This fully updated fourth edition of *An Introduction to the Study of Education* provides a comprehensive and reflective introduction to the study of education, inviting students to question what education is, who it is for and what purpose it serves. Taking the reader from the early years through to lifelong learning, it examines all forms of education and learning.

This new edition includes ten completely new chapters and a step-by-step guide to essay writing. There is also a companion website to accompany the book, featuring additional chapters, which can be visited at www.routledge.com/cw/matheson. This fully updated fourth edition provides:

- a full exploration of the historical, sociological, philosophical and psychological roots of education;
- a clear focus on the individual levels of education – preschool, compulsory, post-compulsory and lifelong learning;
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- a focus on current educational practice and diversity across the United Kingdom and Ireland.

Written in a clear and accessible style, this is the essential core text for all beginning students on undergraduate and postgraduate courses in Education Studies and all those interested in education today, where it came from and where it is going.

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An Introduction to the Study of Education

Fourth edition

Edited by David Matheson
Dedicated to the memory of

Elsa Monnet-Rossetti
My mother-in-law

1927–2013

Adrian Hastings
Colleague and friend

1953–2013
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CHAPTER

1

What is education?

David Matheson

Don’t let schooling interfere with your education.

Mark Twain

Introduction

There are some notions which most of us think we know what they are and assume that others share the same or similar ideas. These can include ideas such as fairness, equality and justice. They are terms which are easy to use and to feel that we understand what we mean by them, but notoriously difficult to explain to others, other than by appealing to common sense and asserting that ‘everyone’ knows what justice, fairness, equality and so on actually are. Some terms, such as professionalism, are even best described by their absence. To define professionalism per se is notoriously difficult, but unprofessional somehow appears easier, even if in reality unprofessional is more often exemplified than defined. In this morass of potential confusion, there are phenomena which we recognise when we see them but would be hard put to describe in anything even vaguely resembling objective terms.

Among these slippery concepts is that of education. Education is what might be termed an essentially contested concept (Winch and Gingell 1999). It is one with a vast range of definitions, none of which is totally satisfactory. For example, we have the common equation between education and school. In this case, what about higher education? Where does further education fit in? And, for that matter, where do we place things we teach ourselves? We can discuss education that includes all of these arenas for learning or we can exclude at least some of them. We may even do as Abbs (1979) does and claim that ‘education and school can refer, and often do refer, to antithetical activities’ (p. 90). Or we can go even further and align ourselves with Illich (1986) and assert that school is not only the antithesis of education but that its main function is to provide custodial day care for young people.

This chapter has its function to consider what education might be. I intend to do this by considering a well-known attempt at defining education. I will then consider some of the things that education can be for and, lastly, I will consider what it might mean to be educated before briefly considering Education Studies itself.
Defining education

The literature is replete with attempts at defining education and so, at most, I will succeed here in merely scratching the surface. First, there is what we might term the ‘elastic’ sense of education. This is one, in a manner akin to the manner in which Lewis Carroll’s Humpty Dumpty ascribes any meaning he wants to a word, where education means precisely what the speaker, though within limits unknown to Humpty, wants it to mean. This approach capitalises on the kudos attached to the term education and seeks to ascribe it to whatever the speaker wants to give it. The result is a very loose approach wherein terms like education and learning are used interchangeably and the whole notion of education gets diluted to vanishing point. Despite this, as Lawson (1975) says, to call an activity or process ‘educational’ is typically to vest it with considerable status.

It is a commonplace that humans are learning machines. As Malcolm Tight puts it, ‘Learning, like breathing, is something everyone does all of the time’ (Tight 1996: 21). A first step, then, in trying to get a definition of education that is worth the bother is to exclude some activities. Unfortunately this is exactly where the problems start. As soon as we exclude activities from the list of what constitutes education we have to exercise a value judgement and we have to find a good reason for doing so. Nonetheless, at least by going about it this way, if we do decide that education equals school – an all too common assumption – then we have hopefully begun with a definition of education into which school fits, rather than beginning with school and making our definition of education fit into it.

The synonymous use of school and education is, however, hardly surprising when we consider that most of us will have experienced in schools what is arguably the most important part of our formal education. After all, it is there that most of us will have learned to read, developed our skills in social interaction, encountered authority which does not derive from a parent and we will have been required to conform to sets of rules, some of which might have been explained, some of which might not. School leaves its mark on us and on our personal conception of education, but this risks rendering us at least myopic to other possibilities.

A popular approach to the definition of education, at least in Anglophone countries, is that proposed by Richard Peters. Peters’ (1966) contention is that ‘education implies that something worthwhile is being or has been intentionally transmitted in a morally acceptable manner’ (p. 25). He manages to encompass two significant components: there is not only the end product, there is also means adopted to achieve it.

Peters’ definition suggests several areas for exploration:

1. intentionality and the ‘something’;
2. the notion of transmission;
3. the criteria for ascertaining whether the something is worthwhile;
4. the basis upon which moral acceptability is to be judged.
Intentionality and the ‘something’

For Peters, education cannot come about by accident. In this he concurs with Hamm’s (1991) claim that ‘learning is an activity that one engages in with purpose and intention to come up to a certain standard’ (p. 91). This implies, inter alia, that those things which we learn incidentally cannot count and hence stands at odds with Tight’s contention that ‘Learning, like breathing, is something everyone does all of the time’ (1996: 21). Equally, it implies that the person fulfilling the function of teacher has some clear notion of what is to be transmitted to the learners.¹ This may take the form of some specific material to be learned or it may take the form of attitudes to be acquired and opinions to be formed. A question to be asked concerns whether we can ever separate what is being transmitted from the manner in which the transmission occurs. In other words, can the message stand alone from the medium that carries it? Or is it the case, as Marshall McLuhan (1967) claimed, that the medium is the message?²

For Peters, the ‘something’ refers to knowledge and understanding (and this can reasonably be extended to include skills and attitudes).³ This, in turn, leads to several other questions, not least of which is to consider exactly what we mean by knowledge. Knowledge consists of several components. Most notably these consist in their turn of: knowing how to do things (procedural knowledge) and knowing that (prepositional knowledge) certain things exist or are true or have happened and so on. There is also the rather thorny question of how we know that we know something and just what knowledge is, but this is perhaps beyond the scope of this book.⁴

Understanding is important for Peters since this takes us beyond simply knowing and into the realms where we become better equipped to grasp underlying principles, are able to explain why things are the way they are or why they happen the way they do, and so on. The role of knowledge and understanding in defining education becomes even more crucial when one considers Peters’ view on what it means to be educated (see Barrow and Woods 1995: ch. 1). For Peters, becoming educated is an asymptotic process: we can move towards it but we can never fully attain it. For Peters, ‘this understanding should not be too narrowly specialised’ (1970: 4). Just how narrow is too narrow is open to speculation, but this is a point best dealt with later as we consider what it means to be educated.

Transmission

Transmission creates in the mind an image of something passing from one place to another. However, we have to take care to understand just what Peters means by the term. In an age dominated by broadcast media, there is a tendency to equate ‘broadcast’ with ‘transmission’; in other words, one may transmit but we never know who will receive or indeed exactly what they will receive. If Peters equates ‘transmission’ with ‘broadcast’ then he clearly is referring to teaching rather than to learning. On the other hand, if by transmission he actually means what we might nowadays term ‘successful transmission’ (i.e. when the message sent is equal to the message received), then he refers to both teaching and learning. Indeed, the etymology of ‘transmission’
would clearly indicate the latter. We need only look at the manner in which ‘trans-
mis-sion’ was employed in the days before our present media age (in terms, for exam-
ple, of a vehicle’s transmission, which transfers movement from the engine to the
wheels – which certainly brooks no ambiguity as to the ‘message’ sent being the same
as the ‘message’ received, although there is energy lost along the way – in the case of
mechanical devices most often as sound and/or heat) to see the justification for this
claim. Nonetheless, we do live in a media age; transmission has adopted a range of
meanings; and so, perhaps Peters’ definition might be better altered to use the term
‘successful transmission’.

In any case the need for transmission in Peters’ definition of education brings with
it the idea that, first, one cannot educate oneself by means of discovery, although one
can by means of educational materials such as books, since in this latter case it is the
ideas of the writer of the book which are being transmitted via the book. Second, there
is an implication of a deficiency model of education whereby the teacher has ‘some-
thing’ that the learner does not and hence the teacher’s task is, at least in part, to
remedy deficiencies on the part of the learner. This is a view of education which
stands at odds with Freire (1972) and Rogers and Freiberg (1993), who see personal
growth from within as a central tenet of education and for whom ‘transmission’ of any
‘something’ is in effect anathema. For each of these writers, an educator may facilitate
learning but nothing more.

Worthwhile and worthless knowledge

There are various criteria we might use to mark out educationally worthwhile or valu-
able knowledge from that which is worthless. We might do this in terms of need, but
in doing so one must take care not to confuse needs with wants. What I want is not
necessarily what I need and vice versa, and this goes for everything I could possibly
want or need, including knowledge. Again, it is a matter of perspective and relative
importance. With this in mind, needs can be defined in terms of societal needs or indi-
vidual needs. The question arises as to whether the needs of society are necessarily
compatible with the needs of the individual. The answer one gives is very much
contingent on one’s view of the social goal of education and whether one views society
as composed of individuals or whether one sees individuals subsumed into society.

