Professional Education

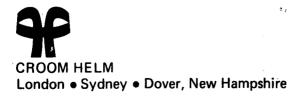
Peter Jarvis



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Professional Education

Peter Jarvis



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NEW PATTERNS OF LEARNING

THE PURPOSE OF THIS SERIES

This series of books is intended to provide introductions to trends and areas of current thinking in education. Each book will be of interest to all educators, trainers and administrators responsible for the implementation of educational policies and programmes in higher, further and continuing education.

The books contain a bibliography of key works to enable the reader to pursue selected areas in depth should he or she so wish.

This book, 'Professional Education', examines the changing concept of education and looks at the aims, curricula and methods of appraisal of professional education. The book is written by Dr Peter Jarvis who is a Lecturer in the Department of Adult Education at the University of Surrey.

P.J. Hills Leicester Many people have assisted me in writing this book - too many to name all of them individually, although I should like to identify some of them here.

This book was originally to have been written jointly by Miss Pat Smart, senior lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Surrey and myself, but due to circumstances beyond her control she has had to withdraw from this joint enterprise.

Some of the ideas discussed here have been raised with students on the Post Graduate Certificate of Education of Adults course, organised at the University of Surrey. All of these students are preparing to teach adults, mostly in the professions, and I am grateful for some stimulating sessions that have helped me clarify some of my thoughts.

Miss Sheila Gibson, a colleague in the Department of Adult Education, who encouraged me to write this book, has kindly read the manuscript and has helped me correct some of the worst excesses of my written style. This has been an unrewarding undertaking for her but one which will result in the book being easier to read.

Dr Philip Hills, the editor of this series, has been a constant source of support and I am most grateful to him for his support while I have completed the book.

Hilarie Morgan has typed this manuscript with considerable skill, speed and with much patience. Without her efforts the book would not have been produced as rapidly as it has been.

Finally, this book is dedicated to my wife and children who have encouraged me to use spare time in the evenings and at weekends to write and have made few demands upon me during this period.

I am grateful to all who have assisted me in any way, but, in the final instance, none but me can take responsibility for the ideas expressed in the following pages.

> P. Jarvis University of Surrey

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1 THE CHANGING CONCEPT OF EDUCATION:

THEORY AND PRACTICE

Education is usually associated with childhood. Stop anyone in the street and ask them about it and invariably they will reply in terms of schools and schooling for children. Read books on educational theory and the majority of them will refer to the education of children. True, much education is about bringing up and teaching young people and even the word 'education' may be derived from the Latin 'educare' which means 'to train or bring up a child'; hence, the term may be being employed correctly according to its derivation. But there is a possibility that the word stems from another Latin word ('educere' denoting 'to draw out' and if this were the case then the traditional usage of the word is not in accord with its derivation. It is unfortunate, but quite understandable, that the taken-for-granted meaning of the word refers to the first of these two derivations although it will be argued in this book that this is a very limiting use of the word, since logically education can occur at any stage in life. However, it is only with more recent developments in the education of adults that the illogical use of the concept has begun to be recognised. One of the main intentions of this book is to begin to formulate some ideas about education, but which examine it from the totally different perspective of the education of people in a variety of professions. Even so, many of the ideas discussed here might prove useful to other educators, especially those who teach adults.

Since the concept of education has generally been assumed to relate to childhood, it is necessary from the outset to reconsider its meaning and this is the purpose of this opening chapter. Having formulated a concept of education, it is intended to explore what is actually occurring in the world of education at the present time in order to demonstrate the realism of the definition provided here. At the same time, it is necessary to refer to other discussions on the subject but it would be most tedious to employ a multitude of studies, so that most of the references here will be to one of the most influential writers in this sphere, R.S. Peters, whose work will be examined in some detail.

THE CHANGING CONCEPT OF EDUCATION

Many of the earlier definitions of the term 'education' reflect the meaning of 'educare' and include within them an intragenerational perspective. John Stuart Mill, for instance, claimed that the content of education was to be found in 'the culture which each generation purposely gives to those who are to be their successors' (cited in Lester-Smith 1966:9). Similarly, the early French sociologist and educationalist, Emile Durkheim (1956: 71) regarded education as 'the influence exercised by adult generations on those who are not yet ready for social life'. Yet by the beginning of this century it was becoming apparent that an inter-generational perspective is not intrinsic to the concept of education. For example, John Dewey (1916: 8) had to add a prefix to the term education in order to express the same type of idea as that specified by Mill and Durkheim, noting that formal education was necessary if society was to transmit all its achievements from one generation to the next. While 'formal' would not now necessarily be the prefix employed, 'initial' might be more meaningful, it does denote Dewey's recognition that education is a broader concept than that of the education of children. Indeed, he argued that education could occur at any stage in life, so that while education and the education of children are related they are self-evidently not synonymous.

