INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGIES – RESTORING AGENCY AND VOICE TO THE LEARNER

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1. INTRODUCTION

Understanding pedagogy involves more than describing specific teaching methods. It involves reflection on

- the complex interrelationship between teachers' preferred methods (resulting from an interaction between teacher identity and personality and a tradition);
- pupil identities, attitudes and desires;
- contexts (that of the school, and the wider social and cultural context);
- the curriculum, in terms of both content and values.

For schools serving communities marginalised by poverty or racial / cultural / religious difference, pedagogy involves understanding the relationship between the identities and 'habitas' of the children as developed outside of school, and their experience of school learning. This relationship is problematic for many reasons, which this article attempts to explore.

The article will focus particularly on concepts of *voice* and *agency*. These involve, of course, issues of curriculum – what is most important to learn – as well as epistemology and pedagogy – how do we know, and how do we come to know. There is very little tradition in Britain of teachers consulting with learners about what they will learn, and it is worth recalling the Danish Ministry of Education's (1995) advice to teachers who would like to write a plan for the whole year – that it is very efficient to plan ahead like this, but not to allow it to interfere with your negotiations with your class! The present article, however, is mainly focused on pedagogical questions, though including practices which do involve decisions from the learner.

The passive tradition is still very strong in schools (Freire's concept of 'banking'). Teachers talk, children listen - or maybe they don't. Teachers ask all the questions, and there is rarely any real discussion. (See Edwards and Furlong 1978:10-32; Barnes 1969: 9-78; Barnes 1976; Sinclair and Coulthard 1975; Stubbs 1976) Learning is more often about memorising than thinking. Attempts at reform in the 1970s and 80s have largely been undermined by the policies of later British governments, but the struggle continues today.

The dominant pedagogical culture in schools amounts to a denial of voice and agency. Children never stop asking questions at home but rarely ask questions when they go to school (Stubbs 1983:114-126). Their role is to answer the teacher's questions, which are really quite strange:

> '*Miss Davis, she complain about Ned not answerin' back. He says she ask dumb questions she already know 'bout.' (mother to researcher, from Heath 1983; see also Stubbs 1983: 126; Barnes 1969: 24-26)*

The patterns of exchange are generally constrained by the pattern known as IRF or IRE (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975)[1]. The teacher *initiates*, a pupil *responds*, the teacher closes the exchange by '*feedback'* or '*evaluation'* (sometimes simply repetition) before opening another IRF triad. If another pupil attempts to intervene after R, this is regarded as out of order. Even when a teacher declares a 'class discussion', the speaking rarely moves around the pupils, and pupils' contributions are generally framed by the teacher's questions. Except when working in small groups, pupils rarely take initiatives.

The lack of agency can be best understood by examining the traditional economy of schoolwork. I hope this is not too much of a caricature. Generally, the pupils are told what to do, how to do it, and how long to do it for. At the end of this time, they hand over a product (generally a piece of writing) to the teacher. A few days later, the teacher gives the pupil a mark or grade. This is rather similar to the alienated labour of the factory: the worker is told what to do, and how to do it, and for how many hours, then hands over the product, receiving a payment in return. The product, in the school and in the factory, is experienced not as *use value* but only as *exchange value*. The producer has little control over what is produced or how. Although, in schools, the product is ostensibly a form of written *communication*, there is no sense of real audience. Some school reforms have of course tried to change this, for example the replacement of practical training in woodwork or needlework skills in schools by Design and Technology, in which the student has to take design and construction decisions based on identifying the potential user's needs, and finally evaluate the product on that basis (Eggleston 1992). However, most areas of the school curriculum are not like that. This basic economy of schoolwork is reinforced by forms of assessment, as summative tests rather than formative feedback. Becoming more 'effective' (i.e. efficient, in the short term, and based on measurable performances) can reinforce this.

Another normative feature of school learning is the privileging of abstract reasoning over thinking which is experientially grounded. This is not to suggest that practical activity does not take place in schools, but it is often of low status, and seen in terms of trained actions rather than as situated learning. At the same time, forms of learning in more cognitive or 'academic' subjects often involve high levels of verbal explanations with very little experiential involvement or use of other sensory channels. (This will be an important issue in the later section 'Theories of poverty and low achievement.')

I would like to argue that this basic culture of learning is likely to have a particularly damaging effect on students from marginalised communities. If the student (through life in a family and neighbourhood, poor housing or health, knowledge of the parent's employment conditions or low wages, or encountering officialdom) has an experience of powerlessness and frustration and low status, then facing a similar experience at school - of loss of *voice* and *agency* – could be very negative. It is quite different for children from professional families; even if they are placed in a passive role at school, they know that academic success is the price for a good job and lifestyle. In the short term too, it is likely that these 'middle class' pupils will receive more positive feedback, because their teachers recognise the families' culture as worthwhile. It is validated in the school as cultural *capital* (Bourdieu 1983*),* not seen as the product of a dysfunctional neighbourhood which is lacking in social capital – a semi-criminal or lazy or immoral urban jungle which often acquires mythical status in the collective imagination of the staffroom. At the same time, forms of manual activity in poorer

[1] It would be interesting to discover which countries this applies to. In a recent visit to Norway, I found more dialogic and democratic patterns of classroom language.

communities - and indeed forms of everyday informal learning which are often more 'situated' than traditional school learning – result in a cultural gap which the school may find it difficult to bridge.

Drawing on case studies of successful schools serving very poor communities, this article will describe teaching and learning which breaks this pattern. In the ten case study schools which I studied for 'The Power to Learn' (Wrigley 2000), I found many rich examples of social constructivist lessons which restore a sense of agency and voice to the learners.

Such schools are quite rare, however. Despite fifteen years in which a particular version of 'school improvement' has been supported by governments in England, at the highest level - Michael Barber, and then David Hopkins, have held senior government posts - the gap in achievement between richer and poorer students remains very wide[2].

First, however, an outline of policy trends on teaching and learning, based on a hegemonic model of school improvement in the particular context of England. It is hoped that readers will reflect on whether similar tendencies are at work in their different contexts, and on whether such policies and understandings are influencing other education systems through such globalising agencies as OECD or the World Bank. These considerations would be an interesting topic for other articles.

2. THE INFLUENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS RESEARCH ON OFFICIAL SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

A surprising feature of much School Improvement literature from England, until recently[3], has been its neglect of pedagogy. Although teaching and learning are always declared to be important, they are rarely theorised or discussed seriously. In particular, unlike Spanish writings (for example, in Murillo and Muñoz-Repiso eds. 2002), there is a limited understanding of pedagogy in schools serving marginalised communities.