There is also the cultural aspect of knowledge to consider. Whether we seek cul-
tural replication, maintenance or renovation, or even replacement, will play a major
role in one’s definition of educationally worthwhile knowledge. Our view, not only of
the society we have now, but also of the society we want to have, is critical both in
determining educationally worthwhile knowledge and in determining what counts as
knowledge at all. This is exemplified, in all too many parts of the world, by the way in
which some minority (and sometimes even majority) languages have been proscribed
in schools. This happened, for example, to Welsh, Scottish Gaelic, Scots, Swiss and
French patois, Breton and Catalan, to name but a few cases in Europe. These languages
were effectively designated as educationally (and often politically) unacceptable know-
ledge in often vicious bids to extirpate them.
Moral acceptability

Peters contends that education must be conducted in a morally acceptable manner. If there were consensus as to what constitutes morality then this exigency would present few, if any, problems. Unfortunately in our present society we see what are termed moral values being challenged on a regular basis. No longer is the teacher seen, if ever she or he were, as an absolute authority on moral matters and this is the case across the whole range of teaching and learning. Our society increasingly recognises itself as multicultural (as indeed it has been in reality since at least the dawn of recorded history – see Grant 1997) and, as such, acknowledges that there can exist a multiplicity of value systems within one society. This poses the major problem of defining ‘morally acceptable’. There are, however, some points of agreement within our society that certain ‘educational’ methods are simply unacceptable. At the extreme this precludes inflicting physical pain as a means of encouraging learning. Yet it was only in 1985 that corporal punishment was finally outlawed in state schools in the UK. While in theory in its latter years this punishment was reserved for recalcitrant miscreants, in practice it could be used, and was used, as an ‘aid’ to learning whereby, for example, a pupil might be hit for not spelling a word correctly. Moral torture in the form of denigration, however officially decried, still continues as a not uncommon means of pupil regulation. This can range from sarcasm to denigration of speech patterns and the learners’ cultural roots.

The literature, however, tends to highlight indoctrination as an immoral means of encouraging learning. Indoctrination is defined as the intentional implantation of unshakeable beliefs regardless of appeals to evidence (Barrow and Woods 1995). A good example of indoctrination in action is what Anthony Flew (1975) called the No True Scotsman argument – see the final chapter in this volume for details on this and other sophistical devices – whereby the subject of an assertion is modified in the face of evidence which challenges the validity of the original assertion.

Indoctrination is seen as running counter to the very idea of education as it ‘necessarily involves lack of respect for an individual’s rationality [and hence] is morally unacceptable’ (Barrow and Woods 1995: 80). These same writers illustrate their opposition to indoctrination by means of an imaginary Catholic school where all the teachers endeavour to have the pupils wholeheartedly and unequivocally share their belief in Catholicism. The fact that Barrow and Woods demonstrate some remarkable ignorance about Catholicism is beside the point. Their focus is on major areas of belief, on whole-life beliefs, on what one might term macro-beliefs. What about the lesser ones, the meso-beliefs and the micro-beliefs? How did we learn that science is objective? That experts are to be trusted? That reading is a necessary prerequisite for any modern society? It does not demand much imagination to determine a welter of beliefs which we usually hold unshakeably and which have been intentionally transmitted to us. There is also the question of the level at which intentionality occurs. While a teacher may not intend to indoctrinate his or her learners, it is quite conceivable and indeed likely that the socio-political system within which that teacher operates demands that certain values and beliefs be transmitted (this is a theme returned to in the next chapter). If we are not
only indoctrinated but also conditioned, then perhaps the very thoughts we are capable of thinking are restrained and constrained.\textsuperscript{9} In addition, the very language we use and words we employ reflect power dynamics and whose version of language holds sway at that moment (Corson 1998: 5).

In Chapter 16 of this volume Trevor Corner and Nigel Grant remind us that we are generally better at identifying when others are indoctrinating. When it happens in our own education system we are more liable to call it ‘moral education’ or ‘citizenship’. The question of moral (un)acceptability remains unanswered.

Perhaps a better question to ask is whether one can avoid all indoctrination in an educational process. Can one always present a learner with rationales as to why things are as we say they are? Will one always have learners who are capable of understanding such rationales? How does one rationalise to a three-year-old that to stick one’s finger in the fire is not a good idea? By explaining the basic theories of thermodynamics and what happens when there is an interaction between skin and hot surfaces? By slightly scorching the child’s finger? By telling the child that it will hurt and hope that one’s authority as an adult/parent will be enough to have the child always believe that sticking a finger in the fire is not a good idea? Simply presenting notions as truth is much simpler than explaining them and may be much preferable to demonstrating possible consequences of an action one wishes the learner to avoid. Explanation demands a level of understanding which may simply not exist in the learner. However, even rationalising everything might be construed as ‘indoctrination’, in that one is presenting the learner and encouraging in him/her a pattern of behaviour and hence beliefs as to its acceptability. One’s force of argument may give one such an advantage over the learner that the latter simply succumbs to the belief being proposed. As a teacher one may feel that the learner has agreed with the reasonableness of the belief and has agreed to share it. As a learner one might just feel ground down.

In passing, it can be worth reminding ourselves that ‘acquiring a belief is like catching a cold’ (Heil 1999: 47). No matter how I might contrive to ‘catch’ whatever metaphorical virus transmits a belief, no matter how I might believe myself willing to acquire the said belief, it is only when conditions are just right that I will acquire it. However, repetition and reinforcement that the proposed belief is true will help enormously in engendering these conditions. This point, known as \textit{argumentum ad nauseam}, is illustrated by the way in which media stories can achieve a life of their own, regardless of how true they are and frequently in the face of powerful evidence to the contrary (Miller \textit{et al.} 1998; Moore 2002). This notion of repetition is tied in with an approach used in psychiatry whereby the patient with depression learns to act as if they did not have depression. In this way, they may put a spring in their step, talk in an upbeat manner and basically conduct themselves as if they were fine. They are circumventing the depression and acting as if they believe themselves to be fine. The aim is to set in train a habitual behaviour and in effect change their belief about themselves. ‘Fake it until you make it’ requires a suspension of disbelief in order to modify expectations and hence belief. It is widely used in addiction therapies as well as in treatment of mood disorders (Demaree \textit{et al.} 2004: 21).
It seems that the teacher is in a cleft stick if she or he decides to avoid all indoctrination. Giving no teaching implies to budding learners either that learning has a low value or that they themselves have. If we offer teaching, we are offering a complete package of beliefs that go with it and implying, if not insisting upon, its acceptability and desirability and hence ‘indoctrinating’ (Sutherland 1994).

On the other hand, perhaps there is a major argument in favour of critical thinking. Indeed, if one’s position is that indoctrination in all its forms and regardless of the intent is immoral (i.e. if one accepts that Peters’ definition of what constitutes education is valid at least in this respect) then the encouragement of critical thinking is essential. This does, however, require a conundrum whereby the learner has to be convinced of the value of critical thinking in order to acquire or develop the tools necessary for critical thinking. Hence, in order to avoid indoctrination, one needs to employ indoctrination.

Expressed at its least subtle we have Postman and Weingartner’s notion of ‘crap-detection’ whereby the ‘crap detector … is not completely captivated by the arbitrary abstractions of the community in which he [sic] happened to grow up in’ (1976: 18). In other words, the crap detector is able to look past the symbolism and theatricals of his or her society and adopt a critical perspective. This is a notion which is most often associated with Paulo Freire and his idea of conscientisation. In dealing with Freire a word of caution is needed: Freire wrote in Portuguese and used the term conscientização which, since the Portuguese words for conscience and consciousness are the same, could be translated into English as either conscience-raising or consciousness-raising, so there is an element of ambiguity about the concept. However, Freire, a gifted linguist, was probably aware of this and hence the double meaning is very likely to be deliberate.

Conscientisation is a means of empowerment whereby the learner decides what is to be learned and does so in terms of what is meaningful to his or her own existence. The goal of this education is to make the learner more critically aware of the area under discussion, and hence more critically aware of himself or herself and his or her environment. The political implications of such an educational goal and its associated pedagogy are immense. In this view of education, there is no received wisdom and everything is open to question. Nonetheless, the quandary outlined above remains, whereby offering teaching in any shape or form, or not at all, constitutes indoctrination but perhaps the development of the critical faculty is the most moral of options in that it encourages the learner to question even the basic premise upon which the learning experience is based (Akkari and Perez 2000).

What is education for?

What education is for is clearly dependent on how we choose to define education and how we determine the relationship between education and the society in which it operates. For the purposes of this section, where we look at some of the social goals of education, we shall concentrate on the formal domain. Formal education is above all associated with school, further education and higher education. It tends to aim, at least
at some levels, at a qualification and is often associated in the public mind with younger people. Non-formal education requires no entrance qualifications (such as school certificates or degrees, but it may require a certain level of knowledge and/or expertise in the domain in question), may result in no exit qualifications and is more usually associated with adults. The boundaries between formal and non-formal education were never very strict and are becoming even more blurred as time goes on.