More recently, Peters (1966: 23ff), following Wittgenstein's argument, has claimed that education, like many complex phenomena, is too complex to be defined. He goes on to suggest that these complex concepts form a family 'united by a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing; sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities in detail'. However, the question then must be posed as to whether the whole family needs to be defined, or may not the similarities that unite the family then constitute the basis of the definition? Peters has sought to isolate these similarities but instead of doing so from an empirical perspective he has attempted to specify criteria that define what is, and what is not, an educational process. But before these can be discussed in detail it is necessary to clarify any problems that surround the concept of definition itself.

Traditionally, a definition is an endeavour to construct conceptual boundaries around a phenomenon, so that everything encompassed within the boundary line may be classified as being of that particular phenomenon and everything that lies beyond it is excluded. Yet as phenomena have become so complex and as one phenomenon has merged into another in the complicated growth of industrial, urban society, it has often become extremely difficult to isolate and delimit specific phenomena: it is more common nowadays to question the validity of employing definitions. Yet to employ a word without overt definition is not to mean that the user of the word does not have a covert and implicit definition. As this is the case, it is considered wiser for the purposes of this discussion to attempt to provide a meaning to the term. Nevertheless, no attempt will be made here to demarcate the external boundaries of the phenomenon, rather this approach fastens on to the similarities that constitutes the family and endeavours to define education by them. This is precisely what Peters has done in specifying three criteria of education and he argues that these criteria constitute the basis 'to which activities or processes must conform' (1966: 25) if they are to be regarded as educational. He is, therefore, claiming that anything that lies beyond his criteria is not educational and all that falls within them is educational. His criteria, therefore, perform precisely the same function as a definition, although now the extreme limits are no longer specified. While Peters has constructed his criteria by logical argument, it would have been possible to have analysed the social reality and to have extracted the highest common factors from all the observations. However, the problem with the empirical approach is that a covert definition/set of criteria of the phenomenon (a working definition) must already exist in the mind of the investigator before the inquiry is undertaken. It is, therefore, more logical to commence with a conceptual analysis, leading to a rational definition and then using it to examine the social reality. If the criterion/criteria are sound, then the definition should be realistic but if they are not then the logical process by which they are construed requires further examination.

It would perhaps be useful at this juncture to examine Peters' argument a little more closely. He suggests that:

'Education' is not a term like 'gardening' which picks out a, particular type of activity. Something, of course, must be going on if education is taking place and something must have gone through for a person to emerge as an educated man. For education is associated with learning, not with a mysterious maturation. But no specific activity is required . . . (1966: 24ff)

He then goes on to discuss his three criteria of education, but before these are examined, it is necessary to question this analogy. Education is associated with one particular activity, that of learning and, while it may occur in numerous contexts. it is most certainly an activity. But it is a mental activity rather than a physical one so that it is not always observable. Yet because it is not seen it does not always mean that it does not exist! It is, therefore, argued here that education is always associated with a specific activity - that of learning. But is it not also always associated with teaching? Is not education about a process of teaching and learning? Once more the traditional picture of children's education emerges - the teacher, the children and the school. What of the mature adult who reads widely, compares analyses from one study with another, reflects upon what he reads, learns and demonstrates what he has learned by passing examinations or writing an original piece of work? It would be hard to deny that he had not undergone an educational process and yet it is difficult to locate either a teacher or a school. Hence learning, but not teaching, is the similarity that

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binds the education family together. Even so, education is not synonymous with learning, so that it would be false to define the former in terms of the latter alone. Education is about a process of learning, but before it can be defined, the criteria of the educational process need to be constructed.

