach to the running of schools in most communities.

6. Finally, teacher education in this country seems to reflect many of the problems outlined here. Surely it is authoritarian in nature, bureaucratic, rather narrow in its educational view, and certainly unresponsive to the wishes of many of its constituents. There is a great deal of "change" taking place in teacher education today in the U.S.—but most of that change is based on quite conventional views of the purpose of schools and schooling and how children learn. Change is a *good* thing, then, if it does not challenge the dominant view of education. If it does, it is unlikely that the maverick program or project will be supported by those in decision-making positions.

## Two Approaches Are Illustrated

One might examine, as an illustration, the widely heralded (federally and establishment supported) competency-based approaches to teacher education in the U.S. At Weber College in Ogden, Utah, undergraduates are expected not only to acquire credits, but to demonstrate *competence* in their chosen field (an objective that few would challenge). While students at Weber do, of course, have opportunities for experiences in schools with real children and teachers, and while they do occasionally work in groups and presumably engage in dialogue with their teachers and other students, much of the emphasis on the Weber program is on the students' work in Weber Individualized Learning Kits (WILKITS). Each WILKIT includes the following:

Title—which identifies the topic.

Introduction—which provides the setting for the topic.

Content—which identifies the problems or considerations to be dealt with.

Pre-assessment—which assists the student to know his or her already attained level of performance.



Children play and learn in a loft constructed in the Advisory and Learning Exchange in Washington, D.C. The loft was built during a workshop as part of equipment for the classroom which would promote cognitive development in children.

Behavioral Objectives—which identify the behavior sought and at what level of proficiency

Learning Experiences—which are suggested or required for meeting the behavioral objectives

Self Evaluation—which helps the student assess his or her progress

Proficiency Assessment—which is used to determine if the behavioral objectives have been met.<sup>3</sup>

The following are sample behavioral objectives extracted from viewing WILKITS:

1. Demonstrate your comprehension of structural analysis skills by scoring eighty or more points on the *Structural Analysis Test*. (W-31 Structural Analysis Skills)

2. Display comprehension of the four functions which aid us in the classification and understanding of the factors which account for motivation, as measured by a teacher-designed examination with a proficiency level of 80 percent. (W-13 Motivation and Learning)

3. Analyze the relationship to retention of recall, recognition, relearning, interference, nature of the stimulus, and intent to remember, as measured by a teacher-made test with 80 percent proficiency. (W-8 Transfer of Learning)

4. Respond to the group interaction of a classroom meeting in which you will assume the leader role, as measured by a 75 percent agreement with the faculty advisor on a teacher-designed Summary of Group Interaction. (W-21 Classroom Group Meetings)

The total program for prospective elementary school teachers is as follows:

	Quarter Hours
Education 195, <sup>4</sup> Introductory Field Experience _____	1
WILKIT: Orientation (W-3) _____	3
Education 300, Fundamental Skills for Teachers _____	3
WILKIT: Self-Concept (W-12) _____	

<sup>3</sup> Caseel Burke, *The Individualized, Competency-Based System of Teacher Education at Weber State College*, Washington, D.C.: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 1972, pp. 11-12.

<sup>4</sup> A "pre-professional" requirement.

Education 324, Basic Skills for Elementary Teachers	4	WILKITS W-57 Tutoring Techniques W-26 Reading Study Techniques W-35 Handwriting W-70 Media Equipment Operation W-14 School Health W-5 Growth and Development (May be waived upon successful completion of Family Life 150)	W-60 Media Production W-22 Purposes and Methods of Evaluation W-19 Professional Responsibilities W-37 Listening W-23 Art (May be waived upon successful completion of Art 250) W-39 The Language of Music (May be waived upon successful completion of Music 320)
Education 325, Elementary School Curriculum I	6	WILKITS W-27 Reading Readiness W-28 Nature and Instructional Implications of Reading W-29 Reading Comprehension W-30 Basal Approach to Teaching Reading W-31 Phonic Analysis Skills W-32 Structural Analysis Skills W-33 Dictionary Skills W-36 Spelling W-38 Oral and Written Communication	Education 488, Teaching Practicum in Elementary Education WILKITS W-4 Classroom Management W-13 Motivation and Learning W-21 Classroom Group Meetings W-10 Teaching and Learning in the Three Domains
Education 326, Elementary School Curriculum II	6	WILKITS W-6 Elementary School Mathematics I W-9 Elementary School Mathematics II W-42 Inquiry in Elementary Science W-43 Organizing and Planning for Teaching Elementary Science W-50 Social Studies in the Elementary Schools W-54 Elementary Social Studies Instruction W-40 Music for Children	Education 498, Synthesis of the Elementary Teaching Program WILKITS W-8 Transfer of Learning W-16 Backgrounds of Educational Practice W-17 Professional Relationships W-18 Professional Rights Leadership or Service Practicum Prescribed Remediation or Optional WILKITS Total Professional
Education 360, Instructional Skills for Elementary Teachers	4	WILKITS W-7 Principles of Reinforcement W-20 Instructional Resources Evaluation and Use of Instructional Media	Given the framework, the educational view of those working in teacher education at Weber, the program is consistent and logical. It also suggests ways in which other colleges of education which share these views may make their own programs more precise and more individualized (in terms of pace or rate of learning), and perhaps, more thorough.
			We might contrast this approach, however, with excerpts from a description of a workshop for teachers conducted by Sybil Marshall in Philadelphia last year
			Geoff, working in the gym, sometimes with and sometimes without music, began our first sessions on movement. He began with a ball for everyone to bounce and then asked us to

