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1

# EDUCATION

The Journal of the Faculty of Education

The University of Malta

REFERENCE COPY



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## THANKS

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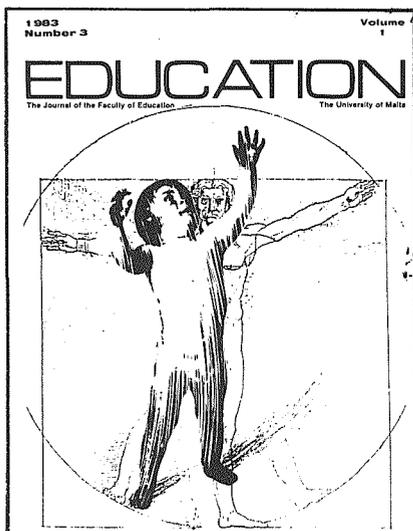
## Building Bridges

**B**ridging the gap between theory and practice in education constitutes one of the major aims of the Faculty. Its teacher education programmes are built on the belief that systematic and consistently effective pedagogy emerges only from persistent academic activity that seeks to fuse innovative ideas, concepts and theories in education to the everyday practice of teaching. In this endeavour, the Faculty regards the schools as essential partners. On the one hand teacher-educators have the often unenviable task of helping future teachers to overcome their natural tendency to resist change and at the same time initiate them in techniques that utilize new instructional strategies. On the other, the schools have the equally arduous obligation of facilitating innovation by encouraging inexperienced teachers to experiment, and allowing them - within reason - to make mistakes. As a result, full integration between theory and practice is sometimes achieved; frequently, however, the link is only tenuous. Experience in Malta reflects research findings in most other countries, namely, that in spite of their training many newly qualified teachers soon abandon new pedagogy for the traditional instructional methods they had been exposed to as primary and secondary school pupils.

The newly qualified teachers' inability to embody the fusion between theory and practice may be a reflection of the teacher-educators' failure to achieve their aims; may also reflect the schools' inability to accept new pedagogy (and allow it to flourish.) In such situations, teacher-educators and the schools tend to proceed on their divergent ways, ignoring each other's views and objectives.

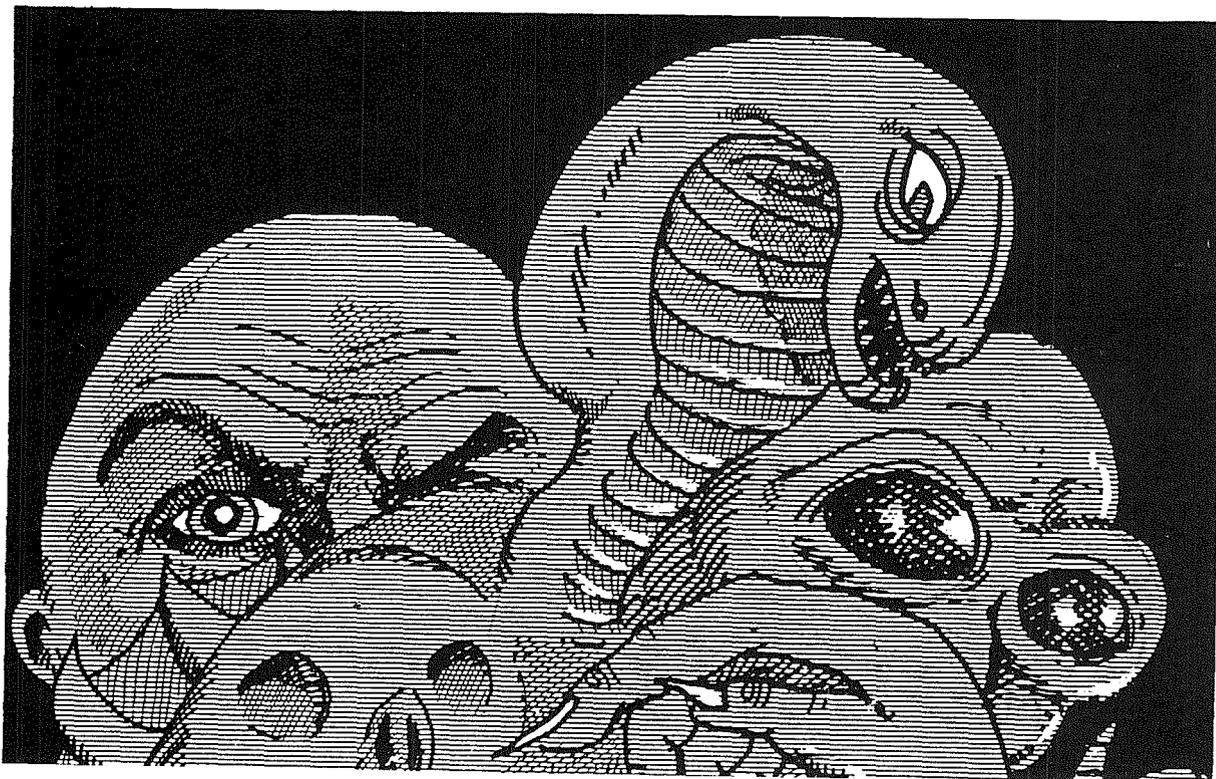
In the circumstances the Faculty of Education prefers an alternative approach, and in May it assembled the theoreticians and the practitioners at a three-day seminar on teacher education entitled "Teacher Education: the Need for Greater Coherence between Theory and Practice" (*vide infra*). The seminar revealed that the gap that exists between teacher-educators and schools is not as wide as has been imagined. More significantly, the seminar illustrated in a tangible way how the Faculty and the schools can work together to their mutual benefit. The papers presented at the seminar and the participants' exchanges offered excellent opportunities for both sides to explore and understand each other's objectives, as well as the obstacles to their fulfilment.

The seminar reinforced the liason that already exists, and set the scene for a better understanding between the Faculty and the schools. It convinced many participants that while there is a need to bridge the gap between theory and practice, it is essential, first of all, to lay sound foundations through closer collaboration between the theoreticians and the practitioners.



# Cognition and the Development of Fear

Joe Gixti



It is significant that most sources of childhood and later fears identified by various investigators can be broadly categorized in terms of a general tendency to fear the very strange, especially when it is closely associated with the familiar, and that a key factor influencing whether or not an object or situation will arouse fear is the amount of control which is felt in its relation. The prospect of pain, for instance, which according to G. Stanley Hall "puts to life the question of its very survival or extinction, complete or partial", was reported by C.W. Valentine<sup>2</sup> to have produced surprisingly little fear in the children he tested as long as it was roused in circumstances under the child's own control, in an expected form, and in a familiar situation. It is, of course, the type of control supplied by our knowledge and expectations about our surroundings (Sartre's "hodological map" or the mental construction of reality created in the course

of an individual's numerous experiences with his milieu which is at the base of Piaget's assimilation-accommodation model of the cognitive system) which is challenged or removed when we are faced with the very strange or the uncanny. For the human infant, as with many animals, strangeness elicits alarm: sudden noise, loss of support, jerky movements, quick changes of luminescence, and objects that rapidly expand or advance will cause an infant to show signs of distress. But what constitutes "strangeness" and the methods of coping with it will also change with the child's developing awareness and understanding of its environment.

The evolutionary implication of this process and its links with human helplessness are instructively outlined by Bruner *et al*:

Man seems to have evolved with a unique capacity

for helplessness that can be 'relieved' by outside shaping and external devices... The early helplessness of man... seems to be accompanied by a propelling curiosity about the environment and by much self-competence in that environment.... Indeed, the degree to which a supply of stimulation creates a demand for it may be crucial for a species in which morphological adaptation has become so supplemented by technological adaptation - a species that, in Weston La Barre's striking phrase... survives by grace of prosthetic devices.<sup>3</sup>

The extent to which competence and a sense of mastery will be achieved in a given context is heavily influenced by the rhythms and discords of what M.E.P. Seligman calls the child's "dance with his environment". According to Seligman<sup>4</sup>, the process of development moves from the neonate's almost complete lack of control over outcomes to the ability to make voluntary responses which are perceived to influence outcomes. If the child perceives its responses to be independent of what changes occur in the environment, or to have no influence on that environment at all, then a sense of hopelessness will develop. The motivational, cognitive and emotional deficits which Seligman claimed to result from learning that outcomes are uncontrollable were later<sup>5</sup> placed within an "attributional analysis of helplessness", which took more detailed account of individual differences and the question of when and where helplessness will generalize across situations and time when humans are involved. The emphasis here fell on whether an individual attributes his failures to his own limitations or to universal ones, and on ways in which the cause of failure is perceived and interpreted. In other words, both the nature of the environment and the individual's cognitive appraisal of it have to be taken into account in any attempt to chart out the stages which mark the development of helplessness and fear.