One brief example will serve to illustrate this. The influential collection *Success against the odds* (National Commission on Education, 1996) includes a clear description of teaching and learning in only one of the ten case studies, that by MacBeath. In most of the other case studies, there is only a vague and tokenistic explanation ('Teaching and learning cannot be characterised as either traditional or progressive. A range of methods are used.') or a focus on the *management* of teaching and learning, such as staff development, lesson observation and co-operative planning.[4]

In place of theory, policy makers and officials[5] have drawn from school effectiveness research a simpler but untheorised set of categories and recommendations. This derives from a 'teaching

[2] The PISA 2000 and 2003 studies show that they are among the widest in the world. The general trend is that high achieving countries have a short 'tail', and that a wide spread generally results in low average attainment. The UK is an exception to this pattern.
It is only in the last two years (2003 and 2004) that examination results at age 16 show an apparent reduction in the socio-economic attainment gap. This is almost certainly due to the new way of matching up vocational and academic qualifications. Schools in poor urban areas are now entering large numbers of students for GNVQ Intermediate certificate in ICT, since it counts as equivalent to a high GCSE grade in four academic subjects. Since the standard measure of school attainment is the percentage of pupils gaining five or more good GCSE passes, there are clear benefits to the GNVQ certificate for the school, in terms of external judgements. However, employers and universities are unlikely to regard the computing certificate as equivalent to four good grades in English, mathematics, German and history, for example.

[3] More positive recent examples include MacGilchrist, Myers and Reed (2004) and Carnell and Lodge (2002)

[4] This is not a comment on the individual contributors, but a question of editorship and ultimately of paradigm. Many of the contributors had good records in terms of pedagogical understanding.

[5] I am referring here to the situation in England, the largest part of the United Kingdom. In Scotland, where School Improvement theory is less well developed and influential, officials have been more open-minded and often more progressive.

effectiveness' paradigm which was strong in the USA in the 1960s, and whose strengths, and many limitations, are described by Rosenshine (1971). This meta-study shows a simple input-output model in which quantitative researchers seek to correlate easily observable behaviours with test results. The behaviours tend to be low inference, i.e. the observer needs to tick the box rather than interpret (although sometimes more affective categories are used such as 'shows enthusiasm', 'helpful to students') and the tests are generally fragmentary tests of basic skills, i.e. spelling, word recognition, arithmetic calculation. There is, consequently, a kind of circularity in this method, as particular forms of 'effective' teaching may produce results in terms of tests which measure what is easily measured. Rosenshine highlights some difficulties:

- it is often unclear what the variables mean, to the reader or indeed the observer;
- some simply cannot be quantified reliably ('pace – neither too fast nor too slow')
- some variables are 'extremely gross', such as length of teacher talk or student talk;
- some treat student ratings as if these were an objective measure.

The difficulties in developing a theoretical explanation can be seen from the misleading use of terms which Rosenshine mentions:

- 'extended lecture' in some studies means 'explanatory structuring statements lasting approximately 20 seconds'
- the word 'inquiry' is used to include 'extended questions, extended student responses, and extended teacher elaboration of student ideas'.
- distinctions such as divergent-convergent, or open-closed questions, are misleading, since apparently divergent or open questions might elicit low-level factual recall ('Name a famous Spanish composer.')

Though sometimes broader categories are used, this emphasis on easily observed, separate behaviours is apparent in the models adopted for top-down control of schools in the 1990s. Sammons *et al.* (1995) produced an important review of school effectiveness literature, commissioned by OfSTED, the new school inspection agency. Their literature review is quite uncritical and untheoretical, but transparent enough to indicate that most of the research studies they found were highly positivistic:

- quantity is the key to quality;
- evaluation depends on observing easily recorded surface behaviours;
- there is little attempt to analyse interactions in terms of cognitive processes, or a clear foundation in any theory of pedagogy.

In some places, Sammons *et al.* attempt to steer their readership away from too simplistic a view:

*As Carroll (1989) cautioned '*time *as such is not what counts, but what happens during that time' (p14)*

In the main, however, the descriptors of effective teaching which they relay are at a surface level, such as 'Keep the teaching sessions task-oriented' or 'Have high expectations for achievement (give more homework, pace lessons faster, create alertness)'.

The English inspection regime, since 1992, is a privatised economy in which thousands of independent inspectors work on short (e.g. three day) contracts for profit-making organisations which are in turn contracted to the government Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED). Such a regime

lacks the coherence and professionalism needed for reflective evaluation of teaching and learning, and naturally tends towards the observation of lessons in quite fragmentary and mechanistic terms. In 30-40 minutes, the inspector must make unambiguous judgements on many separate criteria such as 'lesson planning', 'pace', 'variety of activities', 'control of behaviour', 'homework', 'assessment', and then give a 1-7 grade. Observation sheets are quality-controlled on whether they include comments against up to 20 different variables. There is no time for serious discussion and the working conditions tend to lead towards shallow judgements:

- whether homework was given, rather than its quality
- whether the lesson moved rapidly, not whether there was time to think
- whether the teacher gave the inspector a lesson plan, not whether the plan made sense psychologically or pedagogically.

In addition, during the early 1990s, the government used carefully chosen effectiveness researchers to recommend transmission teaching ('banking' methods), praising countries such as Taiwan as models of good practice. Since the Labour government took over in 1997, direction of teaching methods was increased even further, and teachers were coerced into teaching lessons with particular structures (e.g. the 'literacy hour' in primary schools). Although this new model has some good features and draws on some sound theory and practice (especially *First Steps* from Western Australia), its rapid imposition led to mechanistic and rigid imitation without deeper pedagogical understanding, and other successful modes of teaching reading were abandoned.

A further consequence of the high-pressure surveillance regime has been the separation of children into different 'ability' groups from an early age. Sometimes from the first year of primary school, children within a class are divided into different tables, and current government policy presses strongly for the division of pupils into different classes, even in comprehensive secondary schools. This is designed to speed up the transmission of knowledge, and make it more 'efficient', but does not consider the dangers. Early decisions are made by teachers about which children are 'more able' and 'less able', inevitably on the basis of what has been learned in the family, such as reading, and often influenced by more stylistic elements of cultural capital (see Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). Despite the euphemisms, children on the 'green table' or 'banana table' or 'triangle table' in the primary school, or in class 2J in the secondary, inevitably know what this means. Those who enter with less 'ability' often experience a more limited curriculum, with more use of decontextualised exercises on basic sub-skills, and don't gain linguistically and culturally from others in the class. They often develop a habitus of being 'a less able pupil', within a wider regime of passive school learning, and begin a downward spiral – failing to value school learning, feeling a failure, experiencing lessons as boring or not relevant, sensing that their identities or families or personal interests or opinions are not valued.

