

Remembering the future

A personal/professional journey

How do educators become drawn towards socially critical approaches to education and what are some of the formative influences that can contribute to such a stance? This opening chapter uses autobiography to explore ways in which personal and professional journeys are often inextricably bound together. Firstly as a geography teacher, and later as a curriculum developer and teacher educator, the author has helped pioneer innovative and practical ways of teaching about global and futures issues in school and higher education. It is from personal narrative that the substantive concerns of this book unfold and the investigations into futures-orientated teaching that follow can best be understood in this wider life-context.

Why should we take it for granted that an author's personal feelings and thoughts should be omitted (from a book) ... After all, who is the person collecting the evidence, drawing the inferences, and reaching the conclusions? By not insisting on some sort of accountability, our academic publications reinforce the third-person, passive voice as the standard, which gives more weight to abstract and categorical knowledge than to the direct testimony of personal narrative and the first-person voice (Ellis and Bochner 2000: 734).

Prologue

A Spring day in the early twenty-first century in north-east Somerset. My usual journey to work. As I pass through the university gates and look at the great trees, the fields and the stream in the valley, I give thanks as always, to those whose hands laid out this beautiful place in time past. At lunchtime I walk around the lake and reflect on how I came to be in this place. A series of 'snapshots' crosses the mind's eye.

- A small baby being carried downstairs by his father in the middle of the night. He is laid on a table and wrapped in a green check blanket. The house is full of fear as the air raid

siren wails in the adjacent street. The fear of being bombed, of being buried alive in an East Anglian town in 1943.

- A young boy in a classroom being chastised by a teacher for talking. He remembers the angry women who punished him at primary school, now it is aggressive male teachers at this English grammar school who offer him violence as well. He is constantly in trouble, lives in fear of many lessons.
- A student sitting in his small study at a college of education in London. He is surrounded by friends who are trying to persuade him to come out for a drink. What he actually wants is to be left in peace to meditate. They are intrigued by, but make fun of, his interest in eastern philosophy.
- A classroom in Gloucestershire on a sunny spring day. A young teacher stands at the blackboard teaching about current trouble spots in the world. On the wall a map of the Middle East and pictures from a colour magazine about the war in Vietnam. A pupil complains 'This isn't geography!'
- A young family are encamped with hundreds of others on the coast of Scotland with one of the Greenpeace vessels standing offshore. These activists have come from all over the country to protest at the construction of a nuclear power station and to support those preparing to occupy the site.
- A room full of teachers reflecting on what global education means for them. They are working in small groups, sharing their experiences, as part of a professional development programme in a faculty of education at an Australian university. The facilitator moves from group to group moved by their commitment and enthusiasm.
- A summer school for teachers in Nova Scotia. Participants have come from many parts of the province to explore ways of putting a practical futures dimension into their work. The week is intense and many feel transformed by the experience. The convenor feels the facilitator wrought some kind of 'magic' with the group.

If I had glimpsed any of these scenes before they actually occurred my response would have been one of surprise. Yet looking backwards they make sense, part of my thread of becoming. I can see how each scene was enfolded in what came before, like a seed awaiting the right time to fruit, my personal and professional lives always inextricably intertwined.

In considering the 'genres of ethnography' available to qualitative researchers today Tedlock (2000) draws attention to the valuable contribution that autobiography and personal narrative can make to writing and research. The writer's own experience thus becomes a topic for investigation in its own right (Denzin 1997) challenging positivist notions of the

possibility of there ever being a 'disengaged observer'. Behar (1997) and others have stressed the importance of 'knowing who the author is' and the need therefore to reflect our vulnerabilities in our texts. Feminist researchers have also stressed the importance of incorporating personal experiences and standpoints in academic work often by starting with a story about themselves (Reinharz 1992). Ellis and Bochner (2000: 746) comment that:

A text that functions as an agent of self-discovery or self-creation, for the author as well as for those who read and engage the text, is only threatening under a narrow definition of social inquiry, one that eschews a social science with a moral center and heart.

This chapter thus situates the research that follows within the context of the author's own personal and professional journey. It invites the reader to become a co-participant - emotionally, morally and intellectually - in both the life story and the analysis that follows.