Mary Warnock<sup>6</sup> argues that the "power in the human mind which is at work in our everyday perception of the world, and... in our thoughts about what is absent" derives its impetus "from the emotions as much as from reason". This partly accounts for "the capacity we have... for taking things as significant, for seeing more in them than would meet the purely sensory eye". This capacity, i.e. the imagination, "has two functions which go together: to shape by means of an inner poser, and to allow us to feel". Following Kant, Warnock underlines the implications of this approach by asserting that

without the fictions of the imagination... we would not perceive our familiar world, and this means that we would not perceive the universal element in the world. We would be lost in an ocean of particular impressions.

The "fictions of the imagination", then, inspired by emotion as much as by reason, determine to a large extent the manner in which we perceive our environment. Cultural differences, because they

determine the range of possibilities of which an individual can become aware, have frequently been reported as influencing the ways objects and environment are perceived. Emotions too, it should be recalled, "are basically forms of cognition"<sup>7</sup>, so that what one feels in relation to a particular situation is determined by the manner in which the situation is appraised, i.e. by whether one perceives it as agreeable or disagreeable, familiar or dangerous.

The type of interaction taking place here is only inadequately suggested by terms like "stimulus and response". Our reaction to an image which disconcerts us by its uncanny newness or incongruity, and the manner in which that reaction is influenced by the way in which we have come to interpret our interaction with an environment, raise questions both about the workings of consciousness and about what the term "image" implies. In *The Psychology of Imagination*, Sartre asserts that "the image, like the sign, is a consciousness" and that "a consciousness does not have an opaque and unconscious surface by which it can be seized and attached to another surface"<sup>8</sup>. Sartre underlines the motivational factors which come into operation when a sign or an image (a "consciousness" according to his definition) acts upon our cognitive appraisal (or another consciousness):

Between two consciousnesses there is no cause and effect relationship. A consciousness is through and through a synthesis, completely withdrawn into itself: it is only at the very heart of this internal synthesis that it can join itself to another preceding or succeeding consciousness by an act of retention or protention. Moreover, if one consciousness is to act on another, it must be retained and recreated by the consciousness on which it is to act. There are no



passivities, but internal assimilations and disintegrations at the very heart of an intentional synthesis which is transparent to itself. One consciousness is not the cause of another: it motivates it.<sup>9</sup>

The implications of these standpoints can be profitably considered through an examination of a type of fear which appears to presuppose a high order of imagination. The fear of the dark has often been associated with the unease of separation and the absence of the comfort and security provided by loved ones. In one of his discussions of infantile anxiety, Freud<sup>10</sup> argued that children "are afraid in the dark because in the dark they cannot see the person they love; and their fear is soothed if they can take hold of that person's hand in the dark". The fear of darkness is in fact most acute in children when they are alone and therefore without the direct reassurance of protection which their trust in, say, adults normally affords. But reassurance does not come exclusively from loved ones: a familiar environment which a child can see to contain no threats can also serve this purpose to varying degrees. Indeed, the "visual cliff" experiments of Gibson and Walk<sup>11</sup> suggest that infants will come to place more trust in their visual perception of situations and objects than in reassurances offered by parents. A child's fears and anxieties (e.g. in the dark) are often only soothed when he is *shown* that there is nothing to be afraid of. Further, it is of significance that the "fear of darkness" only manifests itself when the child's dependence on visual perception becomes marked (usually after the first year of life)<sup>12</sup>. Most of the reports on childhood fears of this



nature stress not so much the darkness itself but rather the terrifying imagery with which it becomes peopled. It is, in other words, not simply a sense of isolation which being in the dark can create. The absence of sharp visual details and the curtailment of the ability to move will also give rise to a sense of disorientation in which familiar or recognizable surroundings become transformed into indeterminate darkness and strange shades. In a sense, the child cannot as yet trust surroundings to remain constant and unchanging when the sharp outlines he can recognize when the lights are on can no longer be clearly perceived in darkness. One can interpret this type of uncertainty as an extension of Piaget's theories about difficulties related to the concept of conservation in the Preoperational Stage of human development. The undefined nature of an environment shrouded in darkness, where substances appear to change their shapes (as well as hiding recesses where potential threats may lurk), undermines the possibility of feeling control over outcomes. It is a sense of helpless vulnerability and a consequent state of anxiety which are most likely to prevail under these conditions. In this context, the slenderest perceptual cues are interpreted in terms of variously disturbing images encountered in other contexts. The images associated with the ambiguous shades need not be intrinsically threatening. C.W. Valentine, for instance, reported how a five-year old girl was terrified for several weeks because she saw cabbages all around her bedroom and a girl going out of the window<sup>13</sup>.

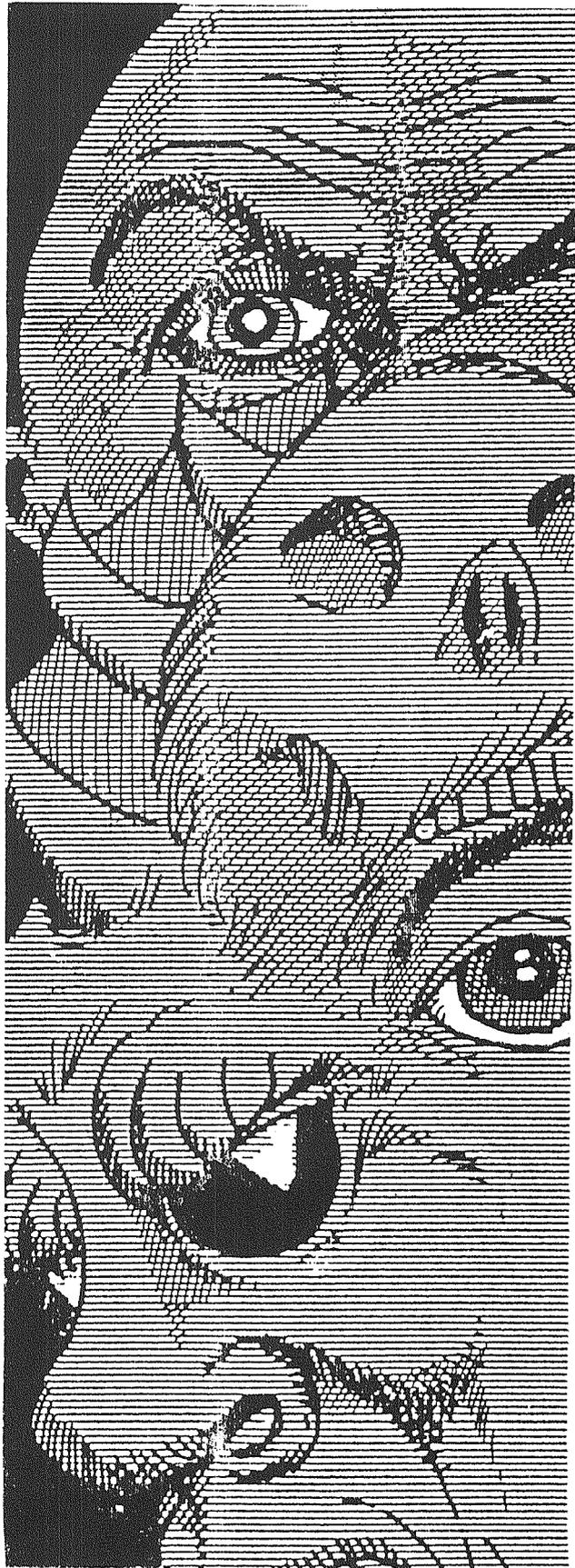
Adults too, in their endeavours to control and frequently to protect the young, will often warn against various imaginary or threateningly decked figures who will punish misbehaviour, or against, in the old cliché, sweet-proffering strangers whose friendly appearance is not to be trusted. The "dance" of perceptual and cognitive development of necessity brings the child into contact with objects, figures and situations which cannot (and often should not) be readily accommodated into a mental picture of secure reality. Nor is the "data" on which the child has to work of an unambiguous nature. When the reassurance afforded by clearly perceived outlines is thus undermined, as much as when the trusted presence of a protecting adult is not readily available, it is not surprising that disquieting associations will be perceived as forming a logical part of undefined surroundings. This will be especially the case when darkness accentuates the ambiguity of surroundings. According to J.L. Singer,