3. THE LINK BETWEEN POVERTY AND LOW ACHIEVEMENT: SOME THEORIES

Reply of the Indians of the Five Nations to an invitation in 1744 by the commissioners from Virginia to send boys to William and Mary College:

'You who are wise must know, that different nations have different conceptions of things...Several of our young people were formerly brought up at the colleges of the northern provinces; they were instructed in all your sciences; but when they came back to us...[they were] ignorant of every means of living in the woods... neither fit for hunters, warriors, or counsellors; they were totally good for nothing. We are, however, not the less obliged by your kind offer... and to show our grateful sense of it, if the gentlemen of Virginia will send us a dozen of their sons, we will take great care of their education, instruct them in all we know, and make men of them.' (Drake: Biography and History of the Indians of North America, in Rogoff 1990:42)

Theories of ability and intelligence are social constructs which arise and become popular in particular historical circumstances. Running through Twentieth Century thinking about ability and intelligence is the issue of how symbolic representation relates to experiential involvement.

In 19th Century England, there was little need for the idea that different individuals had different levels of educability; for most Victorian policy makers, it was simply unthinkinkable and intolerable to educate working-class children[6] 'above their station in life'. [7] In 1906, employers' representatives were asked by the parliamentary Consultative Committee on Higher Elementary Schools 'What is the kind of product most to be desired?' They answered bluntly, 'To make them efficient members of the class to which they belong'. Cowburn argues that the rise of the Labour movement (trade unions and the Labour Party) made it no longer possible to be so forthright after that date.

Faced with such increasing radical activity, the language of class arrogance was hardly appropriate. It was becoming no longer possible to dismiss the vast majority of working class children as being unfit to receive a secondary education because of their class alone. (Cowburn 1986: 122-5)

3.1. Innate intelligence

Shortly afterwards, the skills shortage resulting from World War I made it desirable to select a minority of working-class children for a secondary education. Intelligence testing provided the means. Alfred Binet's test, which he always viewed as a means of assessing *acquired* ability in order to remedy individual difficulties, was adopted in England by Cyril Burt, London's first educational psychologist, as a means of identifying supposedly *innate* intelligence. (In the USA, the adaptation was based on racism, not class prejudice, and the tests were used to discriminate between the 'intelligence' of potential immigrants from northern and southern Europe.)

This supposedly scientific approach to identifying 'intelligence' was based on highly abstract forms of reasoning, with logical puzzles such as 'Rectangle is to square as ellipse is to ?' [shapes represented visually] It was hardly surprising that children from professional families should prove more successful than those from manual workers' families who were more accustomed to dealing with

[6] In this article, I frequently use 'working-class' as shorthand for manual workers. This has become the normal use in educational sociology. The working class, in a Marxist sense, is much broader, including increasing numbers of white-collar and professional employees, including highly skilled workers who are increasingly powerless in the new global economies. However, within a discussion of educational disadvantage, the former definition has a particular importance, for two reasons: manual workers are more likely to suffer low income and periods of unemployment; and parents who are manual workers are less likely to have higher levels of education and the kind of knowledge which schools regard as important.

[7] See Gordon 1981:20seq. and Cowburn 1986 for slightly different interpretations of this, and of the way that assumptions changed. Also, for comparison, Bisseret 1979 provides a history for the different ideological and political circumstances of 19th Century France.

less abstract but genuine and urgent real-life problems[8]. As Neisser points out, such tests are designed by people with a particular type of intelligence to identify others with a similar type of intelligence.

Academic people are among the stoutest defenders of the notion of intelligence…the tests seem so obviously valid to us who are members of the academic community…There is no doubt that Academic Intelligence is really important for the kind of work that we do. We readily slip into believing that it is important for every kind of significant work. (Neisser 1976:138)

Rogoff (1990:42-61) provides many rich examples of culturally grounded concepts of intelligence. These may depend on ways of looking at the world, related to economic needs; on cultural values; on whether a society is literate, and the particular functions of literacy in that society; and on institutions of schooling and habitual modes of socialisation and learning. Sometimes misunderstanding occurs at the level of tacit groundrules about appropriate intelligent behaviour, as in the story of the elderly lady who was asked to complete Raven's Progressive Matrices; she scolded 'A Professor, and still playing with puzzles!' (Goodnow 1980). In some societies, hypothetical problems appear unthinkable: Luria gives a lucid example of the impact of such groundrules for thinking:

> *[Syllogism] 'In the Far North, where there is snow, all bears are white. Novaya Zemlya is in the Far North and there is always snow there. What colour are the bears there?'*
>
> *'We always speak only of what we see; we don't talk about what we haven't seen.'*
>
> *'But what do my words imply?' [The syllogism is repeated.]*
>
> *'Your words can be answered only by someone who was there, and if a person wasn't there he can't say anything on the basis of your words.' (Luria 1976:108-9)*

By modifying the problem, Cole *et al.* (1971) were able to demonstrate that it is not a lack of logic which prevents non-literate people from understanding syllogisms; they simply feel uncomfortable answering questions for which they cannot verify the premises.

The culturally situated relationships between symbolic representation and experience may have relevance for the academic success of working-class pupils, whether in terms of habits of mind or of a preference for genuine problems which results from the force of economic necessity. Only an academic could assume that survival on a low income in the inner city does not require intelligence; only an academic would presume that these inner-city survivors must treat all abstract problems as important. This is not, of course, to suggest that abstract reasoning and hypothetical conjecture are unimportant; however, acquiring this ability will need a different sort of preparation for children who are used to more pressing and immediate real-life problems.

3.2. Language deficit [9]

After the concept of innate intelligence lost favour – and Burt's research was exposed as fraudulent (Rose *et al.* 1984:98) – theories of verbal deficit emerged as a popular explanation for the different levels of school achievement of pupils from different backgrounds. In their most primitive forms, these were based on a crude prejudice which saw certain dialects and accents as inferior. The

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[8] What is more surprising is that Burt should jump to the conclusion that differences between the children of Oxford professors and those of manual workers were due to heredity rather than environment. Rose *et al.* (1984:87) argue that this is the result of the hegemony of Social Darwinism as an ideology, but also of Burt's class prejudice. While still an undergraduate student at Oxford, Burt had noted: 'the problem of the very poor – chronic poverty: little prospect of the solution of the problem without the forcible detention of the wreckage of society or otherwise preventing them from propagating their own species.'