Since time immemorial, formal education has been used with a social goal in mind. Every society seeks to replicate itself and finds ways of transmitting what it considers worthwhile to its young and sometimes its not-so-young citizens. In Ancient Greece, for example, the Spartans used a formal school system to instil into their young men the ideas of absolute obedience to their military commanders, extreme courage and resistance to pain as well as, what were for the time, some of the most advanced notions of military strategy. The young women were trained in domestic arts and motherhood. By the same token, it was not uncommon for commentators to complain, as did Seneca during the Roman Empire, that ‘we are training children for school, not for life’. From this it becomes clear that it has been held for a very long time that school ought to have a social function and that this social function has not always been clear and well-defined.

Since the Reformation, at least, the idea that formal education can be used to reproduce society, mould society or create a new society has been widely discussed and written about in the West. The Reformers sought to create a society based around the reading of the Bible which distinguished them from their Roman Catholic predecessors, who emphasised the interpretation of the Bible given by the Old Church. The social upheaval of the Reformation was accompanied by attempts to literally create a new society based on a literate population. To this end, John Knox et al. (1560), in their First Book of Discipline, proposed the creation of schools in every centre of population whose aims would be not only to teach basic skills such as reading and writing, but also to act as a means whereby the more able boys and girls would learn sufficiently to allow entry to higher education. In this way, the intelligentsia would be kept in contact with the rest of the population and the upper echelons of society would be revitalised by new blood.

This idea of using education for social engineering has echoes in Robert Owen (1835), who states in his New View of Society that:

Any general character, from the best to the worst, from the most ignorant to the most enlightened, may be given to any community, even to the world at large, by the application of proper means; which means are to a great extent at the command and under the control of those who have influence in the affairs of men.

(Owen 1835 [1965]: 85)

It is important to underline here that character refers not to individuals but to the communities that they form. The essential point, however, is that for Owen education had the power to shape collections of individuals into communities and to determine the nature of those communities. In other words, education has a major socialising
function. This theme is taken up by Durkheim, for whom ‘education consists of the methodical socialisation of the young generation’ (Durkheim 1956: 71). Durkheim also sees education as a means for social reproduction: ‘Education, far from having as its unique or principle object the individual and his interests, is above all the means by which society perpetually recreates the conditions of its existence’ (Durkheim 1956: 123). Part of the recreation of itself is the need for economic sustenance if not growth. However, until recently there seemed to be a certain coyness about openly espousing the view that ‘the economic aims of education are as legitimate as any other’ (Winch 2002: 101). Yet, if education – whether a lifelong activity or as Winch puts it ‘broadly but not exclusively concerned with preparation for life’ (2002: 101) – does not have economic aims, then why is so much money spent on it? In point of fact, it is fairly easy to establish that the economic aims of education are paramount, especially when education is viewed as a preparation for life or as a means of coping with changes in one’s economic circumstances.

Formal education serves many functions besides those outlined above. It contains examinations and assessments of various kinds which serve to decide, in part at least, the choice of next destinations the learner can move on to. Depending on one’s perspective, these can be seen as an opportunity for social mobility or as a means for further entrenching social divides and further ossifying the existing social structure. Formal education may liberate or enslave, expand horizons or confirm feelings of personal failure. But let us note that formal education is seen as a right but seldom as a privilege despite general consensus that it is essential in order for a person to learn how to function within our society.

### What does it mean to become educated?

Becoming educated carries with it a number of notions such as the acquisition of depth, whereby a person understands (increasingly) the underlying principles within an ‘area of knowledge’. The educated person will acquire breadth in the sense that she or he will develop a cognitive perspective within an area of knowledge and between areas of knowledge. This implies the creation of linkages across the area of knowledge and into areas which may adjoin or not. This not only serves to distinguish knowledge from information, but serves to encourage the adoption of differing perspectives on the same domain (an almost essential prerequisite to creative problem-solving). Indeed, for Peters, ‘being educated is incompatible with being narrowly specialised’ (1970: 4).

An area of knowledge is, by definition, not an amorphous mass, but has certain rules to bind it together. In this view of education, the educated person has to abide by these rules when acquiring knowledge, when handling knowledge and when using knowledge. To take one example, when learning another language, one accepts that the grammar and syntax of that language are rules to be obeyed (as best one can) if one wishes to communicate effectively in that language. Failure to obey the rules may make communication difficult, if not altogether impossible. Against this has to be set the notion that fundamental creativity often comes about when the accepted rules in an area of knowledge are bent or ignored and a new, revised set has to be put in place.11
We are used in our culture to measure ‘being educated’ against, for example, level of qualification or extent of acquaintance with some domain or other. In this way, the capacity to expound upon and employ the literary canon, or some other set of knowledge, may be the scale against which one’s being educated is measured. Barrow (1999) draws this together with the development of criticality mentioned above and states that ‘it is to have a developed mind, which means a mind that has developed understanding such that it can discriminate between logically different kinds of questions and exercise judgment, critically and creatively, in respect of important matters’ (p. 139). Such discrimination and judgement inevitably need to be based upon a significant amount of knowledge. Just how much is significant and about what sort of knowledge we are talking is, of course, open to debate and will vary according to circumstances. My being educated in horticulture may be of little use when faced with a burst pipe in my living room.

All this implies that, while we may wax about general education, the sheer scope of knowledge and skills which are there to be acquired, at least in theory, is such that we must forcibly remain uneducated in at least some, if not many, domains. However, Barrow’s argument, in company with many others, implies very strongly that education is the antithesis of indoctrination, although, as suggested above, education must perforce contain elements of indoctrination, if only to convince some learners of its own worth.

Education suffers from a variety of definitional problems, not least of which is the frequently false equation between education and studying (compounded by a similarly false equation between learning and studying\(^1\)). Studying implies some sort of examination, if only self-examination. Learning does not. Whether education makes a similar implication is dependent on how one chooses to define it. However, we might do well to distinguish between education and being educated. If education runs into such problems through its simultaneously being a process and a product, then why not dispense with the one and concentrate on the other? In this way, discussion of what it means to be educated can potentially be more fruitful since the term implies not a process, with all the pitfalls and traps that await even the more astute such as Richard Peters, but rather a product. In this way, it is immaterial how we have acquired the components of being educated; what counts is that we have indeed acquired them.

With this idea in mind, it is worthwhile taking a moment to consider those things which, in your opinion, every person should know and those things which every person should be able to do. Should we value some knowledge and skills over others? If so, which ones? And, as importantly, why should these knowledge and skills be more important than others? By asking questions such as this, we can begin to establish a canon of basic knowledge – which might be quite sophisticated – as well as establishing a hierarchy of knowledge. Critical in this venture, though, is establishing the rationale for such a set of affairs. In the end we may arrive at the same conclusion as Maskell (1999), who argues that those whom we might term ‘educated’ are all too often themselves in want of an education, suffering as they do from limited horizons and narrow ranges of knowledge.

We might even arrive at the notion of the educated public which, as Wain (1994) tells us, can take a variety of forms but which in all of them seems to imply some sort of
community of persons endowed not just with knowledge and understanding across a wide range of spheres, but with critically and a capacity to communicate effectively with each other.

**Some different kinds of knowing**

It seems fairly obvious that there are various things that we learn in different ways, regardless of our general preferences for learning. For example, it is hard to conceive of learning to sing without opening one’s mouth and actually trying to sing. Equally, one could hardly train a surgeon (or should that be *educate*) without expecting them to acquire knowledge not only of what to do but also of how to do it, as well as giving them supervised practice in actually doing it. This is tied in with the notion of developing expertise such as in the Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1985) model of skills acquisition, which takes the learner from novice to expert: novices rely on rules since they do not have the experience and insight that allow them to gauge the applicability of the rules, whereas the expert has an intuitive grasp of situations based on a deep tacit understanding. In this way, the expert may know something without knowing how they know it. In effect, they can know the answer on the basis of experience and knowledge deeply held. Linked to this is the conscious competency model (Table 1.1).

**TABLE 1.1 The conscious competency model**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unconscious</th>
<th>Conscious</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 1: unconscious incompetence</strong>&lt;br&gt;The person is unaware that they are deficient in the skill or knowledge needed.</td>
<td><strong>Level 2: conscious incompetence</strong>&lt;br&gt;The person is aware that they are deficient in the skill or knowledge needed. &lt;br&gt;Practice will move the person to the conscious competence stage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 4: unconscious competence</strong>&lt;br&gt;The skill or knowledge set is so practised that active application is not realised or necessary. It is a ‘second nature’ response.</td>
<td><strong>Level 3: conscious competence</strong>&lt;br&gt;The skill or knowledge do not need assistance to be performed or recalled, but does require thought or concentration, and is not an automatic action.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Roland and Matheson (2012: 144).