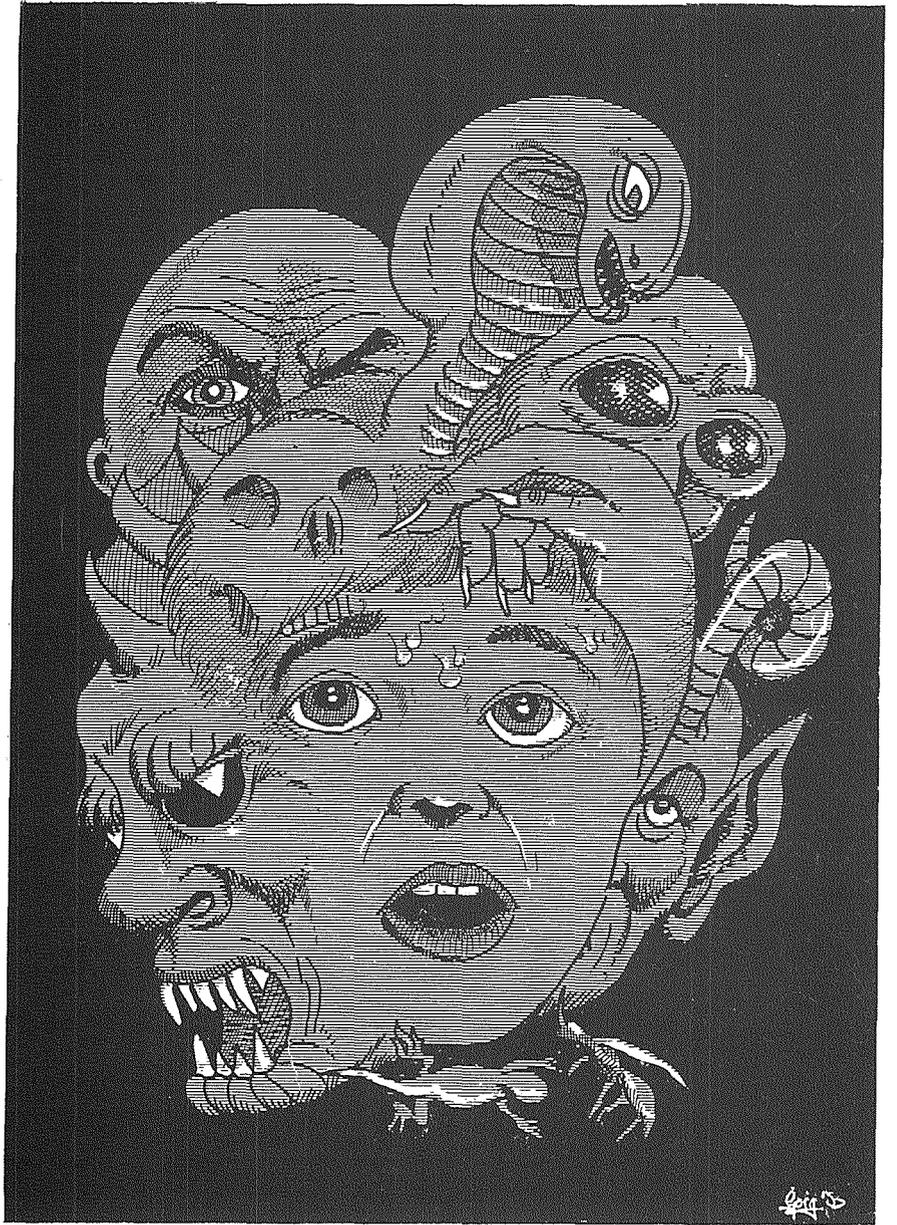
For the very young child the monsters of the movies and television are embodiments of those distortions and ambiguities that people the shadow world at night when the child is preparing for bed. Linked by

adults to bogeymen and other threatening figures, these monsters cannot be readily understood or grasped and therefore arouse negative emotion and terror.<sup>14</sup>

It bears repeating that the shapes taken by the "fictions of the imagination" in moments of uncertainty are strongly influenced by the cultural context in which we live and by the distinctions which we learn to make between what is "real", what is possible, and what is "unreal". According to Piaget's model of cognitive development, the cognitive system changes its internal structure by repeatedly attempting to accommodate and assimilate novel, previously unassimilated environmental elements. Because the environment is anything but clear-cut and the individual's contact with it is so often influenced and mediated by other agents (parents, peers and, supremely as the name suggests, the Media), the process of interaction can often be erratic. Thus, objects and situations which in reality present a substantial threat can be assimilated into a system which codes them as harmless since they can be associated with familiar and "safe" elements. The process of accommodation can also work on false premises when a mental picture of reality is restructured in such a way as to accommodate elements whose threat is unreal but which have been decked in a way which associates them with danger and distress. This of course is one of the ways in which "irrational preconceptions" and superstitious convictions can become part of a mental picture of reality (temporary or permanent as that picture will turn out to be depending on the types of further interactions which take place).

Reflections on childhood fears inevitably raise questions about the cultural and social context in which children grow. I have argued that it is a sense of helplessness in the face of the very strange which underscores most childhood fears, and that disturbing ambiguities are interpreted in terms of the fictions of the imagination inspired by the multiple rhythms of interaction with an environment. A child's understanding of what can be referred to as real and of what possibilities can be applied to the appraisal of a particular situation is of necessity dependent on his culture's interpretation of reality and on its awareness of the viability or otherwise of the significance it ascribes to its surroundings. If this is the case, then a study of fear aspiring to any cohesiveness will have to attempt an account of a specific cultural situation in a specific moment in history. Our age is one in which myths are resorted to in a dangerously insecure and often sceptical manner, so that a variety of symbols and modes of perceiving remain enmeshed in our attempts to appraise and evaluate our true bearings long after they have lost any direct relevance. The types of fear which are likely to fester in this context will have origins and





implications which cannot be properly understood or resolved if our awareness of competence or control in relation to our environment is no more than an exercise in self-deception, or if our lives are structured around a resigned sense of helplessness and ruled by the politics of bitter vacuousness.

1. G. Stanley Hall, "A Synthetic Genetic Study of Fear". In *The American Journal of Psychology*, XXV (1914) p. 152
2. C.W. Valentine, *The Psychology of Early Childhood*, 4th edn. (Methuen, 1950).
3. J.S. Bruner, R. Olver and P.M. Greenfield, *Studies in Cognitive Growth* (Wiley and Sons, 1966), pp. 2,4.
4. M.E.P. Seligman, *Helplessness: On Depression, Development, and Death* (W.H. Freeman and Co., 1975).
5. L.Y. Abramson, J. Garber, and M.E.P. Seligman, "Learned Helplessness: An Attributional Analysis" in J. Garber and

M.E.P. Seligman (eds.), *Human Helplessness* (Academic Press, 1980), pp. 3-34.

6. Mary Warnock, *Imagination* (Faber, 1976). The quotations are from pages 196, 199, 78 and 71 respectively.
7. J.P. Sartre, *The Psychology of Imagination* (Methuen, 1972), p. 27.
9. *ibid.*
10. S. Freud, *Three Essays on Sexuality*, *Standard Edn*, VII, ed. J. Strachey (Hogarth Press, 1953), p. 224.
11. E. J. Gibson and R. D. Walk, "The 'visual cliff,'" In *Scientific American*, 202 (1960), pp. 64-71.
12. See J.H. Bamber, *The Fears of Adolescents* (Academic Press, 1979), pp. 15-52; and Yi-fu Tuan, *Landscapes of Fear* (Blackwell, 1979), pp. 11-24.
13. Valentine, *op. cit.*
14. J.L. Singer, *Daydreaming and Fantasy* (Allen & Unwin, 1976, O.U.P. edn. 1981), p. 160
15. See J.H. Flavell, *The Developmental Psychology of Jean Piaget* (Van Nostrand, 1963); and *Cognitive Development* (Prentice-Hall, 1977).

# Charles Vere - and His Controversial Attempts to Open a School in Malta

Joe Debono

**NOME D'IMPRESA:** CIVILI.  
**Istituzioni Caritative.**  
**OSPIZIO IN MALTA.**  
Dal 19 Ottobre 1863.  
Il Dr. G. B. Schembri ha da essere, provvisoriamente, Medico e Assistente Superintendente e Scrivano, in vece del Dr. Cioè Balausti, che ha risegnato.  
Per comando,  
Palazzo, Valletta, Victoria Colonna,  
27 Ottobre 1863. *Principale Segretario di Governo*

**CIVILI ASSOCIATI:**  
**Charitable Institutions.**  
**OSPIZIO IN MALTA.**  
From 19 October 1863  
Dr. G. B. Schembri to be, provisionally, Medical Officer and Assistant Superintendent and Clerk, vice Dr. Cioè Balausti, resigned.  
By command,  
Palazzo, Valletta, Victoria Colonna,  
October 27th, 1863. *Chief Secretary to Government*