[9] Substantial critiques of language deficit theories can be found in Rosen 1972), Labov (1969), Gordon (1981), Tizard and Hughes (1984), Edwards and Westgate (1994), Edwards (1976).

colloquial speech of working-class pupils was described in quasi-moral terms, as bad grammar, slovenly speech, sloppy pronunciation, and foul language. Such judgements often showed high levels of misunderstanding and prejudice.

Bereiter *et al*. (1966, p121) frown on pupils who reply to the question 'Where is the squirrel?' by saying 'In the tree' rather than 'The squirrel is in the tree.' Riessmann (1962, p75) writes: 'The communication of the deprived is famous for its use of imaginative nicknames and shortenings – the British "never-never" for instalment buying, "telly" for TV, "pub" for bar or public place [sic!].' (Gordon 1981:50)

It is clear that a new kind of prejudice was emerging as a quasi-scientific explanation. In particular, short 'incomplete' sentences were seen as deficient. This shows serious linguistic ignorance, as utterances often depend upon context to complete their meaning. This is not limited to one social class: 'Tea, dear?' makes perfect sense, in context, even without a verb.

Particular dialect forms were assumed to be *illogical*; they had to be eliminated in young children in order to make them fit for schooling. In the USA, Black American English was a particular target. For example, its omission of the verb 'to be' in the present tense was judged logically defective – though Russian and other languages omit it too.

It is interesting, within the core argument of this article, that the problem again centres on the relationship of language and other symbolic forms to experience. The most influential language deficit theorist[10] in Britain was Basil Bernstein. His argument, essentially, is that working-class children only know language based on a 'restricted code', whereas middle-class children also have access to 'elaborated code'. 'Restricted code' language makes sense within the shared experience of a familiar or immediate context, whereas 'elaborated code' denotes language which is more explicit. 'Elaborated code' is appropriate when speaking about a situation which is not immediately present to the speaker and listeners, or at least familiar to them both. Typically, 'restricted code' involves more pronouns, whereas 'elaborated code' involves more nouns. Bernstein's case depends on unclear causal links between class → family type → linguistic code[11] → speech → educational attainment. The evidence remained seriously flawed. The most famous demonstration was through an experiment in which 'working class' and 'middle class' children described a drawing of boys playing football and accidentally kicking the ball through a neighbour's window. The middle-class version is more explicit:

> *Three boys are playing football and one boy kicks the ball and it goes through the window the ball breaks the window and the boys are looking at it and a man comes out and shouts at them because they've broken the window so they run away and then that lady looks out of her window and she tells the boys off.*

The working-class version uses pronouns, assuming that the listener will understand:

> *They're playing football and he kicks it and it goes through there it breaks the window and they're looking at it and he comes out and shouts at them because they've broken it so they run away and then she looks out and she tells them off. (Bernstein 1972:167)* [12]

[10] Bernstein himself denied that it amounted to a deficit theory. The point is skilfully argued by Gordon 1981:66-89, which provides a penetrating commentary on Bernstein's inconsistencies.

[11] The term 'code' is itself obscure. Bernstein uses it not to refer directly to patterns of speech, but to an underlying organizing principle which leads to the production of certain types of speech. The essential point, in the end, is that a distinction is being made between two different types of language.

[12] Like other 'evidence' in support of Bernstein's arguments, we do not have access to real quotations but only to the research assistant's reconstruction of typical versions. The research assistant Hawkins (1969) calls them 'slightly exaggerated' versions.

Ironically, Bernstein and his research Hawkins miss the point – that the children, and the listener, have the drawing in front of them all the time. Pronouns are quite sufficient here. If anything, it is the first child's use of language which is inappropriate. Bernstein does not argue that working-class children are incapable of more explicit syntax, or that they do not have the grammar, but that they simply tend to *use* language differently. An alternative explanation would be that the middle-class children in the experiment have a different *social* understanding of the situation, seeing it as a formal presentation which requires a particular style of language. This too would have implications for school learning, because of the linguistic expectations of teachers, but would not see the working-class child as deficient because linguistically 'restricted'.

Bernstein's theories were received enthusiastically and became, in crude popular versions, a kind of professional folklore. Teachers in the 1970s would frequently claim that working-class parents 'don't talk to their children, they just hit them,' and that the children arrive at school 'without any language'. Labov's attack on American versions of verbal deficit theory[13] applies, with modifications, to Bernstein's more sophisticated version:

There is no reason to believe that any non-standard vernacular is in itself an obstacle to learning. The chief problem is ignorance of language on the part of all concerned… Teachers are now being told to ignore the language of Negro children as … useless for learning. They are being taught to hear every natural utterance of the child as evidence of his mental inferiority. As linguists we are unanimous in condemning this view as bad observation, bad theory and bad practice. That educational psychology should be so strongly influenced by a theory so false to the facts of language is unfortunate; but that children should be the victims of this ignorance is intolerance. (Labov 1969:34)

It is easy to understand the appeal of Bernstein's theory, as a plausible explanation for lower achievement even though children attend the same school. The problem is that it focuses attention on the child and blames the working-class family, rather than questioning the school norms. Indeed, some critics have concluded that, even in very poor families, the child often has more opportunities for language development at home than at school:

> *In their interactions with the external world, the young children whom Wells recorded seemed to be 'compulsive and creative seekers after meaning', and most of their homes provided at least some experience of interactions 'characterized by collaboration in the negotiation of meaning and intention'. Yes in their classrooms these same children were* not *encountering a 'linguistically rich environment able to provide compensation for those believed to be deprived at home. On the contrary, there were no homes that did not provide richer opportunities than the schools… for learning through talk with an adult.' (Wells and Wells 1984: 191-4) (Edwards and Westgate 1994:162-3)*

School learning requires, at particular times, explicit communications about situations which are not immediately present. However, it happens too frequently that teachers speak in quite abstract ways without providing photographs or real objects, as if the teacher and pupils shared a common experience.