Donald Rumsfeld, as Secretary of Defense under George W. Bush, famously stated in 2002:

Reports that say that something hasn’t happened are always interesting to me, because as we know, there are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns – the ones
we don’t know we don’t know. And if one looks throughout the history of our country and other free countries, it is the latter category that tends to be the difficult ones.

(Federal News Service 2002)

Rumsfeld was frankly lampooned by the press and broadcast media. However, if we present Rumsfeld’s comment in tabular form and add a fourth category and some notes of explanation, it becomes more clear (Table 1.2).

**TABLE 1.2** Known knowns, and so on

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Known</th>
<th>Unknown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Known</strong></td>
<td><strong>Unknown</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Known knowns</strong></td>
<td><strong>Known unknowns</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things that I know I know – e.g.</td>
<td>Things that I know I don’t know – e.g.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowing that I speak certain</td>
<td>knowing that I do not speak certain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>languages.</td>
<td>languages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unknown</strong></td>
<td><strong>Unknown unknowns</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unknown knowns</strong></td>
<td>Things that I think I know but in fact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things that I know but am unaware</td>
<td>don’t – e.g. skills I could once execute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of my knowing them – tacit</td>
<td>but can no longer do, but I remain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge.</td>
<td>convinced that my former competence remains.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In addition, we might consider *how* we know. A typical classification is as shown by Miller (1990) when he considered how to assess various types of competence in medical practitioners (Figure 1.1).

![Miller's triangle](source: Miller 1990: S63)
The lowest level in Miller’s triangle – *knows* – refers to *propositional knowledge*; that is, knowledge of facts, legislation, policies and so on. This is akin to learning for the theory part of a driving test. The second lowest level – *knows how* – refers to *procedural knowledge*; that is, knowing how to use the knowledge from the lowest level. This is like being able to describe how to drive a car. The third level – *shows* – refers to being able to demonstrate what one has learned in the lower levels. In other words, to be able to carry out practical tasks under supervision. This is like being accompanied by an experienced driver when learning to drive. Of course, during this time, one might well be continuing to acquire both procedural and propositional knowledge and, if one reflects on the practical work, one will be using that to add to both of these types of knowledge. The highest level is *does* and this is where one can work alone and unsupervised. This is like when one has passed the driving test and is able to get out on the road alone.

We can add a further level to Miller’s triangle (Figure 1.2).

*Shows others* refers to teaching. In order to teach effectively, one needs to be able to bring forth the tacit knowledge that one has in order to be able to explain to learners. This entails breaking tasks down into component parts and empathising with the learner and the challenges that she or he faces. The expert has a dexterity that the novice usually lacks and so what is easy to the expert may be very difficult for the novice.

The move from unconscious competence back to conscious competence to be aware of the things one does automatically and without thinking can be difficult and even impossible for some people to achieve, at least in some instances. Hence, for some, the further level of Miller’s triangle might well be *Can’t show others*. This is without mentioning those for whom the further level might well be entitled *Won’t show others* as they jealously guard whatever skills they possess, perhaps for fear that the rising generation might usurp them.

![Figure 1.2](image_url) Matheson’s variation on Miller’s triangle.
There is also the phenomenon whereby one can recognise good performance without being able to perform to the level one is observing. Related to this is the sports coach who can advise players how to improve their game and yet cannot himself or herself play as well as the players she or he is coaching.

**What is the study of education?**

Education is unlike most other academic disciplines in that there is no agreement as to what it actually is. In consequence the study of education is somewhat diverse. It begins inevitably from the concept of education held by those directing the study – whether through their role as course managers, as researchers or as funders of research projects.

**From the student’s point of view?**

If one succumbs to the notion that education equals school, then one’s view of what constitutes knowledge of education worthy of study (for who really wants to study useless knowledge?) will be somewhat different from knowledge considered worthwhile by one who believes that education is a lifelong process. Unfortunately, there is a widespread tendency to do just that, despite the fact that it closes one’s mind to the educational experiences that occur in the longer part of one’s life. The excuse given, as Gutmann (cited in Wain 1994) reminds us, is that ‘an exhaustive study of the other potential educational agencies in society would be exhausting if not impossible’ (p. 155). This is doubtless true, but one could just pick and choose as has occurred in the present text and try at least to be representative of what is available.

At least two attempts have been made to establish what students of Education Studies might study and these were undertaken for the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. The result is the *Benchmark Statements for Education Studies* (QAA 2000, 2007), which seek to state what a student completing a Single Honours programme in the subject will be capable of doing. Joint and Combined Honours students would be expected to show capability in a relevant selection of the areas.

The benchmark statements represent a compromise between those who argue that Education Studies is a discipline in its own right and those who see it as an offshoot of teacher training. Equally, the statements have to accommodate those who emphasise one methodological approach, be this sociological, historical, psychological, philosophical, some combination of these or some other approach entirely.

Education Studies is concerned with understanding how people develop and learn throughout their lives. It facilitates a study of the nature of knowledge, and a critical engagement with a variety of perspectives, and ways of knowing and understanding, drawn from a range of appropriate disciplines. There is diversity in Education Studies courses at undergraduate level, but all involve the intellectually rigorous study of educational processes, systems and approaches, and the cultural, societal, political and historical contexts within which they are embedded.

(QAA 2000: 4)
In the second edition of the benchmark statements for Education Studies, this had evolved into:

Education studies is concerned with understanding how people develop and learn throughout their lives, and the nature of knowledge and critical engagement with ways of knowing and understanding. It offers intellectually rigorous analysis of educational processes, systems and approaches, and their cultural, societal, political, historical and economic contexts. Many courses include the study of broader perspectives such as international education, economic relationships, the effects of globalisation and the role of education in human rights and ecological issues. They all include critique of current policies and practice and challenge assumptions.

(QAA 2007: 1)

What is perhaps most remarkable is that, other than the definitions given above, the statements never explicitly state what topics need be studied. This should come as no surprise: if there can be no consensus on what constitutes education, there can surely be none on what constitutes Education Studies.

Despite this, Education Studies is perhaps unique among academic disciplines in that all students can bring directly to bear their own experiences and their own process of education. Since we have all found ourselves in situations which involve teaching and learning (and in studying Education Studies we are continuing to do so), then we all have experience which is relevant. In this respect, perhaps the only other domain which comes close in terms of universalised experience is Medicine, since we have all been sick at least once in our lives.

From the researcher’s point of view?

The various chapters of this book, including this one, together with their references lists, give some indication of the wide diversity of subjects studied by researchers in Education Studies. Fundamentally, one can say that if a topic involves teaching or learning in any shape or form whatsoever, whether in a classroom or in the school of life or wherever, then it is fair game to be researched. Not that one would necessarily get funding, of course.

Conclusion

In essence, this chapter has been about ideas regarding education and its purpose, as well as briefly considering Education Studies. Ideas when formalised into practice naturally have material impacts and some of these are picked up in later chapters. A negative perspective on such an impact is given by Common, who presents us with perhaps the most cynical view of formal education as social control:

We learn reading and boredom, writing and boredom, arithmetic and boredom, and so on according to the curriculum, till in the end it is quite certain you can put us in the most boring job there is and we’ll endure it.

(Common in Meighan 1986: 75)
Notes

1. It also implies some sort of examination to see if the learner has come up to the ‘standard’. Examination may of course be self-examination, rather than some sort of test imposed or conducted by a third party.

2. A master of aphorisms and puns, Mcluhan deliberately entitled his book on this subject *The Medium is the Massage*.

3. Indeed, if one follows Bloom’s (1969) *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*, then one has to include at least some skills since the hierarchy of cognitive objectives is as follows, and the last three listed are clearly skills to be acquired:
   - knowledge
   - comprehension
   - application
   - analysis
   - synthesis
   - evaluation.

   Similarly, following Bloom’s affective objectives will mean including attitudes in our ‘something’.

4. For discussion of the nature of knowledge, the reader is referred to the *Blackwell Companion to Epistemology*. For a counter-argument to the commonly held belief that knowledge is justified, true belief, see the Gettier Problem which tackles the inconsistency in the JTB approach with humour and panache. See http://en2.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gettier_problem.

5. Being unable to educate oneself by means of discovery stands at odds with Donald Schön’s (1984) work on the reflective practitioner, which has been extremely influential in the UK and elsewhere in terms of how not only teachers but also medical practitioners, engineers, architects and various other professionals are trained. Schön discusses, among other things, the development of the expert touch, that tacit knowledge that allows us to make adjustments to our practice on the hoof.

   It is a type of knowing that we see in every skilled crafts-person who knows by apparent intuition just what to do in a given situation. It is a skill which, like any skill, is learned, but it is essentially one which, although a teacher may help one on one’s way, one teaches oneself.

6. Majority is a very relative term. In the UK, English speakers are in the majority but they are very much in the minority in Europe, however we want to define Europe – for this too is a relative term: do we mean the European Union? If so, then what about Switzerland and Norway? If Europe is that part of the world west of the Urals which sits on the European Continental Shelf (a traditional definition of Europe) then what about Iceland? The Icelanders consider themselves European and yet their country is a volcanic island in the middle of the Atlantic and very definitely not on the European Continental Shelf. Similarly, minority is relative. Both terms can also be considered in terms of power.