(Continuazione al No. 1422.)  
Il Marchese di Hastings, successore al generale Ponsomby, una quantità di prelores, cui molto fu eredita la famosa comica conosciuta col nome di lui. Per altro bravo militare, che aveva condotto in Waterloo riportando una ferita a ortite; affabile, caritatevole. Ma ci bisognava uniformarsi al famoso calcolo partito di Bail; e l'indole particolare di Ponsomby ci stava proprio a capello, trattandosi ora già di far del gran male, che egli era inteso al grande sì in male che bene, ma di lasciar correre io così come stavano. Il Ponsomby, in otto anni di governo, badò a darsi buon tempo, godendosi quella grazia di Dio delle cinque mila lire annue nei giuochi, nella caccia, nei viaggi. Un fatto avvertito nel 1827 varrà a metterlo in maggior luce l'indole di Ponsomby ed a mostrare la continuazione di quell'esecrata politica che per tanto tempo ci oppresso, se pur non ci condannò ad opprimere.  
Era venuto dall'Inghilterra un tal Carlo Vere, il quale volendo dar saggio della propria abilità domandò al governo il permesso di stampare nella tipografia del governo, non essendovene altro allora, un opuscolo intorno a cose commerciali per uso dei negozianti: il permesso fu bensì accordato, ma l'opuscolo restò sotto il torchio per due anni e nove mesi e il Vere ebbe a pagare per la stampa il doppio. Dopo questo precludo lo stesso Vere domandò il permesso di aprire una scuola per insegnare la lingua inglese. Ponsomby riferì la domanda al Consiglio dell'Università perché verificasse e rapportasse sull'idoneità del ricorrente; il Consiglio, dopo esaminato il Vere, lo dichiarò idoneo. Dopo questi fatti il governo si ne fece secco secco colla risposta seguente: — « Non ostante il rapporto del consiglio della

Università, il quale ha detto che il supplente è "certo" nella lingua italiana ed inglese, e nell'aritmetica commerciale, trattata il governatore ricusa di accordargli la licenza di tenere una scuola in Malta—Giugno 15, 1827. » — Or non è egli chiaro lo intento di tenere il popolo nell'assoluta ignoranza, noi diciamo, di quella disciplina che maltratta la mente e il cuore, ma pur di quelle conoscenze, che sono necessarie per procacciarsi un pane? Tre mesi dopo Vere era stato innanzi al magistrato per aver, contro il divieto, fatto scuola, e veniva condannato ad un mese di prigione. La quale pena però, venendone richiamato dall'allora Capo di Giustizia Standart, fu ridotta a soli 14 giorni. Vere allora pregò il governo di far pervenire un suo memoriale al ministro della Colonia, nel quale domandava la riparazione dei danni. Il governo rispose che avrebbe inviato qualunque reclamo del signor Vere riguardo l'ingiustizia della di lui condanna ad intanto trattarne il memoriale e dopo tre mesi fece sapere al supplente che non era sua intenzione di spedirlo. Questo fatto è constatato nelle minute del governo imperiale in una delle Sedute di 1836.—Quante persecuzioni, quante ingiustizie, quanti scandali perciò una volta aprì una scuola di lingua inglese! E noi chiamiamo a grumbers, o irri, pietri, disaffezionati!  
Intanto le cose andando di male in peggio, il nostro ottimo cittadino, Camillo e i liberali Scoberras, progettò ad alcuni suoi amici (1830) di fare una petizione al ministero delle Colonie per domandare una riforma dell'amministrazione, un Comitato sanitario indipendente, e diversi altri miglioramenti nel governo. Fu fatta la petizione, presentata al Governatore, ma poi fu ritirata da quelli

che l'avevano presentata, perchè avea loro il Governatore intimato di moderare i termini. Scoberras intanto, sempre costante nei suoi propositi nella mira di sollevare la patria da quel dispotismo, chiamò a radunanza i più liberi ed indipendenti e formulò un'altra petizione, cui mandò direttamente al ministero coloniale (1832.) Si fu allora che il Governatore di Londra istituì un'inchiesta per esaminare lo stato delle colonie, particolarmente rapporto alle rendite e alle spese. Le persone nominate domandarono al sotto-segretario per le colonie se vi erano reclami da parte dei Maltesi; a fu risposto di no. Quando la petizione stava negli scaffali del Ministero, La Commissione cominciò per ridurre il salario dal Governatore a 3000 lire, stabilito da Maitland a 5000; ma il ministero non ci trovava più il suo conto, perchè più alto era il salario e più poteva lucrare dai governatori a prezzo della nomina; onde lo lasciò sul piede di prima.  
Un telegramma da Alessandria, confermato da lettere giunte Mercoledì scorso, ci annunzia che quivi si sono manifestati sette casi di colera; ed intanto i passeggeri arrivati col vapore furono ammessi a libera pratica.  
A capo del Lazzeretto fu messo un guardiano di sanità—di quelli, s'intende, che non hanno altro di guardiano che il collare giallo.  
I passeggeri di Southampton sbarcano dopo tre soli giorni di contumacia—perchè il Colera di Southampton e di tutta l'Inghilterra non è Colera.  
La barba alla Notificazione di Governo che vieta l'importazione del bestiame e dei cani del Regno Unito, si è fatto sbarcare un cane (Malta Times) dopo averlo prima tuonato nell'acqua.  
Evviva il Comitato di Sanità, che gode la fiducia del Governatore! Prevediamo, col permesso dell'Observer, al Portafoglio di mettere mano al deposito dei suggerimenti e dei consigli per far conoscere al governo questi fatti; che noi non vi abbiamo rifiutato col suggerire e col consigliare.

fu messo in contumacia,—però l'ammalato era in via di miglioramento. Il 20 a Trieste si sono constatati 3 casi di colera. Nella Provenza il morbo è scemato, ma non così a Parigi. In Spagna la malattia moltiplicata inferisce, meno nelle province di Valenza e Saragozza è scomparsa. A Beirut è cessata, e trovata la dimora a Tripoli di Siria, a S. Giovanni d'Acri, ad Aleppo a Darbehir, a Damasco e ad Erzerum. Essa inferisce soltanto in alcune città della Turchia europea.  
**IL COLERA IN MALTA.**  
Da sabato passato sino ieri non si sono constatati che soli 6 casi, morti 4.—Gozo nessun caso.  
Il vapore di sua maestà 'Psyche' giunse il 2 corrente proveniente da Napoli.  
La fregata a vapore di sua maestà 'Terribile' è partita da Portsmouth il 18 passato per Malta.  
Il trasporto a vapore di sua maestà 'Messaggera' partì da Woolwich per il Mediterraneo.  
Per mezzo del vapore postale italiano 'Archimede' giunse qui il 2 corrente da Messina sentiamo che tre legacionari, S. Maria 'Loyal Oak', 'Resistance', 'Enterprise' passarono il 1 dal Faro, provenienti da Palermo. Dieci ci erano diretti per la Grecia, dove vi sono dei torbidi. Il vascello di sua maestà 'Gibraltar' e la corvetta a vapore 'Racer' partirono da Napoli per le Isole Jonie.  
I passeggeri fatti da Messina sull' 'Archimede' narrano che le autorità sanitarie di Messina avevano ricusato di ricevere gli arrivi da Napoli. Palermo ha messo 21 giorni di contumacia alle provenienze di Napoli.  
La squadra italiana composta di sei legni da guerra giunse a Corfù il 22 passato, proveniente dalla Sicilia. Dicesi che fra breve verrà in Malta.

Pp. 8 and 9 of *Il Mediterraneo*, N. 1424, 4. xi. 1865

The long and chequered history of Maltese education provides a most versatile and litigious character: Charles Vere, a British resident on the Island from the mid-1820's to the mid-1830's. He made his first impact on the local scene in 1824, when he opened what must be rated as Malta's first department-store at No. 256, Strada Reale - now Republic Street - Valletta. His wares were as varied as they were exotic, and according to advertisements appearing in various issues of *The Malta Government Gazette* published between August 4th, 1824 and March 23rd 1825 included "best London bottled and draught Porter,

fine Devonshire Cyder (sic), fine Old Port Wine in Pints and Quarts, fine Flavoured Sherry, Earthenware, Glass and China, Hardware, Cutlery, Hosiery, Pickles, Sauces, Perfumery, Westphalia Hams, Wiltshire Cheeses." In addition, he sold Pale Ale, London Bottled Cider and Brown Stout, London Porter in Casks, real Cognac Brandy, Fine Old Jamaica Rum, Hollands (sic) Gin, Madeira Wines Faro, Caphaloni, Bordeaux, St Julian and Teneriffe of the best quality, Teas, Sugar, Coffee, Butter, Ladies Cloths (sic) for Pelisses, Carpeting, Marsala, Syracuse and other Wines, Old Hock, Burgundy and



*Il Mediterraneo's* version, however, differs substantially from Ponsonby's official report. In a dispatch dated 20th October 1828, he informed the Rt. Hon. Sir George Murray, the Colonial Secretary, that Vere's complaint was the latest in a series of sixteen similarly vexatious representations by which he and his predecessor, the Marquis of Hastings had been pestered. He points out that despite the fact that full investigations had proved Vere's complaints groundless, the Government had invariably answered all these petitions. He further points out that other letters by Vere contained no new facts, and therefore had been ignored. Ponsonby concedes that he shared the general view that Vere was either "of deranged intellects" or "a most litigious, turbulent individual, professing great effrontery and presumption".<sup>10</sup>

Ponsonby reports that, about a year after opening his shop, Vere had gone to Corfu, taking all the merchandise with him, including many articles he had received on credit in Malta. He returned in 1826 but, as he could not repay his debts, was arrested and sent to prison, where he caused considerable trouble.