The characteristic identified most often as the main source of difficulty is the high level of abstraction which pervades so much classroom talk (and, of course, classroom writing). It is argued that most of the expositional language of teachers, and of textbooks, is 'language at the apex of a pyramid of experience' – that is, language which offers summaries of, or generalizations about, objects and actions and events (Rosen 1967). That would not be a problem if more of the pyramid had

[13] These tended to focus on racial difference, especially regarding Black American English, rather than class differences as in the UK.

earlier been in view, because we are all accustomed to first 'telling a story' and then 'giving the gist' of it. Problems arise where there has been no 'story' – where the abstractions are free-floating, unattached to those detailed empirical referents which can alone give them life (Barnes *et al*., 1969; Edwards, A. 1978; Hull, 1985). (Edwards and Westgate 1994:35)

Pupils whose families have given them the relevant experiences, whether visits to museums or watching television documentaries and nature programmes and discussing them together, will make sense of the teachers words; for other children, it is not their language which is in deficit but visual and other sensory elements in the teacher's presentation. For these children, it is important to provide rich learning experiences as a foundation for developing verbal explanations, and to scaffold the pupils' transition towards more abstract and formal kinds of speech.

3.3. Cultural capital and social capital

There is space to comment briefly on two other theories. Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Bourdieu 1983), through his concept of 'cultural capital', understands linguistic (and other cultural) difference as cultural misunderstanding, rather than regarding the working-class child as deficient. The children of professional families use language, and have cultural knowledge, which is interpreted positively by the school as a sign of intelligence. These children arrive at school with a language and knowledge which is similar to that of the teachers and of academic discourse; the culture becomes capital only because the school evaluates it positively. The language and culture of working-class children is not inferior but simply less valued by the school. Although Bourdieu sometimes appears fatalistic about this problem, his concept, unlike Bernstein's, does allow of transformative action.

More recently the concept of 'social capital' (Coleman 1988: Putnam 2000) has become popular, designating a nexus of relationships which is supportive of children's learning and personal development at school. Although it is tempting to regard it as similar to Bourdieu's, in some versions it is being deployed negatively, as a way of blaming marginalised communities for children's low achievement. There is a tendency to stigmatize such communities as 'lacking in social capital', i.e. having weak or antagonistic interpersonal relationships; this is, of course, true of some families and some neighbourhoods, but gross generalisations are dangerous. It is ironical that Bernstein saw working-class families as linguistically deficient because they lived in close-knit communities, whereas social capital theories assume the reverse. Research is needed on the real situation in different neighbourhoods and communities, and of teachers' constructs of these environments.

4. TRANSFORMING SCHOOL LEARNING

It would be wrong to regard abstract thinking as inappropriate or unnecessary. As Bruner points out, 'it would seem that there are concepts and ideas that permit one to get to higher ground.' Quoting Vygotsky,

> *The new higher concepts in turn transform the meaning of the lower. The adolescent who has mastered algebraic concepts has gained a vantage point from which he sees arithmetic concepts in a broader perspective. (Vygotsky 1934:115, in Bruner 1985:23)*

Whilst accepting Labov's argument that the street language of the Harlem ghetto can be a medium for high-level political and theological debate (Labov 1969), and the growing body of knowledge about alternative modes of reasoning in diverse environments (e.g. the alternative mathematics of non-school situations, Scribner 1984; Lave *et al*. 1984), abandoning the accumulated

methods and discourses of academic learning is not necessarily the best way to raise working-class achievement. Whilst arguing for learning which is better grounded in experience, and for more careful transition from colloquial to academic language, I would wish to reject any notion that sensory experience in itself is enough. This would be seriously limiting. [14]

The central issue, I would argue, is how best to *connect language* (and other symbolic forms such as maps, algebra or musical notation) *with experience,* in ways which *restore voice and agency to the learner*. A theoretical foundation for this can be found in Vygotskian social constructivism, as developed and elaborated in the last quarter of the 20th Century, including some aspects of activity theory and situated cognition.

In case readers should find the argument slippery here, moving from signs and experience to voice and agency, I would like to suggest that the latter pair map onto the former. Thus, in using the terms voice and agency, I am referring to an active position and role of the learner with regard to signs and experience (or in Wenger's terms, reification and participation – see below).

4.1. Experience and symbolic representation in a community of practice

I find particularly illuminating Etienne Wenger's metaphor of the flower and the computer, which is worth quoting at length:

What does a flower know about being a flower? What does a computer know about being a flower?

The question of what a flower knows about being a flower is somewhat troubling because there seem to be two contradictory answers. Being a flower is to no one as transparent, immediately obvious, fully internalized, and natural as it is to a flower: spreading those leaves, absorbing that specific spectrum of light from the sun, taking the energy in, building protein, sucking nutrients from its roots, growing, budding, blooming, being visited by a bee. One might then be tempted to say that the flower knows more than anyone could ever know about being a flower. But ask the flower to teach a botany class, and it will just stand there, knowing nothing about being a flower, not the first thing – not that its leaves are green, not that it is absorbing energy to perform photosynthesis, not even that it has a sweet smell.

At the other extreme, type the word 'flower' into the encyclopaedia program of your computer. Up comes all the information you could ever need. Type 'photosynthesis', 'petal', 'stem', and so on: perfect answers. The knowledge is all there. Or better yet, buy an interactive, multimedia educational program on botany and give it to the class the poor flower could not teach, and let the students explore. They will become experts. But if – as a reward for teaching the class – you buy your computer a half-dozen roses, then the computer will sit there, awaiting some input. It knows nothing. (Wenger 1998: 134-5)

Wenger's resolution of this problem is that human learning involves both experience and symbolic representation. He calls these 'participation' and 'reification'. Having an 'experience of meaning' involves both of these in close interconnection.

[14] This position was adopted by Bantock, a contributor to the extreme right wing Black Papers, who argued for two forms of education – a literary, logical, intellectual curriculum for a small minority, and a totally different curriculum for the majority which would include literacy skills but would concentration education of the emotions and senses. (Summary in Lawton 1977:24) This position, I believe, is restrictive and elitist.

The flower may have an experience as a living entity, and it may even have some kind of relationship with us, but it cannot deal with our reifications. It remains impermeable to the concepts, images, classification schemes and words – even the word *flower* – that we use to negotiate meaning and thus to make sense of our experience. But such reifications are an intrinsic part of our practices. They are indispensable to the process of negotiation that sustains those practices, and thus to the experiences of meaning we can achieve.