7. This was the standard practice in the primary school I attended in the 1960s.

8. This they do, among other things, by insisting that Catholics believe that the Pope is infallible (p. 70). The reality is that the Pope is held under the doctrine of infallibility to be able to make infallible statements under certain circumstances and only on matters of doctrine.

9. See Matheson and Matheson (2000) for a discussion of discourse and the limitations that language can set on our thinking.

10. *Non vitae sed scholae discimus*.

11. One can also contrast the way adults tend to learn languages compared with children. Adults aim more for accuracy in grammar etc., children for communication in just the same way as they learned their native tongue. Children use a new language for the purpose for which language was intended (i.e. to communicate) and only as a secondary consideration do they learn how to structure it. Compare the success rates of children and adults in language acquisition to judge the relative efficacy of the two approaches.

12. See http://s860.photobucket.com/user/chattahoochee1/media/reading-but-not-studying.gif.html (and elsewhere) for the very wonderful cartoon *reading but not studying*.

13. Parents who attempt to teach their offspring how to drive do not always find this to be an easy task, as the breaking down of automatisms into their component parts can render their execution challenging, if not impossible.

14. I once heard Education Studies being described as parasitic and proud of it!
What is education?

**References**


CHAPTER 2

Ideology in education in the United Kingdom

Catherine Matheson

To ‘idéologues’ one must attribute all the misfortunes which have befallen France.

Do you know what fills me most with wonder? The powerlessness of force to establish anything…. In the end the sword is always conquered by the mind.

Napoleon Bonaparte

Introduction

Every concept in education has varying and various interpretations, but perhaps none more so than ideology. As this chapter will show, it is used in a variety of senses and to a variety of ends. To do this, we begin with a discussion of the concept of ideology and show how it has had multiple meanings from the time it was first coined. We then move on to discuss ideology in education and show some of the types of ideology that are used in understanding education, before illustrating some of these types.

The concept of ideology

Ideology is a ‘highly ambiguous concept’ (Meighan and Siraj-Blatchford 1998: 179), a ‘most equivocal and elusive concept’ (Larrain 1979: 13) which has many meanings and usages and can be conceived either negatively and critically as a ‘false consciousness’ or positively as a ‘world view’. The former has a restricted meaning and tends to be used in a pejorative manner to describe a set of undesirable and even distorted beliefs, while the latter has a looser meaning and is used by philosophers and social scientists in neutral and analytical ways. Ideology can also be viewed as a subjective psychological phenomenon emphasising the role of individuals and groups or as a more objective social phenomenon ‘impregnating the basic structure of society’ (Larrain 1979: 14). Ideology can also be seen either, restrictively, as part of, or more loosely, as equal to, the whole of the cultural sphere or ideological superstructure of society.

The word ‘ideology’ originated with that group of savants or intellectuals in the French Revolution who were entrusted by the Convention of 1795 with the founding and management of a new centre of revolutionary thought. These people were located...
within the newly established Institut de France, which was committed to the ideas of the French Enlightenment and thus the practical realisation of freedom of thought and expression (Lichtheim 1967).

In its original sense, the word ‘ideology’ was first used in 1796 by the French philosopher Destutt de Tracy, a member of the Institut de France and one of the directors of the highly influential French literary review Mercure de France. It was, in the words of one of the Mercure’s regular contributors, Joseph-Jérôme Le François de Lalande, nothing more than a name for the ‘science of ideas, their rules and their origins’ (Lalande in Rey and Rey-Debove 1990: 957). Deriving ideas from sensations, Destutt de Tracy undertook to study the ‘natural history of ideas’ in his Eléments d’idéologie (1801–1815). He wanted to unmask the historicity of ideas by tracing their origins and setting aside metaphysical and religious prejudices, but also wanted this unmasking to reveal a true and universal knowledge of human nature (Hall 1978). Ideology was presented as a science and set in opposition to prejudice and false beliefs because scientific progress was possible only if these could be avoided.

From the start, however, ideology was to have pejorative connotations, one reason being that de Tracy and those who practised it, the ideologues or ‘idéologistes’, were concerned with two logically incompatible concepts of ‘ideology’: the relation between history and thought and the promotion of ‘true’ ideas which would be true regardless of the historical context. Following Helvétius, who believed that education could do everything, the ideologues shared his enthusiasm for it (Larrain 1979). After the years of revolution they wanted to educate the French people and, above all, the young people so that a just and happy society could be established. De Tracy wanted his book to be a study programme for youngsters and explicitly acknowledged that a motive for writing it was the new law (1801) introducing public education.

The other reason for the pejorative connotation of ideology was Napoleon, who was the first to use the term in a truly negative sense. Initially he shared the objectives and goals of the Institut de France and even became an honorary member in 1797 (Lichtheim 1967). The Institut then facilitated Bonaparte’s accession to power, which he achieved in 1799, by helping him win the support of the educated middle class (Hall 1978). However, he abandoned the ideologues in 1803 when he signed his Concordat with the Church and deliberately set out to destroy the core of the Institut, the liberal and republican ideas of which greatly influenced the educational establishment. From then on the ‘idéologistes’ were ridiculed as utopian visionaries under the name of ‘idéologues’ (Dancy and Sosa 1993: 191) After the defeat in Russia in 1812, Napoleon turned on them forcefully and attributed all of France’s misfortune to the ideologists, or ‘idéologues’ as he disparagingly called them, whom he considered unrealistic, doctrinaire and ignorant of political practice (Lichtheim 1967). (It is worth noting that English language has reversed the pejorative and non-pejorative use of the term.) Nonetheless, after Napoleon’s demise, the Comte de Tracy, who became a well-known personality in France and outside France, held an influential salon where writers and scientists met.

It is from this pejorative use of ideology as an undesirable or misguided set of ideas that many modern uses of the word have grown. Continuing this tendency, Marx and
Engels used ideology pejoratively to mean a false belief or illusion. In The German Ideology, written in 1845–1847 but only published in 1927, Marx and Engels, although not clearly defining the concept, use ideology to deride the proposition of the belief in the power of ideas to determine reality. For Marx (and Marxists) ideology was thus often seen as an attempted justification of a distorted set of ideas which consciously and/or unconsciously concealed contradictions in the interests of the dominant class or of a group, and served to maintain disproportionate allocation of economic and political power to the ruling class or dominant groups (Marx and Engels [1845–1847] 1970). Elsewhere Marx uses the term less pejoratively and gives a sociological interpretation of ideology (Marx 1859 in Meighan and Siraj-Blatchford 1998), in which ideology can be defined as a broad, interlocked set of ideas and beliefs about the world held by a group of people operating at various levels in society and in various contexts and which is demonstrated in their behaviour. This adds to the ambiguity of the concept of ideology not only because of the competing definitions, but also because the set of beliefs operates with several layers of meaning (Meighan and Siraj-Blatchford 1998).

After a period of disuse the word was revived with the publication in 1927 of Marx’s and Engels’ previously unpublished The German Ideology, which reinforced the Marxist and central sociological tradition view of ideology as ‘distortion of reality’ (Bullock et al. 1988). The classical Marxist position claims that ideological misconceptions cannot be dispelled by confronting with the ‘truth’ those under their spell since ideologies contain standards of evidence and argumentation that prevent the recognition of reality as it is (Dancy and Sosa 1993). For Gramsci and other Marxists, however, ideology is explained in terms of its social role, it is neither true nor false but ‘the “cement” which holds together the structure [in which economic class struggle takes place] and the realm of the complex superstructures’ (Hall 1978: 53). In other words, ideologies are those beliefs which are generated by a particular mode of production or economic structure. For Althusser, ideologies are non-scientific beliefs related more closely to social practice than to theoretical enquiry (Summer 1979). Lack of space precludes discussion of scientific beliefs as the only true beliefs and hence being free from ideological constraints; however, the reader is referred to Sokal and Bricmont (1998) for a discussion of the nature of scientific belief and reality. More recently, the concept of ideology has seen a renewed (implicit rather than explicit) interest, particularly in feminism, cultural studies and post-modernism in general, for the ‘unmasking relations of power and domination implicit in culturally dominant forms of theoretical and social discourse’ (Dancy and Sosa 1993: 193).

For my purposes I shall consider ideology in its broad sense of a set of beliefs as opposed to the narrow sense of a set of undesirable or misguided beliefs. Within contemporary sociology one distinguishes between ‘particular’ ideologies concerning specific groups and ‘total’ ideologies concerning a total commitment to a way of life. Every ideology is composed of three ingredients: (1) an invariable mythological structure, (2) an alternating set of philosophical beliefs and (3) a historically determined chosen group of people (Feuer 1975). Where ideologies exist in competition there are several outcomes: domination, incorporation and legitimation. In the first instance, we have cultural domination or hegemony. In the second, we have radical ideas incorporated
into the traditional ideology. In the last instance, an ideology may achieve acceptance of its beliefs by direct repression or by more indirect means of institutional control, such as those of the media, education, religion, law or economy (Meighan and Siraj-Blatchford 1998).