Learning to resist

I was born during the darkest days of World War Two in Ipswich, the county town of Suffolk. It must have been an awful time for my parents, my twin and I imbibing their fear and anxiety even before we were born. I arrived prematurely and my brother died soon after birth. My first clear memories as a small child are of the early 1940s - being carried down into the air raid shelter in the garden during the war. I was quite clear what I felt about school after my first morning there. I declared it was nice but that I didn't need to go back in the afternoon. The problem, as the teachers saw it, was that I was too talkative. This constantly got me into trouble with the women teachers who tried to shout, bellow and slap me into submission. I put both my anarchist tendencies and my strong sense of injustice down to those childhood experiences at primary school.

Grammar school was even worse. Here several of the male teachers regularly tried to threaten, humiliate and beat me into submission. I learnt to survive through solidarity with my peers and a well developed sense of humour nourished by the Goon Show. Not until I was sixteen did teachers leave me in peace to enjoy my education. In particular I grew to love geography and English literature, mainly because of particular teachers who really knew their craft well. So I developed a passion for this world, finding out about how it was formed and how it worked. I loved doing fieldwork and getting to know an area of countryside well.

The first turning point came in the summer when I left school at eighteen. Walking with my friend Patrick in the country we pondered the meaning of life, whether God and evil

existed or not. I think we imagined we would find the answers to such questions in just a few months. I had been brought up as a member of the Church of England but now found such Christianity far too narrow and hypocritical.

Quest for meaning

So I left school in 1960 to read geography at the University of Exeter. Devon was a revelation of beauty with its hills and woods and I lived on a farm in the Exe valley. Appalled at what I read about the superpower arms race and the consequences of nuclear war I joined the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. As a result of my nuclear nightmares, from which there seemed no escape, I fell into deep despair and disillusionment. The second turning point came with Resnais' documentary *Night and Fog*, a graphic and harrowing portrayal of the Nazi concentration camps. As I watched the bulldozers pushing piles of emaciated bodies into mass graves I felt as if I too had gone over the edge into the abyss.

Cycling home that night I was overcome by tears of despair but, even as I wept, I realised that the only thing anyone *could* do was somehow to work towards making the world a better place. It was a simple, perhaps even simplistic, realisation but a powerful one. My sense of purpose and vocation in this life dates from then. My mid-term exam results were bad, however, and I spent the rest of that year sitting in the library reading modern English literature, philosophy and comparative religion.

I then spent three years at Borough Road College in London, now part of Brunel University. The urban scene, suburbia, the traffic, hurt my soul after the beauties of Devon, but I studied geography and English there training to be a secondary teacher. I also immersed myself in comparative religion, especially Buddhism, Zen and Taoism. I left college in 1964 clear that I wanted to use my geography teaching to help students make sense of important issues in the world around them.

Education and action

My first teaching post was at a rural secondary school just outside Gloucester. I was fascinated at this time by books that gave potted histories of world trouble spots. Lessons on issues such as the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Vietnam war, the nuclear arms race, and issues of global wealth and poverty, became an on-going element in my teaching. In the mid-60s it was still unusual for anything to be taught about global issues. So I gained a lot of confidence in my subject and learnt my craft as a geographer in the Severn valley, the Cotswold Hills and the Forest of Dean. I also ran the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme and enjoyed teaching map reading, camping skills and taking groups on expeditions. I gained my Mountain

Leadership Certificate so I could take groups to really wild areas, teaching them to take an interest in the terrain they traversed, to feel at home on the fells, to be safe in all weather conditions. I could now pass on my own love of the countryside, hills and mountains, to others.

From a small rural school I went to a larger urban one as a Head of Department. Again I was able to indulge my curriculum interests and produce a syllabus that included orienteering in Thetford Chase and the study of local and global issues, but other interests were beginning to blossom too. It began with a TV documentary in the early 1970s on environmental issues called 'Tomorrow has been cancelled due to lack of interest.' It wasn't going to be if I had anything to do with it. A colleague and I set up a local environmental action group - one of the first in East Anglia. We campaigned on a wide range of issues from recycling and pollution of the local river to waste dumping and urban redevelopment. It gave me a taste for campaigning, organising, engaging in social and political action, working directly to make my bit of the world a better place.

This, in turn, led to my increasing politicisation as I became interested in grassroots activism and the history and philosophy of anarchism. My heart still leaps when I read:

There is nothing integral to the nature of human social organisation that makes hierarchy, centralisation and elitism inescapable. These organisational forms persist, in part because they serve the interests of those at the top. They persist, too, because we have learned to accept roles of leadership and followership ... even the eradication of coercive institutions will not automatically create a liberatory society. We create that society by building new institutions, by changing the character of our social relationships, by changing ourselves - and throughout that process by changing the distribution of power in society (Ehrlich 1979).