By contrast, computers can deal very well with certain types of reification, such as elements of discourse… They can do the right thing according to a reified definition of what the right thing is. They can interpret commands and data correctly. They can play their part in activities competently. But they do not have an identity of participation with which to take responsibility for the meanings of what they process. By lacking – in opposite ways – the ability to combine participation and reification in a process of negotiation, both the flower and the computer lack the capability to have an experience of meaning. (Wenger 1998:135-6)

It seems to me that this analysis of a dialectical relationship between *experience* and *symbolic representation* (I prefer these terms to 'participation' and 'reification') is the key to understanding successful learning, in and out of school. It has particular relevance as a tool for grappling with the issue of underachievement in marginalised communities. It casts light on the fallacies of judging intelligence through tests of abstract reasoning, or condemning language as 'deficient' on the false expectation that the words alone must be sufficient to carry the meaning.

If we pursue Wenger's argument, we soon encounter the term 'community of practice', which supplies the missing element, the social environment in which this interplay of language (symbol system) and experience (a sensory encounter with material reality) takes place. These are the three elements of Vygotsky's model of learning:

- mediation by language (seen as a special kind of tool)
- mediation by tools or artefacts
- co-operation with other people.

4.2. Cognitive acceleration in science education

All three are involved in the Cognitive Acceleration projects (Shayer and Adey eds. 2002). Repeating Piaget's experiments in inner London schools, and with a representative cross sample in England and Wales, Adey and Shayer (1994: 28-33) discovered that the transition from 'concrete operational' to 'formal operational' reasoning does not happen spontaneously at the age of 11 or 12, but for many comes much later.[15]

They developed methods to accelerate this, by embedding the learning of key scientific concepts into co-operative problem-solving activity. Based on a constructivist psychology, their five steps are:

- concrete preparation (involves rich experience and introduction to new vocabulary)
- cognitive conflict (the learners find an event or observation puzzling / discordant with previous experience or understanding)

[15] In the population as a whole, fewer than 30 per cent of 16 year olds were showing the use of even early formal operations. That means that the majority of the population was leaving school using only concrete operations. (Adey and Shayer 1994:31)

- construction zone activity (collaborative mental activity – 'a magic place where minds meet, where things are not the same to all who see them, where meanings are fluid')
- metacognition (self-reflection and higher-level modelling on the part of the learner)
- bridging (the conscious transfer of a theory to new situations and problems). (adapted from Adey and Shayer 1994: 75)

As an illustration, I will use a science lesson which I observed in a Leicester school with high levels of poverty, and where most pupils were bilingual (South Asian) and a significant minority struggle with English. The study of evolution began with groups of 13-year-olds designing islands – drawing them, deciding the climate and vegetation. After this concrete preparation, the teacher stimulated cognitive conflict by placing the wrong animal on each group's island – a model penguin on a sandy tropical island, a camel in the Antarctic, etc. The groups discussed this vigorously, identifying particular physical features of the animal. Working now on large sheets of paper (big enough to show to the rest of the class – a real audience), each group drew an animal and labelled features which were well adapted to an environment – an elephant's thick skin and trunk, a penguin's feet, etc. This, and the discussion that followed, fits Adey and Shayer's notion of 'construction zone activity'. The series of lessons was not complete until concepts of adaptation and evolution had been consolidated at a more abstract theoretical level, and the relevance to many other problems was clear.

The learning was successful because theoretical learning was skilfully grounded in an experience which the students found interesting and challenging. It was also a clear example of *voice* and *agency*: it provided many opportunities for authentic discussion, for choices to be made, for active learning, for sharing with others – a real audience, a product. It also involved students in making campaign posters for Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace - a sense of political voice and agency.

It is worth attempting to relate this lesson to Vygotsky's concept of language as tool. Vygotsky regarded language as a particular kind of tool, but it is easy to make sharp distinctions between these two types (material as against spiritual tools). Bakhurst (1995:60) argues against this: 'The artefact [unlike the raw material from which it has been made] has been produced for a certain use and incorporated into a system of human ends and purposes. The object thus confronts us as an embodiment of meaning, placed and sustained in it by 'aimed-oriented' human activity'. Similarly, words have a materiality – they are symbolic precisely as matter which bears meaning in a particular speech community. We might perhaps view the islands, the model animals and the large posters as a middle category, or perhaps, following Wartofsky (1973:204) as a third kind which would include works of art, etc. as 'imagined worlds'. In this lesson, the students are actively creating an 'imagined world' using islands and posters as semiotic models within which complex theories can be accessed.

Other science lessons in this school (Wrigley 2000:47-60) provide further insights. Studying bacteria and its speed of growth, students had explicit and transferable knowledge of how to conduct a 'fair test', and were encouraged to vary the experiment by changing constants and variables. The connections to good health were clear. The teacher mischievously challenged the students to a calculation: 'If the bacteria doubles every 20 minutes, how many after 24 hours? How many people think they might need a calculator? No? That's fine, let's start.' A kind of 'cognitive conflict', they soon discovered the mystery of exponential growth and were amazed. Another lesson was a simulation: *Application for the Vacancy of Enzyme*. Some students drew up job descriptions, others wrote CVs, questions were planned and interviews took place, and finally a successful 'appointment' was made.

The interrelationship of experience and symbolic representation, through co-operative activities which restore voice and agency, can be found throughout the case studies in The Power to Learn (Wrigley 2000). There is no space here to discuss them all, but they provide rich illustrations of social constructivist pedagogy, in contrast to the fast-paced transmission teaching which has found official favour in England.

4.3. Language and literacy: bilingual pupils

A good illustration comes from a class of seven year olds in a very poor part of Bradford, Northern England. Almost all the families are Pakistani or Bangladeshi, who live in a close community, so that many children speak very little English when they arrive at school. Learning the English language, and how to read and write, are centrally important. The teachers believe that this cannot happen by rejecting the family language, and that language and literacy development must be grounded in real and interesting experience.

One classroom wall represents their neighbourhood, to which the children have stuck photographs and maps and drawings from their many visits out of school. It is labelled in English and Urdu. Another wall is a large map of a remote Scottish island – the children are reading one of the Katie Morag stories. This provides for much discussion about the geographical contrasts, and new vocabulary appears on the walls – settlements, bay, ferry. On the day of my visit, the teacher had written a newspaper, in large print, about the myth of the Loch Ness Monster. An eye-witness report appeared in column 2, and the teacher (in role as reporter) soon discovered that the children misunderstood the source of the information: 'Miss, you found it in the library', 'Internet, miss!' Finally, one small boy, very excited: 'Miss, that man said…. that man saw it…'

Here was an opportunity to open up the two-dimensional text into three-dimensional experience, and to make a past-tense report more immediate. She brought the boy to the front, he quickly invented an identity as the eyewitness, other children (holding glue-pens as pretend microphones) acted as reporters interviewing him – they were just as quick to give their newspapers names and develop an identity. After this, the activity was repeated in pairs, so that each child had lots of practice, and finally the class moved on to writing.