The Government sent a number of magistrates to inquire into the cause of the troubles and declared Vere at fault, in spite of his insistence that he had been unjustly treated. Ponsonby alleged that only his restraint prevented the magistrates from taking libel action against Vere.

Ponsonby explained, that on the basis of Vere's previous actions the Government did not consider him "a proper person to keep a school within the Island"<sup>11</sup>, still Vere had defied the law. Consequently, he had been sentenced to imprisonment for one month.

Ponsonby considered himself quite generous

to Vere; he explains that he had remitted half the sentence and, some time later, granted Vere permission to deliver lectures on book-keeping. He also instructed the Government printing press to publish, free of charge, some booklets, entitled *Tables of Exchange*, compiled by Vere thus enabling the author to make a decent living.

Kind and generous treatment did not diminish Vere's pugnacious tendencies in any way for, according to Ponsonby, not long afterwards, he took several persons to court for slander. All were exonerated because Vere could not substantiate his charges. Vere was again imprisoned for a "violent interference with the officers of the Executive Police in the execution of their duty in a matter (in which Ponsonby) was neither directly nor indirectly concerned."<sup>12</sup>

The Governor's version has a more truthful ring about it. Vere was certainly a meddler. He opened and shut business several times, for example in the August 16th 1826 issue of *The Government Gazzette* he advertised that he was once more opening business in Strada Reale. He borrowed and lent money or sold merchandize on credit, for in the same issue of *The Government Gazzette*, he informs one and all that he had revoked the Power of Attorney issued to Mr Emanuel Costa, Legal Procurator, and to Mr Antonio Zarb, his agent; and that, therefore, these two persons were no longer authorized either to collect money owing to him or to treat any business matter involving him: those who had paid any sums of money to Costa and Zarb were asked "di conto delle somme pagate" to Notary William Stevens, in the Commercial Hall.<sup>13</sup>

Despite the serious charges mentioned in his dispatch, Ponsonby seems to have suddenly

*In the Prison he made  
great disturbances and great complaints  
were made against him by the factors—  
on the other hand Mr. Vere represented  
that he was treated in a harsh manner*

*with the general opinion that he  
is of deranged intellect; if not  
he certainly is a most litigious  
turbulent individual, proposing  
great affronts and presumptions  
only a few days ago he was sentenced*

suffered a major change of heart for, early in 1829, an advertisement appeared in *The Malta Government Gazette* announcing that Vere was about to open a school at No 141, Strada Forni - now Old Bakery Street, Valletta. Besides Writing and Arithmetic, "the Art of Book-Keeping" would be taught by Vere himself, "through the medium of the English or Italian". The morning lessons were to be delivered between 9 and 10, the evening ones from 6 to 8. Somewhat ambiguously, readers were informed that Vere was ready to give private tuition "at home or abroad"<sup>14</sup>. The school, apparently, soon made considerable headway for, in 1830, it was transferred to more prestigious surroundings - at 101, Strada Reale. French was now added to the curriculum. Fees were described as "moderate"<sup>15</sup>.

### Official Sanction

In May 1831, after eighteen months of instructional activity, Vere offers us yet another twist when he informs the public that "having obtained the Permission of Government", he had opened a school for "the Instruction of Youth in the English Language, Writing and Arithmetic". The fees were 2 dollars per month, however, gentleman wanting to learn English through Italian, would be charged one dollar per month. In the latter case, the lessons were in the morning only, either from 6 to 7, or from 7 to 8.<sup>16</sup>

Does this mean that Vere had been again flouting the law all the time and his previous 'schools' were illegal? One can only wonder

especially since a series of advertisements for the school<sup>17</sup> sounds very much like Vere's vindictive proclamation that he had won his way at last.

In September of the same year, the curriculum becomes more ambitious when he informs the public that he intended giving "Lectures On the Principles of The British Constitution and The Laws of England", between 7 and 8.15 in the evenings, every Tuesday and Thursday. The involvement of the participants was to be ensured by allocating fifteen minutes "to conversation on subjects connected with the Lecture." For a whole course of 36 lectures, the fee was 3 dollars,<sup>18</sup> but one ticket would admit two ladies!<sup>19</sup>

In November of the same year, Vere began describing his school as a "Commercial and Finishing Academy" with the curriculum now comprising Writing, English Language, Arithmetic, Book-keeping and Geography - all taught "with every requisite to enable a person to fill any department in a Merchant's Counting House".

Tuition times were "from 1/2 past 8 to 11 a.m. and from 2 to 4 p.m.". Students paid two dollars per month, but those taking Book-keeping had to pay one dollar extra.<sup>20</sup>

The frequent changes in the curriculum and the time-table make one presume that, despite the public fanfares, the school was not, perhaps, attracting enough students. Certainly, in March 1832, it moved to No. 5, Strait Street, Valletta, where Vere intended to open an evening school for young ladies "from 2 to 4 every Wednesday and

Saturday".<sup>21</sup> Schooling for girls was extended a year later when Mrs Vere opened a Girls' School for the teaching of Dressmaking, English, Writing and Arithmetic.<sup>22</sup> To allay any moral or religious suspicions, assurance was solemnly given that "Non si avrà nessuna ingerenza in materia di Religione".<sup>23</sup> A few days later Vere informed the public of more ambitious educational activities and within "una scuola, Lunedì 1<sup>mo</sup> dell' entrante Aprile sarà aperta in Valletta". English, Italian, French and the elements of Latin Grammar were to be taught through the most approved methods. Besides these languages, Writing, Arithmetic, History, Geography and Astronomy were also to be offered.

In order to cope with the expanded curriculum, other teachers were roped in, thus giving the institution a more tangible aspect of a formal school. The time-table, too, once again underwent a change. Mr Vere still taught English, on Mondays and Thursdays, while the Italian Giacomo Silvestro Fior taught Italian on Tuesdays and Fridays. The French language, on Wednesdays and Saturdays, was the responsibility of Mr Antide Joume. Private lessons were also available in the three languages, as well as in the elements of Greek and German Grammar, and in Geometry and Navigation. Once more, moral consciences and denominational suspicions were calmed by a promise that no lesson would be delivered that could, in any way, offend the religious sentiments of the students.<sup>24</sup> The repetition of this religious safeguard makes one wonder whether Mr Vere's notoriously turbulent character had not, perhaps, seriously jeopardized the success of his educational ventures!

A year later, Mr Vere's school seems to have ceased operations. Certainly, its Italian teacher, Mr Fior, had opened a school himself at No 257, Strada Reale, Valletta.<sup>25</sup> But Mrs Vere was still giving instruction in English, Italian, Arithmetic, Needlework and Dancing "helped by able masters".<sup>26</sup>

Nevertheless, the school does not seem to have lasted more than a year for, throughout 1835, there was not a single advertisement either extolling its amenities or announcing some addition to the curriculum - and it was not typical of Vere to remain silent for any length of time! He suddenly fades out of the picture.

2. G.G., No. 936, 21.1.1829, p. 20.
3. G.G., No. 1103, 21.3.1832, p. 88.
4. G.G., No. 882, 9.1.1828, p. 12. Cfr.: G.G., No. 885, of 30.1.1828, p. 36.
5. G.G., No. 1093, 11.1.1832, p. 16.
6. *Il Mediterraneo - Gazzetta di Malta*, No. 1424, 4.11.1865, p.8.
7. *Ibid.* "Notwithstanding the University Council's conclusions that the applicant was versed in the Italian and English languages as well as in Commercial Arithmetic, the governor declined to issue him the permit to open a school in Malta-June 15, 1827".
8. Bianca Fiorentini, *Malta Rifugio di Esuli e Focolare Ardente di Cospirazione durante il Risorgimento Italiano*, Malta, 1866, p. 62 *et passim.*, Cfr. also *L'ordine - Giornale Politico Letterario Religioso*, No. 9, Anno I, 18.8.1849, p. 37.
9. *Il Mediterraneo* ..., No. 1424, *et supra*, *loc. cit.*
10. National Library of Malta; Dispatch: Ponsonby to Murray, dated 20th October, 1828.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*
13. G.G., No. 805, 16.8.1826, p. 243.
14. G.G., No. 936, 21.1.1829, p.20. Cfr. also G.G., no. 957, 10.6.1829, p. 182, and G.G., no. 968, 1829, p. 270.  
The fees charged were far from moderate, when one considers that, at the time, the daily wages were very low, e.g. a male weaver - 3d, a spinner - 2d, a tanner - 1d, and a policeman - 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. *Vide*: Charles Price, *Malta and the Maltese - A Study in Nineteenth Century Migration*, Georgian House, Melbourne, 1954, Appendix A, p. 215.
15. G.G., No. 1030 3.11.1830, p. 364. Cfr. also G.G., No. 1035 1.12.1830, p. 400.
16. G.G., No. 1066, 6.7.1831, p. 210.
17. G.G., No. 1067, 13.7.1831, p. 218. Cfr. also G.G., No. 1068, 20.7.1831, p.226, and G.G., No. 1069, 27.7.1831, p. 234.
18. G.G., No. 1075, 7.9.1831, p. 234.
19. G.G., No. 1077, 21.9.1831, p. 298.
20. G.G., No. 1084, 9.11.1831, p. 350.
21. G.G., No. 1103, 21.3.1832, p. 88.
22. G.G., No. 1155, 20.3.1833, p. 100.
23. *Ibid.*
24. G.G., No. 1156, 27.3.1833, p. 108.
25. G.G. No. 1202, 5.2.1834, p. 48.
26. G.G., No. 1210, 26.3.1834, p. 106.