Education is about a learning process, so that at the outset the word 'process' needs discussion. As a noun, process may mean: a course of action; a series of incidents; a method; an action at law; an outgrowth. The last of these five meanings is specific to anatomy, zoology and botany and the penultimate one is confined to legal actions, so that neither of these relate to the discussion about education. The methodology of process is itself problematic but since a chapter of this book is devoted to methodology no further reference will be made to it here. However, the first two meanings of the word - 'a course of action' and 'a series of incidents' - are much more significant to this present discussion. Education is certainly not a 'one-off' occurrence but it is about a series of events in which learning is intended. The idea of 'series' suggests that the incidents may be continuous or recurrent, neither being mutually exclusive. However, the first meaning suggests that something is actually planned or intended. Learning is obviously intended when the learner embarks upon the process but, it may be asked, does the fact that some learning may occur without planning exclude it from being classified as education? When a learner, reflecting upon incidents which have occurred in his life which were not intended but from which he has learned, classifies them as educational experiences, is he actually employing the term correctly? It might appear dangerous to exclude the possibility of learning from ordinary, everyday experience as educational, but not to do so may create even more problems because there would then be no reason for excluding the whole of the socialisation process from the ambit of education. Once this option exists education may appear synonymous with learning or it is so broad a concept as to be virtually meaningless. It is, therefore, considered here that an element of planning is essential to the educational process so that education may be viewed tentatively in terms of a planned series of learning incidents.

Nevertheless, the word 'plan' does initially prove difficult. As Hare (1964: 47ff) has suggested, indoctrination may be viewed as an intention as well as either the content or the methods of the process. It is, therefore, important to qualify the idea that education is a premeditated process by excluding such possibilities as 'indoctrination'. This may be possible by recognising the essentially humanistic quality of education, as Dewey (1916: 23) has emphasised:

Knowledge is humanistic in quality not because it is about human products in the past, but because of what it does in liberating human intelligence and human sympathy. Consequently, Dewey regards education as the antithesis of indoctrination: the one frees the mind whereas the other binds it. It is, therefore, argued here that the planned process of education must have incorporated into its definition some reference to the humanistic quality of the enterprise. By so doing, such processes as indoctrination may not be legitimately included within the conceptual framework of education.

Yet the word 'learning' still requires discussion before an operational definition of education can be formulated. Learning may be regarded as the acquisition of knowledge, skill or attitude by study, experience or teaching. Yet even here no reference is made to the level of knowledge attained nor to the degree of understanding. It would be, and is, possible to learn a mathematical formula by rote but be neither able to understand it nor apply it. It would be illogical to consider an individual who learned without understanding as having been educated. Hence education is more than merely a process of learning: it is a process of learning and understanding knowledge, skill or attitude.

Implicit within the term 'understanding' is the recognition that the learner can both evaluate the knowledge, skill and attitude learned and also reject that which is false, irrelevant or of no value to him. Discrimination lies at the heart of understanding.

It is now, therefore, possible to propose a definition of education - one that will form the basis of the discussion in the following pages.

Education is any planned series of incidents, having a humanistic basis, directed towards the participant(s)' learning and understanding.

Clearly this definition requires discussion, so that its implications are now examined and then related to Peters' three criteria.

It might be objected that it is impossible to plan for understanding to occur, but this is not so! It is not possible to guarantee the outcome of a series of events and, consequently, this definition makes no attempt to specify what the results will actually be. Yet it is maintained here that education must have aims, or else the process will not really be education. Even so, it is quite understandable for someone, reflecting upon the learning and understanding gained from an unplanned series of occurrences, to classify those experiences as educational, although they may not actually have constituted an educational process. Education should always be a planned process directed towards learning and understanding, but the individual branches of education must specify their own aims. The third chapter of this book, for instance, is devoted to a discussion of the aims of professional education.

Similarly this definition does not specify what is to be learned, or taught; the content of the curriculum is not a matter for

the definition of the process. Further reference will be made to this below in discussing Peters' first characteristic of education. Nevertheless, it is to be noted here that this definition is wide enough to embrace knowledge, skills and attitudes essential to the concept of professionalism as well as the cognitive emphasis of higher education. Yet it is narrow enough to rule out as non-educational those processes that do not enhance the humanity of the participants during the process of acquiring knowledge and understanding.

The definition does not specify, however, that education is a process of teaching and learning since it is claimed here that while learners are essential participants in the process, teachers are not! Gross (1977) indicates how some lifelong learners have planned their own learning programmes and have embarked upon the educational process without necessarily including, or utilising, a teacher, but it would be impossible not to consider some of these persons as being highly educated persons. Neither does the definition actually specify that there need be two distinct processes: the teacher externalising and the learner internalising. Paulo Freire (1972: 60ff) rightly recognised that the teaching and learning process is a dialogue in which the teachers are also learners and the learners teachers and this conception may also be understood within this definition.