In another class, I saw children learning the genre of instructions by writing a recipe. First, the teacher demonstrated how to mix the ingredients for a cake, speaking it aloud. The children baked a cake together, each child performing one action before passing to the next person, and speaking each step aloud. Learning how to read and write for these children is a big step, since their English is still limited; in fact, they have to do three things together – develop spoken English, learn how to read and write, and acquire curriculum knowledge in different areas. The development of symbolic representations has to be skilfully interwoven with direct experience (in Wenger's words, the combination of 'participation' and 'reification'). In these two examples also, we might speak of the shared construction of 'imagined worlds' (Wartofsky 1973) in which the second-level symbolic processes of literacy can be developed.

This interrelationship is fundamental to Jim Cummins' theories on teaching bilingual pupils[16]. Cummins' research shows that newcomers to an English-speaking school, if they are integrated into

[16] 'Bilingual' is now the preferred term in Britain for pupils whose traditional family language is other than English. It does not, of course, mean that the children have a strong command of both languages, and there are many possibilities. For some, English is very limited;

normal classes, quickly learn everyday English for conversations and transactions, but that it takes some years to develop the language of academic learning. Often teachers mistake this for a psychological difficulty, and children are assigned to a special education class or school. Even within the mainstream class, such pupils are often given boring de-contextualised exercises, at a low cognitive level and also low in experience. Cummins (1984; 1996) argues that in order to move from

everyday language (rich in experience, low cognitive level)

to

academic language (distant from experience, high cognitive level)

the intermediate stage should not be

decontextualised exercises (low experience and cognition)

but

activities which are grounded in experience and introduce high-level ideas.

Although Cummins' pedagogy does not derive from situated cognition or activity theory, there is clearly a similarity. It also seems to have a wider validity than the education of bilingual pupils.

5. MORE OPEN ARCHITECTURES FOR SCHOOL LEARNING

The recent large-scale reform strategies in England have mainly involved attempts to discipline teaching by imposing particular structures on individual lessons, dividing each 40-60 minutes into three or four different activities. Though not explicitly acknowledged, there has been a strong emphasis on teaching as the transmission of knowledge. Despite the declared intention of raising attainment for all, the benefit to students from poorer families has generally been limited.[17]

Fullan's words are relevant here:

> *I would hypothesize that the greater the emphasis on academic achievement through high stakes accountability, the greater the gap becomes between advantaged and disadvantaged students. The main reason for this is that poor performing students do not need more pressure, they need greater attachment to the school and motivation to want to learn. (1999)*

More open pedagogies are available, from around the world, which might engage these students more and provide an excitement in learning. Key criteria would be:

- the interrelationship between *experience* and *symbolic representations*
- engagement in *activity* in a learning *community* - a 'community of practice'
- a sense of empowerment by restoring *voice* and *agency*.
- The simulation is probably familiar to most readers. Simulations are better than discussions or debates for various reasons:

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others may speak English at home with one or two parents or brothers and sisters, but another language with aunts and grandparents. The term 'bilingual' recognises the importance of respecting and developing both languages if the child is to succeed in school.

[17] Among other examples, mathematics results for 11 year olds were made worse by the Numeracy Strategy (Brown M. *et al.* (2003); the Key Stage 3 Strategy (11-14 year olds) has been of limited value to lower attainers (OfSTED 2002), and the proportion of pupils below Level 5 remains twice as high as the national average in schools where large numbers of pupils are entitled to free meals. It is also argued that tests have been simplified in order to exaggerate the gains made by the various strategies (Tymms 2004).

- learners participate in a rich imaginary context
- participants engage in role, thus ensuring that conflicting views are heard
- ideas are connected with real-world situations
- there is less possibility for the teacher to dominate.

Bruner (1968) speaks of 'two modes of thought', two 'ways of knowing':

- the paradigmatic or logico-scientific one
- the narrative mode.

He argues that both are important, though the former is privileged in traditional schooling. Simulations help to bridge between the two, providing a personal involvement in the narrative as a grounding for the development of more theoretical statements.

The 'Power to Learn' case studies contained further examples, in addition to those above, including:

- holding an interview for parish priest (medieval history)
- a family debate during the English civil war about which side to support
- improvising the scene which Shakespeare did not write – Juliet with her nurse and her mother, after her father has threatened to throw her on the street if she won't marry his choice of man.

The creative and performing arts, including creative writing and the media, provide important opportunities for bridging between the two ways of knowing, creating situations in which difficult and sometimes dangerous ideas can be explored, i.e. *enacted* and *debated*. This is particularly important when teachers wish young people to reflect on taken-for-granted and deeply embedded ideologies without appearing to misuse their power as teachers. For some Asian girls, the arranged marriage is still a reality, and the Romeo and Juliet example provided an opportunity to open up traditional customs and beliefs to discussion. Another example was provided by the Religious Education teacher who asked pupils to write their own creeds. These generally began with a traditional formulation, based on the Bible or Koran, but soon the writers became more speculative and personal, merging or contrasting different values. Two examples (Wrigley 2000:68-9)

I believe in one God because I was brought up that way.

I believe in the holy book and the prophets.

I believe in the day of judgement…

I believe that men and women should be treated equally…

I believe that disabled people should be treated with the same respect as others,

they should not feel like an outsider…

I believe there is a god but he does not control us.

Instead he guides everyone towards the right things.

I believe in evolution. It does happen

but very slowly so we do not even notice it.

I believe that everyone is equal.

No man is higher or lower than anyone else.

This pedagogy, for which I have yet to find a name – I call it clumsily 'cultural reflection and repositioning' – is important for all young people, wherever they have to deal with deeply embedded ideologies, whether the fundamentalism stems from traditional religion or contemporary capitalism. We need to develop pedagogies which enable young people to step back from environments and cultures that they take for granted – a difficult process, since 'the fish is the last creature to discover water'. New pedagogies for critical and engaged citizenship would enable young people to challenge all kinds of oppressive discourse – patriarchy, racism, militarism, imperialism, consumerism – without their teachers telling them what to believe (which is usually futile!)