**Ideology, knowledge and the curriculum**

A curriculum as a package of ideas, together with the manner in which it is delivered (its pedagogy) certainly fits the bill as an ideology. Curriculum heritage is the product of a philosophical tradition which can be traced through historical and contemporary curriculum practice, and in which we find the European triad of humanism (Plato, Erasmus and Locke), rationalism (Plato and Descartes) and naturalism (Rousseau). The first two elements of the triad underline, respectively, the importance of the human character and especially the feelings and the importance of reason, but with both understanding is sought by submission of the individual to an external body of knowledge, while the third seeks understanding in the private, concrete and the natural (McLean 1995). As in much in ideology, the triad’s elements are not mutually exclusive.

It is these first two approaches that have dominated curriculum development across Europe, and, as a consequence of European influence, across much of the world. In France there is the rational encyclopaedic educational ideology with state prescription of national occupational needs (McLean 1995). In this collectivist tradition upper secondary schooling is subordinated to economic and social planning and general and vocational education are linked in content and control (collectivism). In the pluralist tradition we move towards an individualist and humanist approach such as exists in the UK and Germany, with a clear separation between general education and vocational training, though in Germany the curriculum is more infiltrated with rational encyclopaedic ideology than in the UK. We also have generalism (as in France and Germany) versus specialism or, as some say, elitism in England and to a lesser extent in Scotland (McLean 1995). Naturalism, however, as we shall shortly see, is very present and has been highly influential, especially in primary schools.

**Educational ideologies**

An educational ideology is any package of educational ideas held by a group of people about formal arrangements for education, typically expressed by contrasting two patterns of opposed assumptions such as teacher-centred and child-centred methods (the *Plowden Report* – DES 1967) or traditional and progressive methods (Bennett 1976). Going beyond dichotomies, Davies (1969) and Cosin (1972) outline four ideologies of education: (1) conservative or elitist, which maintains cultural hegemony; (2) revisionist or technocratic, which is concerned with vocational relevance; (3) romantic or individualist or psychological, which focuses on individual development and derives from the work of Pestalozzi, Froebel, Herbart, Montessori and Piaget; and (4) democratic socialist or liberal tradition or egalitarian, which seeks equality of opportunity and the
progressive elimination of elitist values (Meighan and Siraj-Blatchford 1998). These categories are not hermetic, nor are they entirely mutually exclusive; they overlap and indeed an educational ideology might belong to several categories simultaneously. Assuming one accepts these categories as valid at all, the category(ies) to which a particular ideology might be assigned is often a matter of perspective.

Any ideology can be compared with others on the basis of a series of theories functioning as part of an aspect of knowledge, learning, teaching resources, organisation, assessments and aims. The concept of ideology can be used as an analytical tool to compare various patterns of education. Ideologies operate at different conceptual levels and, if categorised into levels of operations, can be compared along the lines of whole education systems, competing ideologies within a national system, ideologies within formal education and ideologies of classroom practice. Ideologies are usually linked: for example, ideologies of classroom practice may be linked to other parts of the educational and political network. The levels at which ideologies operate can be seen nationally in terms of Education Acts; regionally in terms of Local Education Authorities; locally at the levels of educational establishments, classroom, teacher–learner interaction, and rival groups within the classroom (Meighan and Siraj-Blatchford 1998).

One could also distinguish between ideologies of legitimation or implementation, the former concerning goals, values and ends and the latter the means, and it can be a worthwhile exercise to consider the ideologies outlined below in this light.

**Educational ideologies and politics**

By definition education is a political activity in the broad sense, although this does not necessarily mean that it is a party political activity. Politics has to do with power and the distribution of power. Education has to do with knowledge (whether in terms of knowing that or knowing how). If knowledge is power, then education is political. If Gramsci’s theory of hegemony (see Chapter 1) is accurate, then politics is an educational activity and education is a political activity. All educators have an ideology, whether formally articulated or not, or whether they are aware of having an ideology. To subscribe to a particular view of the aims of education is to subscribe to an educational ideology. Debate about the nature and purpose of education is therefore ‘bound to be not only ideological but, in the broad sense, political as well’ (Winch and Gingell 1999: 111).

Often people think, it would seem, that there is a correlation between political views and educational views. The correlation is usually that left-wing political views and support for child-centred or progressive education go hand in hand. This may have been more true at particular times, but it need not necessarily be so. Three examples illustrate the fact that political and educational ideologies cannot necessarily be subsumed into each other, although they certainly overlap.

The first example concerns two Labour personalities who had different educational ideologies. In his Ruskin speech of 1976 the Labour prime minister James Callaghan acknowledged his indebtedness to R.H. Tawney, who had been one of the originators
of the Labour Party programme on education many years previously. Ironically, Callaghan and Tawney had very different views on most educational issues. Tawney defended liberal values, teacher autonomy and social democratic meritocracy. Callaghan, in his speech, advocated greater state control, teacher accountability and parentocracy, that is, more power to parents and less to the teachers. Callaghan aimed at increasing state control over education and over the curriculum, whereas Tawney had fought to remove central government’s hold on the curriculum. He feared that government might abuse its power over the curriculum to serve the interests of industry or political ideologies instead of serving the interests of the pupils, who were best served by the professional judgement of the teachers. Callaghan questioned the power of the teachers over the curriculum and thought that teachers should be more accountable to parents and to industry (Brooks 1991).

The second example is that of a Marxist who had nothing but contempt for progressive educational ideologies. Antonio Gramsci, who thought that education had the power to affect political consciousness, advocated conservative schooling for radical politics (Entwistle 1979) and there could be no time for what he considered to be the playful experimentation approach of progressive educational methods. Instead, as much as possible of literacy, numeracy, history, politics and economics and science had to be learned as quickly as possible. In order to be in a position to counteract the dominant hegemony one had to learn what the dominant hegemony learned through education and much more. Learning had to be done in a concentrated systematic and disciplined intellectual way. Incidentally, the surfeit of playful experimentation and the opening up of the imagination was one of the major reasons behind the erstwhile Soviet Union abandoning in 1931 the very progressive and child-centred Dalton Plan that had been introduced from the United States shortly after the Russian Revolution. The Soviet Union needed to industrialise rapidly and discovery methods with self-directed learning were simply not delivering the expertise quickly enough (Grant 1979).

A third example is that a form of selective secondary schooling for all was introduced in the UK by a Labour government after the Second World War, which is currently associated with right-of-centre politics; and the Conservative Party has, over many years, much criticised comprehensive education that was widely introduced from the end of the 1960s onwards, replacing state-funded selective schooling in many areas but not all. The Conservative government, however, did not stop the spread of comprehensive schools but accelerated it. In 1967, the Conservative Party leader, Edward Heath, stated that ‘it has never been a Conservative principle that in order to achieve [selection or grouping by ability] children have to be segregated in different institutions’ (Heath in Finn et al. 1978: 176).

Political ideas and ideologies evolve and their expression in educational circumstances evolves too. Indeed, the apparently same educational ideology can be adopted simultaneously or consecutively by different political ideologies. This is the case not only with selective and comprehensive schools, but also with standards and achievement or equality of opportunity and, more recently, the application of market principles to education and the idea of ‘privatisation’ not only not rejected by Labour, but
taken even further and then endorsed by the coalition government elected in 2010 (see Chapter 13).

Some examples of educational ideologies

An elitist ideology: the public school ethos

Perhaps the best illustration of an elitist ideology is the sort which is held to underpin the education of a country’s ruling class. This kind of ideology is important not only for the way in which it might be held to form the ideas and behaviour of the ruling class, but also for the influence it has on the education of the non-ruling class.

Everyone knows something of the public school ethos or public school spirit. The largely autobiographical novel *Tom Brown’s School Days*, whether faithful portrayal or ‘romantic fiction and expurgated fact’ (Chandos 1984: 45), has helped reinforce the mystique of the public school ethos, the ‘pragmatic, almost unsupervised, trial-and-error, sink-or-swim test for survival in a self-governing community of male juveniles’ (Chandos 1984: 38).

Its principal values are those of character over intellect and the importance of physicality. School is a place to train character. It is what came to distinguish the English public school from all other Western approaches to education or educational institutions. It is what ‘impresses and amazes foreigners’ (Gathorne-Hardy 1977: 75).

In France, Germany and even Scotland schools not only drew from the wider social spectrum, but were academic institutions only; character was left to the family (Vaizey 1977). Examples of the public school ethos can be found in *Tom Brown’s School Days*. The first example is from the point of view of Tom’s father:

> Shall I tell him to mind his work, and say he’s sent to school to make himself a good scholar? Well, but he isn’t in school for that – at any rate, not for that mainly. I don’t care a straw for Greek particles, or the digamma, no more does his mother. What is he sent to school for? … If only he’ll turn out a brave, helpful, truth-telling Englishman, and a gentleman, and a Christian, that’s all I want.  