Teaching and learning have frequently been taken to imply the inter-generational process, as included in the definitions given in the introduction to this chapter. Clearly in professional education there must be some idea, at least in its initial stages, of new recruits learning about that which is already established within the profession. However, in the other forms of post-basic and in-service education this need not be the situation. The elite of hierarchical professions, for instance, can go on a continuing education course and be taught by their subordinates within the hierarchy. In adult education, the elderly may be taught by those younger than themselves. Education per se is not concerned with the knowledge, skills and attitudes that one generation wishes to transmit to the next: it is concerned with knowledge, skills and attitudes that may be learned by people of any age.

It will be seen from this discussion that already different branches of the process are appearing, but before an elaboration of the more complex phenomenon of education is embarked upon it will be useful to re-examine Peters' (1966) three characteristics of education.

Education Implies the Transmission of What Is Worthwhile to Those Who Become Committed to It

Education has been claimed to be normative by many philosophers and they claim that this is a better perspective than the more value-free one that seeks merely to define the process. Frankena (1973: 23) holds that it should be adopted because 'only then

will we have a concept of education that can guide us as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, rather than the other way around'. However, there appears to be considerable confusion surrounding his discussion: he argues that it is very necessary to foster in children 'this sense of what is desirable or relevant' (1973: 27ff) and goes on to write that he is unable to suggest who should determine what is desirable and that every man may be his own philosopher about what is worthwhile. Thus a specifically normative approach to what is transmitted/ learned may be too vague to be incorporated into a concept of education. It would also appear to be more relevant to note that what is incorporated into the curriculum of an educational process may be there for certain reasons, one of which may be that the content is considered to be worthwhile. However, to claim that the criteria, the selection of curriculum content, is necessarily intrinsic to the educational process appears to be rather excessive, since there are many other criteria that have never been viewed as necessary to the concept of education.

It is acknowledged, however, that there is a sense in which the definition of education suggested here is normative since it is claimed that the process is of a humanistic nature. The participants in the process must have the opportunity to realise and develop their humanity through the process, or else it is not education. Through learning and understanding the participants might grow and develop and in as much as human development occurs through education then the process is 'a priori' beneficial. Yet it must be recognised that there are instances when the educational process may not be beneficial to the learner, such as the trauma experienced on learning that a highly valued belief is false knowledge.

Closer analysis of the wording of this characteristic also raises questions about the word 'transmission' which implies but does not specify, that a teacher is necessary to the process. Additionally, it suggests that commitment to the content is necessary by the participants but this is to confuse motivation with the educational process and this is not necessarily intrinsic to education. even though it is a planned process.

Education Must Involve Knowledge and Understanding and Some Kind of Cognitive Perspective, Which is not Inert

Peters argues that education involves knowledge and understanding which is taken to be similar to the process of learning and understanding that occurs in the definition formulated above. However, Peters certainly places a greater emphasis on the cognitive aspect than that specified in the definition adopted here. Nevertheless, it will be argued later in this book that the content of professional education is knowledge, skills and attitudes - but that in order for the process to be educational, there must be a knowledge basis even to skills performance. Indeed, it is suggested here that a person who has knowledge

without skills may be as incomplete a human being as one who has skills without knowledge, and since ultimately the beneficiaries of the educational process are people - their development is one of the final criteria in deciding the value of education.

Peters' second point about inertia is one having two facets to it. First, he claims, that what is learned must result in an individual's outlook being transformed by its acquisition and, secondly, that it implies that the learner must be 'inside' the knowledge and committed to understanding it. These two elements both relate to professionalism and professional practice, so that they are important to an understanding of the process and outworkings of professional education. Clearly there is a third element to inertia: that of active participation in the learning process which may facilitate the learning and understanding being more efficient. However, some form of activity may be intrinsic to the process of learning and understanding and implied within these terms. Nevertheless. Peters' other two points may occur as a result of the process's aims being successfully achieved and, as such, may not be intrinsically related to the actual process of education per se and for that reason further discussion about this will be left until elsewhere in this book,

Education at Least Rules Out Some Procedures of Transmission, on the Grounds That They Lack Either Wittingness or Voluntariness on the Part of the Learner

Peters (1966: 37) writes that education 'picks out no particular process; it implies criteria which processes must satisfy'. However, no actual criteria are specified in these three sets of characteristics apart from the fact that the learners in the process must be active, willing and voluntary. By specifying that education is a planned series of events of a humanistic nature directed towards learning and understanding, there is an implicit element of active participation in the educational process on the part of the learner. However, the word 'voluntary' raises problems about children who attend school because it is the legal requirement that they do so. They may be stimulated/motivated to learn by the teacher and they may actually become willing and voluntary learners, so that in this instance these criteria would apply. Nevertheless, in the first instance the learners were involved in an educational process but they were perhaps less than voluntary. If education may occur in one instance without voluntariness on the part of the learners, however desirable it may be that they do not participate in the process out of a sense of compulsion, their voluntariness is not an intrinsic part of the educational process.