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G. Mallia pp. 6, 13.  
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M. Camilleri p. 15.  
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1. (*The Malta Government Gazette*), No. 697, 4.9.1824, p. 4024. Cfr: G.G., No. 699, 11.8.1824, p. 4034; G.G., No. 701, 25.8.1824, p.4050; G.G., No.705, 22.9.1824, p. 4082; G.G., No. 706, 29.9.1824, p. 4090; G.G., No. 715, 1824, p. 4160; No. 706, 29.9.1824, p. 4090; G.G., No. 715, 1.12.1824, p. 4160; G.G. No. 727, 23.2.1825, p. 59; G.G., No. 731, 23.3.1825, p. 87; G.G., No. 738, 11.5.1825, p. 151.

# Perception, Cognitive Development and Humour in the Child \*

Mario Camilleri

Like beauty, humour is in the eye of the beholder, having no objective existence, being purely a product of the act of perception.<sup>1</sup> In other words, humour results not from the concrete object which impinges physically upon the organism, but from the complex process which organizes and places the sensory-data within a frame of reference, thus bestowing meaning on it.

A "humour stimulus" (e.g. a "joke") — like any other stimulus — is intrinsically meaningless, and only acquires meaning after the perceptual process has successfully managed to decipher a pattern in the stimulus which can be matched with pre-existing schemata in the mind. Like a Rorschach blot, a "joke" can mean different things — or fail to mean anything — to different people. Psychoanalysts maintain that (as with Rorschach patterns) one's response to a "humour stimulus" (response in sense of both overt behaviour and covert "comprehension") reflects one's emotional make up. Perhaps more importantly, humour perception is a product of one's cognitive apparatus (and therefore reflects cognitive make up), since it is this which organizes the crude sensations into a humour percept. Of course, this is an oversimplification, since joke perception is never solely a product of cognitive processes — however complex — but is also regulated by additional factors: social context of stimulation, emotional inhibitions and social taboos, mental set, etc. — the ORECTIC (or, as termed by Freud, the TENDENTIOUS) as distinguishable from the purely cognitive elements of the joke percept. It is nevertheless possible — in experimental situations — to more or less isolate the cognitive components of the joke percept and investigate these on their own.

## INCONGRUITY - PERCEPTION AND RESOLUTION.

Basically there are two theories regarding the

\* This article is based on a longer study entitled "Children's Humour" which the author submitted for the B.Ed. (Hons) Degree in 1982.

cognitive process which underlies joke perception. One theory (put forth by Kant, Schopenhauer, and others) posits that - from the cognitive point of view - humour is essentially the perception of incongruity: that is, the awareness that there exists a mismatch or discrepancy between an *expectation* and an *actual event*.

The other theory (favoured by Freud) maintains that the cognitive process is biphasic - incongruity perception being followed by 'resolution'. 'Resolution' here refers to what the gestalt psychologists Maier, Bateson and Fra, as cited by Watzlawick,<sup>2</sup> refer to as the 'restructuring' of the initial incongruous perception in view of later information such that the initial incongruity is eliminated. In DeBono's<sup>3</sup> terms:

Humour is based on the process of switching tracks: of suddenly seeing something in a different way.

Thus in the following children's joke, from Wolfenstein's (1954) pioneering work on children's humour:

Q. Why did the moron take his bicycle to bed?

A. Because he didn't want to walk in his sleep.

the incongruity generated by the unexpected joking answer (somnambulism having apparently nothing to do with bicycles) is resolved by restructuring the utterance in such a way as to foreground the relationship between 'bicycle' and 'not to walk', which initially tends to be obscured by the mismatch between the (non-joking) answer one would expect to such a question, and the actual (joking) answer.

## INCONGRUITY AND SCHEMA FORMATION

Incongruity perception, being a violation of an expectation, naturally entails the exercise of past experience to predict the outcome of a given situation (which prediction is then proven false by additional information).

It is evident that if no mismatch exists between an expectation and an actual event, no

discrepancies (and hence no humour) will be perceived. Thus non-conservers of liquid quantity will often consider the water-transfer 'trick' funny, which is never the case with liquid-conservers.<sup>4</sup> It thus becomes evident that the perception of incongruity - and hence humour - is relative to the representation of reality in the mind (the schemas), in the context of which sensory data is construed. Nerhardt<sup>5</sup> and others point out that to apprehend the anomalousness of a given distorted object (eg. a dog with wheels for legs), a child must:

1. possess the schema corresponding to the normal object, and
2. be able to identify the anomalous object as belonging to that schema despite its oddness.

Piaget argues that faced with such a discrepancy between an experience and the schema to which it is seen to belong to child will alter the schema in order to assimilate the novel

experience. McGhee<sup>6</sup> points out that such a process of accommodation and assimilation will not result in humour experience but in 'learning'. It is a 'telic' process - one the sole aim of which is cognitive expansion. Humour, on the other hand, is purely for pleasure (of a paratelic nature) - nothing (or very little) is learnt from a humour experience. A child who laughs at the picture of a dog with wheels does not modify his schema of a dog in order to accommodate the novel experience to occur, then, the child must perceive that the anomaly with which he is confronted is merely *playful* - one which is to be taken as play and not in earnest.

The play context is this indispensable for the perception of humour - discrepancies occurring in a non-playful context will be perceived as 'real', and may lead to bewilderment, curiosity, or even fear. The child's ability to detect cues which signal a discrepancy as 'merely playful' is



thus an important factor in humour perception. Because such cues can be purely conventional (eg. 'did you hear the one about..?'), or visual cues such as a smile or a wink), learning plays an important role in the child's ability to perceive humour.

In the absence of such overt cues, the stability or otherwise of the appropriate schema will largely determine whether the discrepancy is perceived as humorous or not. If the child's concept of a dog is hazy, the above mentioned anomaly will be treated with caution as a possible reality. If it is stable, the anomaly will be perceived as downright impossible and hence as a play on the real or purposeful violation of reality (ie. a 'lie').

Understandably, a child's conceptual grasp of the 'world out there' is for more hazy and fragmentary, his schemas less stable, his predictive abilities less well developed than an adult's, and therefore his ability to detect incongruities, and to judge the context as playful or serious, far more limited.

Because cognitive development is from the motor and concrete to the abstract, humour likewise develops from the more concrete slapstick kind (incongruity on the motor level) to the more abstract types such as puns. Once a schema is firmly established, or a concept firmly grasped, or an area of development well mastered, discrepancies between what **SHOULD BE** and **WHAT IS** can be detected and judged to be playful or real. Piaget's work on cognitive development in the child thus provides great insight into the development of humour in children.

### **PRE-OPERATIONAL & OPERATIONAL THOUGHT AND HUMOUR**

Certainly the most dramatic milestone in cognitive development is the transition from the pre-operational to the operational stage, which is most marked at around age 7 or 8. Modern research has indicated that the pre-operational child, because of cognitive limitations, is not capable of resolving incongruities in humour, and that resolution humour emerges only with the onset of operational thought.

The notion that pure - and resolvable - incongruity humour characterize two consecutive stages in humour development seems to have originated with Freud.<sup>7</sup> He observes that in mastering language the infant enjoys nonsensical juxtapositioning of words (incidentally, Piaget makes a similar observation with regard to motor development - what he terms 'symbolic play'). This pleasure in nonsense and pure-incongruity, according to Freud, constitutes the first stage in the development of

humour. As the child grows older, the strengthening of the 'critical faculty or reasonableness'<sup>8</sup> inhibits the liberating pleasure which the indulgence in this purely illogical activity had formerly generated. For this reason, the absurd configurations of words and thoughts have to be invested with a 'meaning' in order to make them permissible.<sup>9</sup> This 'sense in nonsense' constitutes what modern usage refers to as 'incongruity resolution'.