The second example demonstrates that Tom himself seems to have fully internalised the importance of physicality and that character mattered more than intellectual achievement, which constitutes the fundamental values of the public school ethos:

> I want to be A1 at cricket and football, and all the other games, and to make my hands keep my head against any fellow, lout or gentleman…. I want to carry away just as much Latin and Greek as will take me through Oxford respectably.  
> (Hughes [1857] 1963: 262)

Public schools pre-date the emergence of the British Empire. The most distinguished date from the High Medieval period. The public school ethos is therefore a
package of ideas, values and associated practices that have grown up over time. However, it was in the Imperial period that their role, nature and ethos became most clearly defined. The main aim of the education of those who attended public schools was to develop a certain sort of character. This would be one in which self-control and ‘stiff upper lip’ would be of the greater importance as it gave clear imperial advantage. It was well suited to the needs of the army but equally suited to other forms and aspects of imperial service, from missionary work to exploration and administration (Matheson and Limond 1999).

Henry Newbolt’s poem ‘Vitai Lampada’ from *Poems Old and New* (1912) linked together Empire and the public school: ‘The sand of the desert is sodden/Red with the wreck of a square that broke;/the river of death has brimmed his banks,/... But the voice of the schoolboy rallies the ranks: “Play up! Play up! and play the game”.’ The Empire is no more but the public school ethos endures, be it in modified form. *Tom Brown’s School Days* gave rise to the public school novel and the public school memoirs. The magic derives from the myth and the myth derives from literature. The public school ethos survives not just because the public school mystique has a firm hold on popular imagination, but also and most especially because the public school continues to educate the ruling class.

The Clarendon Commission (1864), an investigation of the nine leading public schools, found that

The average school boy was almost ignorant of geography and of the history of his own country, unacquainted with any modern language but his own and hardly competent to write English correctly, to do a simple sum; a total stranger to the laws which govern the physical world.

(Quoted in Martin 1979: 60)

Nonetheless, the public schools were praised for ‘their public spirit, their vigour and manliness of character’ as well as ‘their love of healthy sport and exercise’ and above all the fact that ‘they have had perhaps the largest share in moulding the character of an English gentleman’ (quoted in Martin 1979: 65).

Today the public school ethos endures, not only in about the tenth or so of English schools that are independent schools, both day and boarding schools, and are thus not financed by the state, but it also permeates to some extent the whole of the English education system. More particularly, the public school ethos endures in what are allegedly ‘education’s best kept secret’ (Hackett 2001: 10): that there remains in England about 36 state boarding schools where one can get what amounts to a public school place for between one-third and half of what it would cost to send one’s child(ren) to an independent school. The government pays for the teaching and parents for food and accommodation, at around £10,000. Such schools are praised and prized for their discipline, importance given to team sports and excellent exam results (Hackett 2001). Such importance given to academic achievement is a more recent development within the ideology of the public school ethos.
Some romantic or psychological ideologies

The romantic or psychological ideology, derived from the naturalism of Rousseau, was central to the establishment of progressive schools and has had considerable influence on some forms of curriculum revision and on primary schools. Working within this ideology was perhaps the greatest influence upon the modern primary school curriculum: John Dewey, who argued against the subservience of the child to a curriculum devised for him/her by adults, with its logical division of subject matters and little notice taken of the child’s interest. For him, ‘the child is the starting point, the centre, the end. His[her] development, his[her] growth, is the ideal’ (Dewey 1906: 21 in Curtis 1965: 162). This centrality of the child to the schooling process can perhaps be said to have reached its peak in the UK, and especially in England, with the *Plowden Report* (DES 1967).

In its own terms, Plowdenism emphasises such things as, ‘Learning … [but] not [by] … direct teaching … [and] working harmoniously according to an unfolding rather than a preconceived plan’ (Maclure 1973: 313). Plowden’s was the pedagogy of learning by doing and following one’s interests or enthusiasms. It was influenced by developmental psychology such as that of Piaget, Dewey and Montessori. A long time before Plowden it had been officially approved as an educational ideology in England. The Report of the Consultative Committee on *The Primary School* (1931: 75) backed the idea that ‘the curriculum is to be thought in terms of activity and experience, rather than of knowledge to be acquired and facts to be stored’. The aim of education was to open up the imagination. The cramming of factual or propositional knowledge (knowing that) was condemned, but experience and activity or procedural knowledge (knowing how) were advocated instead. Schooling would be based on scientific ideas of how the child grows and changes. The purpose was to meet the needs of those processes because anything else would be counterproductive in practice, if not also morally wrong. Just as the Reports of the Consultative Committee on *The Primary School* (1931) and on *The Nursery School* (1933) were full of metaphors about growth and nurture and psychological needs, so was the *Plowden Report*, which stressed that education should foster flexibility and adaptability to an economically changing world. Such an ideology saw the aims of education as psychological harmony and saw intellectualism as detrimental to that psychological harmony. The importance of getting on with others and understanding them was stressed, along with psychological balance:

They will need as always to be able to live with their fellows, appreciating and respecting their differences, understanding and sympathizing with their feelings…. They will need to be well balanced, with neither the emotions nor the intellect giving ground to each other.

(DES 1967, §§494–496)

In the 1960s there was an increasing commitment to child-centred education as local authorities moved away from the 11+ examinations and the number of comprehensive schools increased (Brooks 1991). The *Plowden Report* deplored that some
teachers ‘still used books of English exercises and of mechanical computation’ (DES 1967 quoted in Brooks 1991: 92). However, the Black Papers regarded Plowdenism as a libertarian charter and Callaghan’s Ruskin Speech denounced progressivism. The prime minister seemed to have accepted much of the Black Papers propaganda about declining standards, but the ideology promulgated in Plowdenism was far from being what was actually happening in English schools (Brooks 1991).

Although often half-heartedly implemented, Plowdenism can nevertheless be seen as the British, or more specifically English, culmination of the romantic or individualist/psychological tradition (Matheson and Limond 1999). So Plowden had arguably a non-negligible influence in British primary classrooms until the advent in England and Wales of the National Curriculum, with its emphasis on cognitive performance. To its critics it is misguided and even a libertarian charter that promulgates the pursuit of ‘relevance’ to oneself as the essential criterion of intellectual worth. To its supporters it is ‘a truth which has never been fully tested in practice because it has often been misunderstood or overlaid only very thinly as a veneer on existing practices and principles’ (Matheson and Limond 1999: 22).

In all, Plowdenism bears a striking resemblance to Montessorism, the theories of Maria Montessori articulated in *The Montessori Method* (1912) and *The Advanced Montessori Method* (1917). The former deals with mentally or socially disabled children and the latter applies the deriving principles to non-disabled children. In other words, Maria Montessori advocates a psychological method implying that ‘the educative process is adapted to the stage of mental development of the child, and to his/her interests and is not wholly subordinated to the necessities of a curriculum or to the teacher’s scheme of work’ (Rusk 1954: 262). Like that of Plowdenism, Montessori’s own child-centred progressive pedagogy, with emphasis on freedom and auto-education, is associated with the names of Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Herbart, Dewey and Piaget. Such a pedagogy aims to replace traditional pedagogy, whereby the teacher maintains discipline and immobility and engages in loud and continual discourse, ‘by didactic material which contains within itself the control of errors’ and thus ‘makes auto-education possible to each child’ (Montessori 1912: 371). She later added that ‘to make the process one of self-education, it is not enough that the stimulus should call forth activity, it must also direct it’ (Montessori 1917: 71).

Montessori’s emphasis on interest as a driving force for the learner finds a modern echo in Malcolm Knowles’ (1998) idea of andragogy (although, unlike Montessori, Knowles thought primarily of adult learners). Interest as a motivator has, however, a much longer heritage and was defined as ‘the doctrine of interest’ by Herbart, who derived the idea from Rousseau but expanded upon it (Herbart 1816 in Rusk 1954: 210).

Herbart asserts that ‘that which is too simple must be avoided’ and ‘instruction must be comprehensible and yet difficult rather than easy, otherwise it causes ennui [boredom]’ (Herbart 1901 quoted in Rusk 1954: 225). Herbart further asserts that ‘the principle of interest braces [pupils] up to endure all manner of drudgery and hard work, the idea being ‘of making drudgery tolerable by giving it a meaning’ (Adams quoted in Rusk 1954: 225). The doctrine of interest, however, is to be found in Plato’s
Republic, Rousseau’s Emile and Pestalozzi’s correspondence. Herbart also advocated the principle of recapitulation or spiral curriculum, which is a doctrine common to many educators from Plato to Montessori and Dewey. For Herbart, there is no education without instruction and conversely no instruction which does not educate (Rusk 1954). Paradoxically, for an educational ideologist in the romantic tradition, Herbart ascribes to the teacher a centrality which is largely absent from those whose ideas derived from his (Dewey 1923).

**A revisionist ideologist: Herbert Spencer**

Herbert Spencer challenged the traditional curriculum and ‘liberal education’ by classifying the subjects, with scientific subjects being seen as the most important because the knowledge which enables one to earn a living should come first in the curriculum and literary subjects should occupy the ‘lowest place on the scale’ (Curtis 1965). Spencer further asserted that ‘education of whatever kind, has for its proximate end to prepare a child for the business of life – to produce a citizen who, while he [she] is well conducted, is also able to make his [her] way in the world’ (Spencer 1911 in Curtis 1965: 154).