Yet the emphasis on 'the humanistic nature' of education in the definition posed here answers some of the points implicit in Peters' third characteristic: it does, for instance, rule out certain methods as being non-educational on the grounds that they deny, or at least they do not take fully into consideration,

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the humanity of the participants. However, it is preferred here to formulate the educational process in terms of the humanity of the participants rather than attempting to specify which human characteristics are essential to an understanding of education.

It is suggested, therefore, that Peters' characteristics of education are not all intrinsically connected to the educational process as defined in this chapter. Neither may they actually be a clear reflection of certain forms of education that occur within the complex phenomenon which is being discussed here. They may, however, reflect an undefined conception of education that remains implicit in Peters' work, but since his theorising relates much more specifically to one branch of education, initial education, it is probable that these characteristics are more directly relevant to a discussion of this branch of education rather than to education per se. It is maintained here that the definition of education offered in this chapter is applicable to the stem from which all branches of the phenomenon have grown, even though each will have to be qualified according to its own especial mode of classification, so that it is now necessary to explore these different branches of education.

BRANCHES OF EDUCATION

It was suggested in the previous section that education has a common stem and a multitude of branches and the purpose of this brief section is to explore some of these different branches of education. Education, it was argued, is any planned series of incidents, having a humanistic basis, directed towards the participant(s)' learning and understanding. However, even in the last section it proved impossible to discuss any of the manifestations of this process without first having to add a prefix, e.g. continuing, moral, to the term 'education', in order to clarify the particular manifestation to which reference was being made. Indeed a plethora of prefixes may be discovered, all of which endeavour to describe a particular type, or branch, of education so that this sub-section will focus upon these different branches. The ensuing analysis does not seek to be exhaustive, although included within it are many terms in common usage.

Merely to list the terms would not be of great benefit so that an attempt has been made here to classify the types of education into some of the main branches. However, it must be recognised that many of these prefixes are not themselves used unambiguously and that it would be possible to write a whole chapter, or even more, on many of them. Additionally, as a result of this ambiguity it would be possible to classify the terms within more than one section of the following analysis, but for the sake of clarity (even if not total accuracy) little of this is undertaken below. The prefixes themselves constitute at least ten different major facets of education, each having a number of individual, or more complex, manifestations and these are: the content of

education; the learners; the life cycle of the learners; education and its legal position; the level of education; the location of the process; the methodology implied by the classification; the explicit philosophy of the terminology; the providers of education; the apparent purpose of specific types of education. It would also be possible to combine some of these types to refine even more precisely the manifestations of the concept of education under discussion. Additionally, the term 'education' may itself be used to refer to both the academic discipline or the institution of education, but even in these instances it may be more accurate to refer to the specific sub-discipline being studied or the branch of the instituion being discussed.

The Content of Education

The content of education is the concern of curriculum studies rather than to conceptual analysis of 'education' per se, so that no attempt is made here to enter the realm of the curriculum. Even so, the concept is frequently prefixed by terms that specify areas of content but these rarely seem to relate to specific academic disciplines, e.g. chemistry education, but relate more specifically to whole areas of human life and, in most instances, upon a number of disciplines, or sub-disciplines. Examples from this category include: aesthetic education, affective education, agricultural education, business education, citizenship education, civic education, general education, health education, international education, liberal education, moral education, parenthood education, physical education, religious education, sports education, technical education and trade union education. In no instance do these prefixes specify the actual content of the curriculum nor do they exclude the perspectives that a variety of disciplines might have upon their area of concern, rather they relate in a broad manner to specific areas/ institutions in society which may be the focus of an educational process.

The Learners for Whom the Educational Process May be instituted

The definitions with which this chapter opened all contained implicit references to the fact that education was for children. While that proposition has been shown to be incorrect, it does not preclude one branch of education being referred to as child education, or as it is now frequently called 'initial education'. By contrast to initial education, learners may be adults, so that the term 'adult education' is also employed; although this is often used with specific reference to local education authority provision of liberal education for adults. Additionally, the term may refer to the fact that the educational process should be conducted in an adult manner within an environment suitable for adults. Often 'adult education' is employed in contrast to the term 'the education of adults' but further reference will be