During my last year of teaching in school I came across the work of the World Studies Project run by Robin Richardson. I was impressed by his experiential and participatory approach to learning, his resources for teachers and, especially, the workshops he ran. Three of the chief influences on his work were Carl Rogers, Paulo Freire and Johan Galtung. At a conference Robin organised in 1974, called 'Only One Earth,' I remember thinking that if I had any ambition in life it was to be actively involved with such events myself.

After ten years of teaching in schools I wanted a change and it came with a post at Charlotte Mason College of Education in the Lake District. Here I was the geographer in the Environmental Studies department and the Social Studies team. It was at this time that I began

writing, initially about the courses I was teaching (Hicks 1976, 1978). Soon after arriving in Cumbria I become concerned about the nuclear waste reprocessing plant at Windscale and, at an anti-nuclear meeting in Lancaster, I met Paul Smoker who ran the Peace and Conflict Programme at the university. When my contract ended at the college in the mid-70s I arranged to do an MSc with him.

For this I decided to investigate the extent to which a global perspective was found within Initial Teacher Education in the UK. To my excitement I found that all sorts of interesting things were going on, with tutors often drawing on the work of development educators and the World Studies Project. Both approaches proposed a socially critical and person-centred pedagogy closely allied to that of peace education. In 1977 I attended the International Peace Research Association conference in Stockholm where, for the first time, I had to face the questions then being raised by the women's movement. This began a long and often painful process of examining my own oppressive role in supporting patriarchal structures. My MSc was completed in the same year but I decided to stay registered for my PhD whilst also becoming the first Education Officer for the Minority Rights Group in London. This took me into the field of multicultural education and saw the publication of *Minorities: A Teacher's Resource Book for the Multi-ethnic Curriculum* (Hicks 1981). In particular I became interested in the issue of racist bias in teaching materials, a topic which geographers had rarely touched on (Hicks 1980, Walford 2001).

During this period I also continued my environmental activism. Plans were afoot for a major expansion of the Windscale plant and thousands of signatures were collected and delivered to the Department of the Environment in London. On the way back we decided to set up a Network for Nuclear Concern to link anti-nuclear groups in north-west England. Groups were far flung and often suspicious of possible attempts to organise them, but the Network came to play an important role in co-ordinating opposition to the expansion and presenting evidence at a public enquiry. They were powerful days, appealing in particular to my anarchist and oppositional tendencies. I realise now how the faceless men of British Nuclear Fuels felt just like those adults who had oppressed me as a child. They too were threatening my existence. So we organised, networked, campaigned, learnt about non-violent direct action, and suffered the inevitable burnout.

Teacher education

As a result of my research I had become inspired by the pedagogy of peace education and wished to promote this within teacher education. I secured a base for this at St Martin's College of Higher Education in Lancaster (now part of the University of Cumbria) and

launched two major initiatives, the Centre for Peace Studies and the World Studies 8-13 project. During its nine year lifespan the Centre was a unique initiative in the UK. Its aims were to: i) promote within education awareness of issues relating to peace and conflict; ii) interpret and clarify the existing educational responses to such issues, viz. education for peace, world studies, and development education; iii) identify the priorities for curriculum innovation in these fields at both primary and secondary level.

When the Centre first opened in 1980 interest in education for peace *per se* amongst teachers was negligible. However, escalation of the nuclear arms race saw a growing debate about what teachers should, or should not, be teaching in the classroom. Much of the Centre's work focused on giving educators a much broader definition of peace and conflict, from the personal and local to the national and global. In 1984 and in 1986, the International Year of Peace, I was invited to Australia by John Fien, a geographical educator from Brisbane. On both occasions I lectured and ran workshops in several states and found a flourishing interest in peace education. I was impressed by the work of people such as Toh Swee-Hin, Frank Hutchinson and others. John's interests were in geography, environmental and social studies and he played an important part in radicalising these curriculum areas (Fien and Gerber 1988).