move around the room as we bounced it. Then to share a ball with someone else and then to move without the ball. The ease with which workshoppers began to move was a happy contrast to the conspicuous inhibitions of a few summers ago. Perhaps it is that many of these people had already had some experience with movement. Perhaps it is that our society has, in the space of a few years, come to value movement more and inhibitions less. Certainly part of what was working was that Geoff was very good at what he was doing and his calm sureness had a relaxing effect.

Ewart, who, among other things, is a professional illustrator, welcomed a group into the art room and invited them to do a representation of something from the riddles. Tools and materials were available in profusion: tempera, pastels, tiles, linoleum, fabric, twine, yarn, glass, plaster, paper of all sorts, styrofoam, wire, wood, cellophane, brushes, cutters, needles, cloth, screens—the ultimate remove from “a bit of rag on a stick.” The contrast is interesting. The bit-of-rag approach had put the emphasis on the media by limiting the options and thereby enabled everyone to have an experience with one particular technique. Sybil’s and Ewart’s approach had made no mention of media, technique, or materials although all had been made available in profuse variety. The emphasis had been on the message and the assumption had been that the message was sufficiently motivating to permit or force the workshoppers to assert themselves in spite of the techniques. Evidently, the inspiration had been sufficient the work flowed quickly. By the end of the first day everyone had produced something. The diversity was impressive.<sup>5</sup>

Clearly, our first illustration (Weber) deals with an entire program, while our second illustration describes an isolated, month-long summer workshop. Nevertheless, contrasts in both purpose and procedures are striking.

The conclusion I have come to upon examining both conventional and innovative (in the Weber College sense) approaches to teacher education that dominate in the U.S. is that, for many of us, both approaches leave much to be desired. We need, I think, teacher education programs at all levels that

<sup>5</sup> John Harkins *Bridge Building*. Philadelphia Friends Committee on Education (1515 Cherry St., Philadelphia, PA 19102), 1972 n.p.

1 Allow for the total personal development of the individual as a human being and as a professional. There is more to becoming a good teacher than the accumulation of a set of skills. Teachers need to express—to feel—to write—to dance—to move—to create—in nonthreatening, unpressured situations. Teachers need to rid themselves of the idea that “I cannot do therefore I teach.” Good teaching is *doing* in a hundred different ways. This clearly is tied up with the almost desperate need for teachers to develop self-trust, self-respect, and confidence in themselves as teachers and as people.

2 Allow ample time for teachers to *experience*—not merely “learn about.” In Art Combs’ words,

This calls for the development of a *personal* philosophy rather than learning-about philosophy, which is a very different thing. If it were true that knowledge and philosophy made you a good teacher, then professors of philosophy would be our very best teachers—and everybody knows that is not true. So we have to concentrate on helping students *develop* a philosophy instead of learning about philosophy.<sup>6</sup>

It follows, then, that teachers need to feel comfortable with materials, to explore new environments, to develop talents and interests, to examine and reexamine purposes, to stimulate and be stimulated by others, to have the opportunity for study and sustained involvement, and to be constantly “in process,” questioning and being involved inwardly and outwardly in dialogue.

This, it seems to me, is a manifesto for change—a demand for another way to help teachers grow—a rationale for the development of teachers centers in the U.S. Such centers will and should take many forms as they evolve in the U.S., but evolve they must, for there is little sustenance for many of our most thoughtful teachers among traditional forms of pre- and in-service education. □

<sup>6</sup> Arthur Combs *On Interpreting and Meeting Standards for Teacher Education*. Washington, D.C.: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 1971 (Mimeoed.) p. 3

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