More open architectures for learning involve a shift of focus from the single lesson to larger units of time. We might see the following as a family of such methods - creating spaces for exercising voice and agency, involving decision-making and real audience, and frequently also leading to real and significant outcomes:

1) *Project Method*, as developed by Kirkpatrick and Dewey, and commonly practiced in Northern Europe, begins with a theme or issue introduced by teacher or pupils. This is discussed freely, so that ideas and questions emerge. The next stage is independent research or enquiry, with each group or individual choosing to investigate a particular aspect. In the final plenary stage, each group presents to the class and stimulates further debate. Where possible, there is a fifth stage, involving a real-world outcome. (One German version involves the town council or a community group presenting a real problem to the school, and asking the students to present possible solutions.)

2) *Problem-Based Learning* (PLB) is a version of project method developed for the training of doctors in North America, but since used in Scandinavian and Dutch universities in different faculties (now also with Education students at the University of Edinburgh). It begins with a situation, description or scenario which is difficult to 'diagnose'. The next step is for students to begin to articulate the possible problems. It then continues as Project Method.

3) *Storyline is a form of thematic work structured by a narrative.* This can be based on a novel, but more often the bare outline of a story forms the skeleton. Like the other methods, it gives scope for independence within a 'community of learning'. It typically begins with a situation (e.g. a location, at one point in time). The learners invent characters for themselves (e.g. employees in a hotel, families in a town). The teacher (perhaps in role as postman, or politician, or television news reader) moves the story forward by announcing an event. Each such event is the stimulus for research, fictional or formal writing, improvised drama, art, or discussion. Although the method was invented in Scotland for young children, it is regularly used with 13-16 year olds and older in Scandinavia. (See www.acskive.dk/storyline or www.storyline.org for further information)

4) Design Challenges[18] present problems to students which involve investigation and lead to creative solutions which are presented to an audience. I was excited to see a class, in their first month at secondary school, in a challenge which involved many different learning skills

[18] This method was invented at the University of Syracuse (USA), as Education by Design (EDB), and disseminated in Britain as the Critical Skills Project (www.criticalskills.co.uk).

(library and ICT-based research, spoken and written communication and Powerpoint, small group co-operation and planning) as well as geographical and scientific knowledge. It began with a video message from the Emperor of the Galaxy about a plan to build a superhighway across space from the capital to a new holiday resort. Unfortunately, this would mean destroying the earth. The earthlings' challenge was to prove that the earth was worth saving.

These various 'architectures' provide spaces for learning communities to develop, for engaged learning which is critical and creative, for new interrelationships of experiential involvement and symbolisation in a range of media, and the exercise of voice and agency. They provide possibilities for engaging students from marginalised communities, and overcoming feelings of low status and powerlessness. They provide a broader and often richer means than vocational training (the usual offer to disengaged young people from working-class backgrounds) to engage in learning which is active and feels relevant. They help to bridge the gap which worried Bernstein, between language embedded in immediate experience ('restricted code') and more abstract theoretical registers ('elaborated code'). They provide, in their different ways, for both the 'ways of knowing' valued by Bruner, the logico-scientific and the narrative modes.

Some schools have been pioneers in adopting such new pedagogies. Good examples are the Laborschule (Bielefeld, Germany); the Ringstabek Skole (Norway); and a wonderful example of school reform in challenging circumstances, the Ramilo Solans School (Zaragoza, Spain).[19] These deserve further study. Other important sources include the Coalition of Essential Schools, and the Rethinking Schools network in the USA (see Apple and Beane eds.1996, www.essentialschools.org and www.rethinkingschools.org for inspiring case studies).

6. IMPROVING SCHOOLS: THE QUESTION OF CULTURE

In its search for more holistic and less positivist explanations of school success than the quantitative School Effectiveness paradigm's lists of 'key characteristics', School Improvement adopted the word 'culture' as a keyword. Up to now, there has been a tendency to use it in limited ways, generally focusing on management cultures or staff cultures[20]. School Improvement case studies (in English at least) often involve 'thin descriptions' in comparison with the 'thick descriptions' of classical ethnography (Geertz 1973).

In an attempt to recharge the word, I called for a more political and situated exploration of culture than we have managed so far, and specifically in relation to demands for greater democracy and the achievement of real success in inner city schools. For example:

- exploring the differences between authoritarian and cooperative cultures, including developing new rituals for cooperative and democratic learning

[19] The Laborschule was founded 35 years ago by Professor Hartmut von Hentig, under the inspiration of Dewey's Laboratory School in Chicago. An account in English can be found in *Improving Schools* 6(2), 2003. There is, as yet, no account in English of the Ringstabek Skole, which bases its curriculum primarily on project method, storyline and 'enterprise'. The Ramilo Solans School (Cuadernos de Pedagogía no. 339, Oct 2004), serves a gitano neighbourhood with enormous poverty and marginalisation; it has redesigned its curriculum around popular festivals, art forms and genres of music.

[20] Even at this level, they are conceptually weak when compared to the discussion of workplace culture by the business management expert Alvesson (2002)

- examining the cultural significance of alienated forms of learning in which, like factory work, you are told what to write and then hand over your product not to an interested audience but to the teacher-as-examiner, for token payment in the form of a mark or grade

- questioning the culture of target setting and surveillance which regulates the lives of pupils and teachers, and exploring more democratic forms of educational responsibility than the present accountability culture

- examining the cultural messages of classrooms which are dominated by the teacher's voice, closed questions and rituals of transmission of superior wisdom

- developing a better understanding of cultural difference, in order to prevent high levels of exclusion

- understanding how assumptions about ability and intelligence are worked out in classroom interactions

- discovering how assumptions about single parents, ethnic minorities and 'dysfunctional' working-class families operate symbolically in classroom interactions. (Wrigley 2003:36)

Subsequently, I discovered a much neglected discussion of school culture by Seymour Sarason (1971), in which he argues that we cannot transform education unless we question certain 'regularities' of school life which we normally take for granted. School Improvement, in neo-liberal environments such as England, has intensified schooling rather than transforming education. It has led to speeding up the conveyor belt of transmission teaching, rather than a development of new social constructivist pedagogies. It is not surprising that fifteen years of such 'improvement' has left a massive gap between the attainment of the poorest and most advantaged sections of the population. Some schools have achieved educational success for these students by daring to swim against the tide and develop pedagogies which restore voice and agency.

Beyond the concern of this article for marginalised communities (the 'working class' of educational sociology), a wider definition of class, in the era of globalisation, would extend across an even bigger class of employees (blue collar, white collar, professional), who despite their different skills and incomes and lifestyles remain subject to the mighty power of global capitalism. The pedagogies described here also contribute to the restoration of voice and agency in terms of an education for global citizenship. They involve creativity and engagement and critical thinking. I am reminded of the slogan 'Another World is Possible'. Since this is so, another school is possible – and necessary.