Recent findings place this transition at between 6 and 8 years, which is coincident with the onset of operational thought. McGhee<sup>10</sup> has noted that the process which results in incongruity-resolution requires mental operations which only become well developed during the operational stage. Foremost among these operations is reversibility. Considering a resolvable children's joke such as:

Q. Why did the moron tiptoe past the medicine cabinet?

A. So as not to wake the sleeping pills.

it becomes evident that the listener is magically transported (as it were) from one statement (Q) to another (A) between which there appears to be no bridge. Resolving the joke requires one to go back to the Q and work out the *process* or *path* which bridges the two. Such a mental operation is called by Piaget 'reversibility' - it is the ability, a characteristic of operational thought, to mentally reverse an operation and thus arrive at the original state. This the preoperational child cannot do - for him the original and final states of a process are two isolated conditions. In this difference lies the distinction between the age of pure incongruity and that of resolvable incongruity. Pure incongruity merely requires the juxtapositioning of two things - for instance an expectation and an actual occurrence. Resolvable incongruity, on the other hand, requires the perception of a transitory process which links the two discrepant entities.

In recent years the pure/resolvable-incongruity issue has been extensively researched using multiple versions (usually two) of a single joke or cartoon which differ from each other in that one contains explicit resolution information whilst the other does not contain such information. Thus in figure 1, version 'a' is purely incongruous, but version 'b' provides a clue (the wall) to resolving the apparent incongruity. Most pre-operational children are not able to distinguish - humourwise - between the two, since they react only to the incongruity component of the cartoon. Operational children, however, tend to prefer the 'b' (resolvable) version, being able to appreciate the added dimension of resolution in humour.

## PERCEPTIONAL CENTREDNESS

A characteristic of the pre-operational period is 'perceptual centredness'. The pre-operational child "makes no attempt to find the intrinsic relations existing between things"<sup>11</sup> - he tends to perceive details in isolation without synthesizing them into a whole. In other words, pre-operational children tend to "see things always in terms of momentary perception". The pre-operational child will perceive the cartoon shown in figure 2 as humorous only in so far as it violates his expectations of what a teapot should be like. The operational child, on the other hand, will go beyond the momentary perception and discover humour in the consequences of using the depicted teapot (spilled tea etc.), or the reasons for the existence of such an anomalous object (someone having knocked off the spout and stuck it back the wrong way up by mistake maybe) - because now he is "capable of amplifying induction and necessary deduction", which "advances in logic are connected with the definite diminution of egocentrism at the age of 7-8".<sup>12</sup>

One very important consequence of egocentric perception in the pre-operational child is that often he will only "see what he already knows".<sup>13</sup> being incapable of objective observation. Faced with an anomalous object, the pre-operational child may not even notice the anomaly.<sup>14</sup> Presented with the cartoon in figure 2 and a normal drawing of a teapot, one 6-year-old boy could not discriminate between the two versions. When asked which version represented a teapot, he answered that both did. This incapacity arises from the pre-operational tendency to perceive the whole merely as a conglomeration of its separate parts rather than as a synthesis of interrelated components. Children at this stage are therefore incapable of perceiving humour arising from the relation of a part to the whole, as in the following exchange:

- A. "You're British?"  
B. "No I'm not! I'm from London".

where most children will know that 'Britain' and 'London' go together, but fail to perceive the 'part-whole' relation between the two.<sup>14</sup>

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Because humour is a product of cognitive processes it can provide great insight into the functioning and nature of the mind. Indeed, responses to such potential humour stimuli like cartoon absurdities have sometimes been utilized in measuring children's intelligence, such as in the Stanford Binet Intelligence Test. The converse is equally true. Early research on

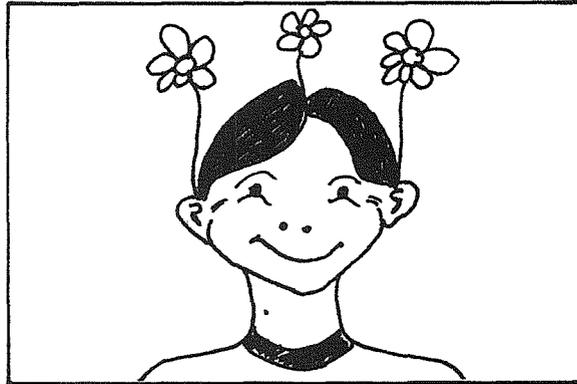


Fig. 1(a)

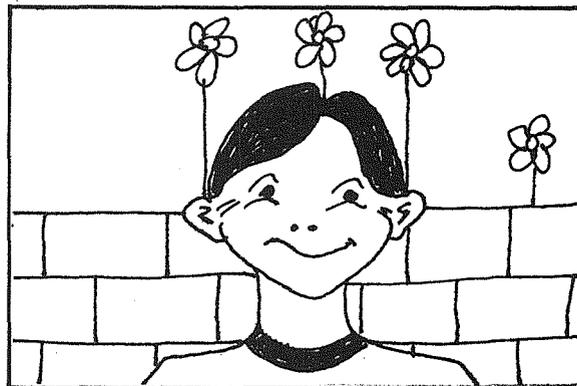


Fig. 1(b)

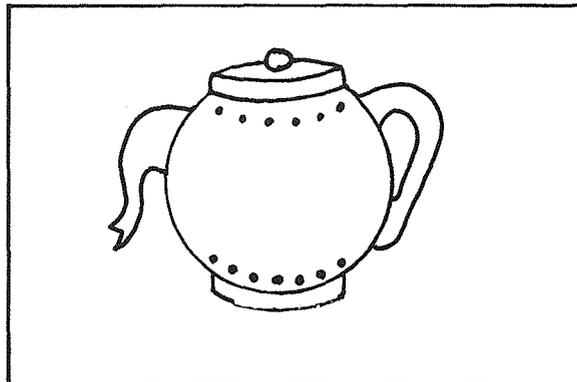


Fig. 2

humour tended to suffer from lack of direction and of a supporting theoretical framework. Only recently have researchers started to place their work in the context of findings and theories in other areas of psychology, especially developmental psychology. Piaget's work, in particular, has proved of enormous value both in explaining some of the findings as well as in the formation of hypothesis regarding humour development. Conversely the work of McGhee,  
*continued on page 17*

# Course Structure in Bachelor of Education (Hons)

## CURRICULUM PLAN

1. Coursework is made up of 90 units/credits; 80 units/credits are devoted to course work, and the equivalent of 10 credits are allocated to the final examinations.

2. The units/credits are distributed as follows:

### A. Educational Theory and Pedagogy

**35 credits**

- i. Educational Psychology & Human Development 11 credits course work + 2 credits examination.
- ii. Socio Cultural Aspects of Education 11 credits course work + 2 credits examination.
- iii. General Pedagogy 9 credits course work.

### B. Main Subject Specialization

**36 credits**

- i. Content from 23 to 26 credits course work + 4 credits examination.
- ii. Method from 7 to 4 credits course work + 2 credits examination.

### C. Subsidiary Subject

**19 credits**

- i. Content and Method 19 credits distributed between Content and Method as required.

3. Course work curriculum plan over five year programme:

Academic Semesters	I	II	III	IV	V	Final Exams	Sub-totals
<b>A. Educational Theory and Pedagogy</b>							<b>35</b>
i. Educational Psychology	2	2	2	3	2	2	13
ii. Socio-Cultural Aspects	-	2	4	3	2	2	13
iii. General Pedagogy	5	2	1	1	-	-	9
<b>B. Main Subject Specialization</b>							<b>36</b>
i. Content	6	6	6	6	6	4	
ii. Methodology	-	-	-	-	-	2	
<b>C. Subsidiary</b>							<b>19</b>
i. Content and Method	3	4	4	4	4	-	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>90</b>

*N.B. The Course can be altered if circumstances warrant it.*

The course is made up of:

- (a) The Academic Work component — five semesters.
- (b) The Practical Work component — five semesters.

The academic component is composed of five major areas of study: Educational Theory and Pedagogy, Main Subject Specialization, Subsidiary Subject, Teaching Practice and Dissertation.

In the course structure the following principles are held as cardinal:

- (a) theoretical, academic work is directly related to practical instructional situations, and not treated in isolation from school/classroom conditions;
- (b) instructional practice must be founded on sound educational theories borne out by systematically developed pedagogy;
- (c) the systematic fusion of theory and practice will materialize through close cooperation between the university and the schools, with the two sectors operating as both research and field laboratories.