At this time I served on and advised several Local Education Authority working parties on peace education, including those for Manchester and Lancashire. Important links were made with issues of gender and race at that time by Betty Reardon (1985) in her book *Sexism and the War System*. Attacks from the political Right, however, began to increase in intensity. They argued that 'peace studies' was an initiative from the Left, backed by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, bent on indoctrinating pupils into anti-nuclear activities. Much of my time was spent assuring teachers, school governors and others that this was *not* in fact the case. An important outcome of this work was the first UK handbook on peace education (Hicks 1988).

Visits to Canada in 1986 and 1988 led to further contacts with peace educators from North America but I realised that peace education in the UK now lagged behind developments in Canada and Australia. Also around this time I met Joanna Macy and became very interested in her work on despair and empowerment (Macy and Brown 1998). By 1989, however, the educational scene had drastically changed. Continued attacks on humanistic and radical approaches to teaching, coupled with the introduction of Thatcher's national curriculum, resulted in a shift towards both more formal methods and a more standardised curriculum. Peace education *per se* became totally marginalised within schools.

A national curriculum project called World Studies 8-13 was also set up in 1980 and directed by myself and Simon Fisher (who had taken over from Robin Richardson at the World Studies Project). World studies was a shorthand term used in the UK to refer to the need for a global perspective in the curriculum. [Internationally the term global education is more commonly used.] Initially the project worked with pilot schools in Cumbria and Avon, developing teaching materials and refining a participatory and experiential approach to in-service work. Eventually the project had a network of contacts in 50 LEAs (i.e. half those in England and Wales) using as their key resource *World Studies 8-13: A Teacher's Handbook* (Fisher and Hicks 1985).

Visits to Italy, Australia and Canada proved that world studies approaches were popular in other educational contexts as well. At this time the political Right launched forceful attacks against both world studies and peace education. As the Conservative government's new national curriculum began to tighten its hold, the project's second publication for teachers, *Making Global Connections*, came out (Hicks and Steiner 1989). The project moved to Manchester Metropolitan University in 1989 (Steiner 1993, 1996) and, now renamed the Global Teacher Project, until recently based at Leeds Metropolitan University.

World Studies 8-13 was one of the most innovative curriculum projects of the eighties and its success lay in the principles and procedures that it used. It showed how local and global issues were related, it acknowledged the experience and expertise of teachers and worked with them in a person-centred way. It produced materials that were practical and fun to use, it excited both teachers and pupils, it made learning interesting and dealt with issues of immediate interest in the real world. My own interests were increasingly focused on the need for a clearer futures dimension in the curriculum as well as a global one.

Alternative futures

My life changed dramatically as I came to understand through therapy the depth of childhood wounds and the ways in which they affect adult life. I also became interested in eco-feminist perspectives (Shiva 1989, Diamond and Orenstein 1990), and ventures which attempted to draw the personal and political together. I didn't like them being seen as separate, for my experience was that they were intertwined. Starhawk's (1990) *Dreaming the Dark*, which drew together issues of spirituality, sexuality, community and non-violent direct action, served to reinforce that which I so strongly felt. I was also interested in the role of new social movements in creating change and the suggestion that we might be witnessing a major shift of paradigm in the western world (Milbrath 1989).

In 1989 I returned to London to start a new project at the University of London Institute of Education and to join a course on Facilitator Styles at the University of Surrey. I wanted to deepen my knowledge of group facilitation and the course at Guildford seemed an excellent opportunity to do this. It combined practical training in facilitation skills with a wide-ranging exploration of different approaches to therapy and counselling (Heron 1989). It was exhilarating and exhausting but by the end of it I was much clearer about who I was and what my skills were.

At the Institute of Education I set up the Futures Project with funding from the World Wide Fund for Nature UK. World studies argued that the spatial dimension in the curriculum emphasised the local and national at the expense of the global and it stressed the need to explore the interrelationships *between* local, national and global. On the temporal dimension the past and present are given more attention than the future creating a 'temporal imbalance' in the curriculum. The question I thus put to teachers is 'If all education is for the future where is the future explored in education?' The early days of the project involved exploring the futures field to see what would be of direct use to teachers (see chapter 2). My particular interest is in how to explore the nature of more just and sustainable futures. But to do this teachers and pupils need to develop a new vocabulary of futures-orientated thinking.

My interest in drawing together the personal, political and spiritual, was reinforced by working with Joanna Macy and radical theologian Matthew Fox in 1991. I was one of a group of facilitators for an event entitled 'Death and Resurrection of Self, Society and World.' Joanna spoke of facing our pain and despair in the face of planetary issues. Matthew spoke of cosmology, our spiritual traditions and the need to confront injustice (Fox 1994). I felt I was coming full-circle in some way, that my interests were approaching some sort of synthesis.