Spencer presents several facets of the doctrine of relevancy (i.e. relevant to the economy and relevant to the learner’s future quality of life). The importance of this former facet in educational and economic debate should not be understated. Other than its returning to the forefront of debates with a great frequency (e.g. in Callaghan’s 1976 Ruskin College speech), the doctrine suggests a great number of questions. How might it be determined how a learner is going to earn his/her living? How can we know what economic needs there will be in the future? To what extent does formal education not already instil pre-vocational skills? Spencer wrote at a time of economic stability, when the future appeared largely to be a direct continuation of the present, which itself flowed seamlessly from the past. Our future now appears much more uncertain – but is this reason sufficient to discard Spencer’s ideas? Even relevancy to the economy is relative, as is discussed at length by White (1997). There are also questions which arise out of the second facet: the business of life also appears to be in mutation but are there underlying skills and values which the learner needs to acquire in order to be successful (by some measure or other) in the ways of the world? We no longer have the consensual moral frameworks that we arguably had at times in the past. Therefore, what skills or values need the learner acquire? And who is to decide these? In sum, to apply the doctrine of relevance, be it to the economy’s future (or actual) needs or to the learner’s future (or actual) needs, we are obliged to decide who is to decide these needs, on what basis (i.e. on what criteria) and to what end(s). Fundamentally, we need decide what education is for.
Liberal or egalitarian ideology

The democratic intellect

The philosophical underpinning of the Scottish education system appears to stand in opposition to the English education system. Both ideologies associated with the dominant values of each system are linked to the history of education in each country. For Scots of the nineteenth century, education had become a badge of national identity, instead of being associated with the privileged ruling class. Education was ‘a potent symbol of Scottishness and one of the ways in which a sense of nationhood was preserved without in any way threatening the basic structure of the union with England’ (Devine 1999: 389). This ‘national’ education system had been established by John Knox and his fellow reformers in the Book of Discipline in the sixteenth century. Its ideology remained a guiding principle for Scottish education. It was not only meritocratic, but according to some, even egalitarian, resting on a ladder of opportunity going from parish schools to burgh schools and then universities, although burgh schools could be bypassed and it was possible for a boy who had talent to go from the parish school to university after he had been given some post-elementary education by the parish schoolmaster in mathematics and Latin (Stephens 1998).

Although not an autobiographical novel, as was Tom Brown’s School Days, Ian Maclaren’s novel Beside the Bonnie Briar Bush exemplifies and reinforces an educational tradition and hence its ideology. The teacher who ‘could detect a scholar in the egg, and prophesised Latinity from a boy who was only fit to be a cowherd’ (Maclaren 1940: 8) is the leader of the local community. His function is to spot likely talent for intellectual endeavour and then persuade the family to live frugally to save up, and the better-off members of the community to give their help to put together the money for the university fees.

The term ‘democratic intellectualism’ was coined in 1919 by Walter Elliot, then Conservative Secretary of State for Scotland, and is associated with the works of George Elder Davie. The term is used to characterise Scotland’s post-Reformation and Enlightenment history (Davie 1961: 75) in terms of thoughtful citizenship, reasoned participation and thriving intellectual debate derived from the fact that until the middle of the nineteenth century Scottish universities nurtured and promoted a set of highly distinctive academic values. The main mechanism of this nurturing and promotion was their concentration on teaching philosophy in a system that only went into decline when forced to change from the 1840s and 1850s (Bell and Grant 1977).

Davie was a lecturer in philosophy at Edinburgh University. He argued that the true nature of Scotland’s educational tradition was democratic intellectualism and deplored the way this true nature had been eroded by closer contact with England (Davie 1993). He argued that Scotland’s educational ideology fitted broadly into a European tradition of generalist curriculum and philosophy-centred higher education. This was contrasted to the insular and eccentric English narrowness of curriculum and specialised ‘Honours’ courses. Not only was there wider access to universities in Scotland, but also a wider and more balanced curriculum with the study of philosophy
Ideology in education in the UK

firmly at its centre (Bell 2000). To understand this point fully it is necessary to think of philosophy not as an academic subject, but as a way of encouraging students to inquire into issues and ideas, morals and metaphysics. In English universities (and at the start of the nineteenth century England had only two, while Scotland, with a tenth of the population, had four) the emphasis was on teaching a precise grasp of Latin and Greek grammar through studying Latin and Greek authors. In Scotland, by contrast, the emphasis was more on understanding what these authors had said rather than how they expressed themselves. (It was thus far more acceptable in Scottish universities to read classical authors in translation.) The ideas expressed in their words were of greater importance than the words themselves, thus the Scottish interest was philosophical rather than literary (Matheson and Limond 1999). The common sense of the subject was put before questions of detail. An understanding of ancient civilisation was preferable to textual study (Davie 1961). Asking and answering philosophical questions was always of prime importance, as was enlightenment over erudition, hence more morals and metaphysics than literature and language (Beveridge and Craig 1989). There was specific teaching of philosophy as a compulsory subject in its own right, but the weaving of philosophical concerns into all other subjects was of far greater significance (Matheson and Limond 1999).

Social democracy

In the period 1944 to 1970, educational policy was based upon the ideology of ‘social democracy’ constructed by three social groups who formed a coalition: the Labour Party (although supported in much of this by the Conservative Party), educationalists working in sociology and economics and the teaching profession. The key features of the ideology of ‘social democracy’ were: a commitment to educational progress through state policy and a concern with access and equality of opportunity. Reform was via the state (the state being seen as neutral) and was for the benefit of all sections of society, especially the underprivileged. A focus of attention in social democracy was working-class under-achievement and wastage of ability and, as a consequence, the idea of non-selective comprehensive schools slowly emerged. Teachers, for their part, pursued professional status and demanded autonomy and control of the curriculum. The notion was promoted, and accepted, that teachers knew what was best for their pupils.

A clarion call of social democracy was equality of opportunity in education, a notion fraught with conceptual difficulties. In a simple form, equality of opportunity can be seen as open and fair competition for economic rewards and social privileges. The problems arise when one tries to determine what is open and fair. The way in which this meaning shifted in the UK is demonstrated by the move by socialists from supporting selective secondary schools in the 1940s and 1950s to calling for a total end to selection for secondary school from the 1960s onwards. Both the generalisation of selective secondary school and the abolition of selective secondary school were justified on the grounds of equality of opportunity. However, coupled with equality of opportunity was also equality per se (Finn et al. 1978). Arguably, equality of opportunity equalises the
chances people have to become unequal. It is therefore incompatible with any notion of equality as reducing privilege, except perhaps privilege of birth. Equality of opportunity does, however, give rise to the notion of the meritocracy, whereby everyone has, in theory, the same chances to go as far as their talents will take them. As this inevitably leads to the creation or at least the sustenance of an elite, it is perhaps best described as an elitist ideology hiding away in an apparently egalitarian one. This only goes to show the lack of mutual exclusivity of the four categories of educational ideology mentioned above.

In the 1970s the ideology of social democracy was finally challenged, largely because of its failure to promote economic growth and growing concerns about falling standards and indiscipline in schools. James Callaghan’s 1976 speech in Ruskin College, Oxford effectively sounded the death knell for social democracy in education. Callaghan called for more control of teachers and more accountability from schools. Education, he claimed, should be seen as a means for training young people for work. The effect was the official beginning of the process that led to the National Curriculum in England and Wales, with its concomitant national testing, OfSTED and the full trappings of direct state control over schools (Chitty 1993).

The best of all worlds or neither one thing nor another

The Third Way

In 1998 Anthony Giddens came up with a new political ideology, the Third Way. (He borrowed much of his ideas from the New Democrats in the United States who, a few years before New Labour, wanted to be seen to have moved away from the Left and towards the Right to attract votes.) Giddens’ book provoked a storm of interest and controversy (Giddens 1998). He wrote a response to his critics two years later (Giddens 2000).

The Third Way is an attempt to find a path between the New Right and the Old Left as there is a need to move away from the sterile debate between Left and Right, or between those who favour either the state or the free market doing everything. It was brought about by the realities of the modern world, that is, the dissolution of the welfare consensus, the rapid technological changes of the Information Age, globalisation and the discrediting of Marxism. It aims to combine social solidarity with a dynamic economy, to stress equality of opportunity, not of outcome, and to concentrate on the creation of wealth and not its redistribution (Giddens 1998). What does this really mean in theory and in practice? Its critics say it is an empty concept without any real content, an intellectual cover for those whose principles are sufficiently flexible to accommodate any type of wealth creation and a betrayal of left-wing ideals.

In terms of education, this new ideology is based on the idea that there is no viable alternative to the market economy. So the Third Way is really Social Democracy, because social justice and equality of opportunity are encouraged, but instead of the state paying the full cost of this, market principles are necessary to lessen state ownership, state funding and state intervention, and to encourage private initiatives to play