In the early 1990s I left London to live in Bath and moved the project to Bath Spa University College. It gradually became more difficult to work with teachers, due to the growing financial and curriculum restraints on schools, but I was able to visit Italy and Canada and greatly enjoyed running summer schools with David Ferns in Nova Scotia. When funding for the Futures Project ended I became a member of staff at the university. Here, in the School of Education, I am able to share my interests through teaching modules on education for change, radical education, education and environment, education for the future, and citizenship education. My teaching and research interests arising from these fields are reflected in the following chapters.

Connecting the threads

What sense do I make of this personal and professional journey? What are the connecting threads and how are they related? My basic life-pattern was laid down during my childhood and adolescence in the 40s and 50s. My experiences at school led to a heightened sense of injustice and a dislike of mindless authority. My Church of England up-bringing and my parents' conservatism led me to reject traditional explanations of life, both religious and political. Above all in my youth I learnt about *resistance*. I learnt to be critical, to keep asking the awkward questions. And through enjoying geography at school I learnt to love this planet.

As a young student this led to an on-going search for life's meaning, a *spiritual* quest that preoccupied me for most of the 60s. Faced with the evils that I witnessed around me I could see no other course of action than to try and make the world in some small way a better place. Herein lay the seeds of my later concern for justice, equality and peace. I became a geography teacher, taught my students both to love the land and to explore local and global issues.

The 70s saw my move into teacher education and post-graduate research. In particular it was a decade of *politicisation* for me through involvement with the environmental, the anti-nuclear, and the women's movements. I began writing and broadened my geographical interests to embrace environmental studies, world studies, development education and multicultural education.

The 80s was a period of synthesis, putting global education and peace education on the national map in a practical and creative way. It was also a time of *personal* growth as I learnt about my self through individual and group therapy. My spiritual interests resurfaced via ecofeminism and the renaissance of Goddess spirituality. Increasingly I felt aware of the links between the personal, political, spiritual and planetary.

In the 90s I focused less on problems and more on the directions and *visions* that we need in order to create a more just and sustainable future. Joanna Macy's deep ecology and Matthew Fox's creation spirituality combine many of my major concerns. Changing the world and changing oneself always go hand in hand. Personal and political equity and justice can never be separated, even if many would wish them so.

What sustains me are my hopes and dreams for a more just and sustainable future although, as the anarchist slogan reminds us, the revolution is the journey not an end event. I am always interested in interfaces, the personal and political, the spiritual and planetary, the inner and outer. This is where growth occurs as we struggle to create synthesis. The dominant social paradigm in the Western world, with its mechanistic viewpoint, has taught us to see things as separate and unconnected. The emerging holistic paradigm, with its ecocentric perspective, argues that we must now start putting things back together again. The journey for

the new century must be one from fragmentation to wholeness, in ourselves and our relationships, both with each other and with non-human species. It is about ending the dis-membering and beginning the re-membering. It is a journey from personal and global separation and alienation towards true justice and community.

My purpose in this introductory chapter, has been to create a 'conversation' with the reader by using personal narrative to invite identification with the existential dilemmas faced and my personal/professional attempts to resolve these. It also helps situate the wider text socially and historically thereby allowing a deeper engagement with the educational issues raised. But, as Lincoln and Denzin (2000:1049) argue:

Of the following, we continue to be certain: the qualitative researcher is not an objective, authoritative, politically neutral observer standing outside and above the text ... qualitative inquiry is properly conceptualised as a civic, collaborative project. This joins the researcher and researched in an ongoing moral dialogue.

Over a hundred years ago, in the 1890s, William Morris, the great designer, writer and political activist, struggled with his socialist comrades in Britain to create a better world - one which, in part, we have now inherited. Much of his passion was inspired by the long utopian tradition which 'at its most radical, invades the prevailing concept of reality, undermines certainties about what humans must always be like, and casts doubt upon the inevitabilities of the relations of everyday life' (Coleman and Sullivan 1990). At heart, it is this 'imagination' which has sustained my work over the last four decades and from which this book has emerged. Here, in this new century, it seems increasingly important that we too should try to live as if we were experiments from that future which we so desire.

NB. References can be found in the book's composite Bibliography.