### The Academic Programme

The B.Ed. (Hons) academic programme is contained within five of ten semesters, alternating every 5½ months with the work programme. Ninety units, or units equivalents, are distributed over the five year programme as illustrated in the accompanying Course Work Plan.

The Course-Work includes:

#### I Educational Theory and Pedagogy

- (i) Educational Psychology
- (ii) Socio-Cultural Aspects in Education
- (iii) Pedagogy

#### II Main Subject Specialization

- (i) Content
- (ii) Methodology

#### III Subsidiary Subject

IV Teaching Practice Sessions are held in specified periods within the Second, Third,

Fourth and Fifth work semester.

#### V Dissertation

Students can research and develop this dissertation throughout the five year course. They are required to attend tutorial sessions during the course and submit the dissertation prior to the final examinations.

### The Unit/Credit System

The B.Ed. (Hons) academic programme is designed on the unit/credit system where subject areas are divided into units. A unit consists of 16 hours contact centred on an identified common body of knowledge (e.g. The Aims and Functions of Education; or Intelligence and Creativity; or English Literature 1920-1970; etc.) Bodies of Knowledge that so require are allocated more than

one unit. The contact hours within a unit may be made up of lectures, seminars, tutorials, and laboratory sessions or a combination of these models of instruction depending on the nature and requirements of the subject.

Each unit is assessed through one, or a combination of these methods: (a) set essay, (b) seminar presentations, (c) submission of reports, (d) written or laboratory project, (e) tests, (f) any other method as required by the discipline of the subject. The unit is credited to the student's academic record once the assessment requirements for that unit are satisfied.

All the units within the programme are identified in this prospectus. The educational objectives, subject topics, modes of instruction, evaluation and assessment criteria together with suggested readings and bibliographical notes are available to students in unit course descriptions.

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## Perception, Cognitive Development and Humour in the Child

*continued from page 15*

Rothbart, and others has served to enrich Piagetian theory and prove - if proof he needed - the amazing insight Piaget had into the workings of a child's mind.

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# Teacher Participation in the Management of Schools

Charles Galea Scannura

**P**articipation — the idea of having a share in management and in profits — could be considered as the new concept to be applied in the Maltese Economy as far as the ‘employed’ are concerned, in the 1980s. The principle, when it comes to Education, may be examined in terms of various sectors — students, parents, teachers, private schools, local state schools, national policy and government.

It is therefore pertinent to note what has been said so far as regards Teacher Participation. It has been claimed that it “is not incompatible with a sound educational policy”. Far back in 1969, CASE (England) declared that teachers should have a right to be involved at all levels of planning and consultation on matters of vital educational concern. For the teacher’s role in education is changing: he cannot act in an authoritarian atmosphere. He has to be accepted as the social operator who collects ideas, hypotheses and changes and makes them known to the masses. He is an animator and promoter of ideas, necessities and cultural and social fermentations.

## **A Democratic Society**

A Commonwealth Secretariat Report, issued in 1974, provides recommendations for the setting up of consultative bodies representative of parents, teachers, students and the community to ensure a wider sense of participation and responsibility in educational organisation.

Hence more than one concept seems to be evolving. We have to accept the “atomic theory of education” — the school is a social institution which has to be related to the economic life of society. It has to adapt itself to the new educational goals and to changes in social and living conditions. Hence the demands, political, moral, social, and economical, that are being made on the teacher and the pupil, have to be re-examined and assessed in relation to the demands being made on the content and methods of instruction.

Change and innovation have to be accepted as essential for educational organisation as for any

living organisation, and the citizens who can ensure this change are the teachers. Hence they cannot be treated as switch-boards of programmed learning, or indoctrination. They have to make the educational policy of any nation work. They have to participate in an advisory, consultative and managerial capacity to transform the school into an “organic part of a democratic society in which it carries out its role as mediator between the past and the future”.

It seems to be in this sense that the Director General of UNESCO has remarked that “the success of any educational enterprise depends primarily on the aptitudes and qualities of the teacher and innovation itself has no chance of success without the thrust of teachers who know their trade and work in it conscientiously and devotedly”.

## **Collective Common Action**

It is within the power of the teacher to ensure that an education policy be made to succeed. But teachers still have to learn how to act and to face their problems collectively. They have the right to change and innovate in their work, but this right becomes meaningful only when the participants have an effective role in the organisation.

It follows that educational institutions should manage their own affairs with the real participation of all those concerned. A UNESCO report, “Learning to Be” (1972), indicates the need of unifying the teaching staff for the purpose of collective common action. This would reflect the differences between teachers’ functions: providers of documentation such as librarians, preparers of documentation who use mass communication and who would help to formulate information so as to be suitable for teaching purposes, and disseminators and educators who guide, support or supervise the pupils.

In order to achieve their ideals in education, teachers have to realize that their power as an influence in society lies in organization, unity, and commitment. They have to realize that “Democracy is a fragile institution, dependent for its

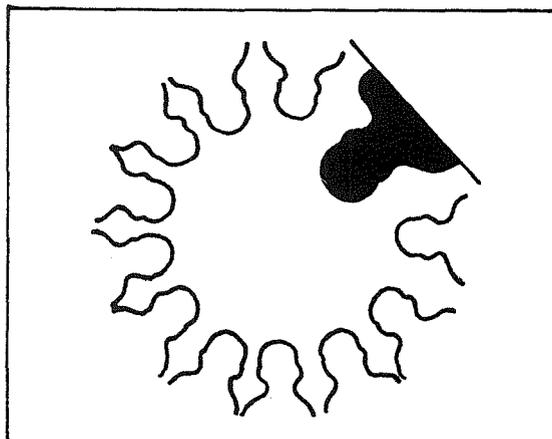
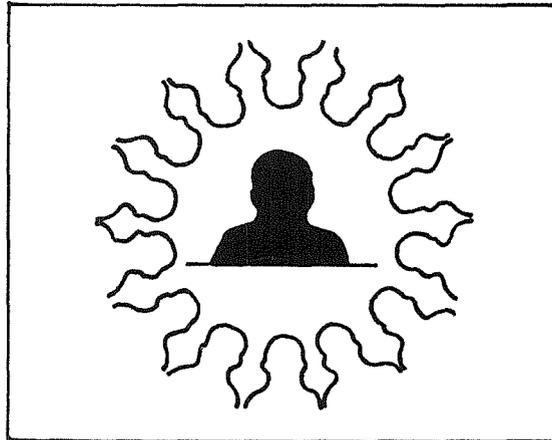
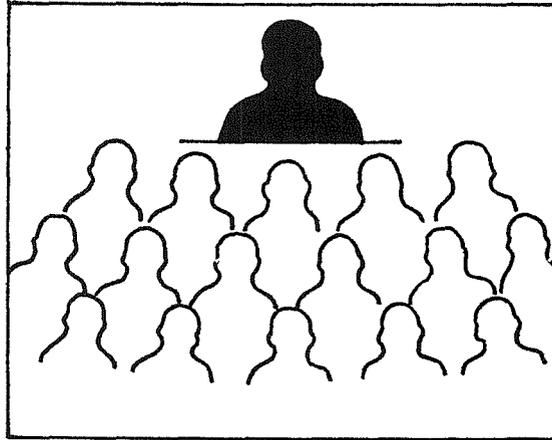
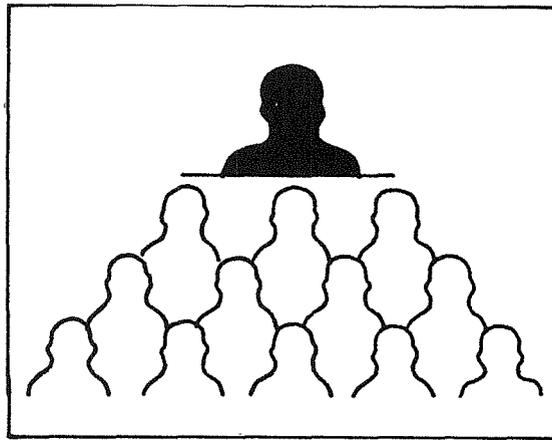
survival on the wisdom of those who participate in its processes". It is therefore up to the teachers themselves to put pressure on society to place education at the top of the nation's priorities. They need to ensure that teachers everywhere are no longer blocked out of educational decision making, to maintain public trust in state schools, and to acknowledge their common destiny with other public employees and work co-operatively to ensure that they are well treated.

Presumably this would ensure progress. Teachers need to be committed and to be involved in the educational socialization process of society. This has already been conceived in some way or other in some countries: in Cuba, for example, the role of the educator is perceived within the framework of "participation of the whole of society in the task of education"; in Peru, the General Law on Education stipulates that "those engaged in education, on account of the specialized functions they perform, shall collaborate in the study and elaboration of educational policy, in particular as it concerns the teaching profession. This participation shall be channelled through the educational institutions of the system and representative teacher's organizations".

**The Need of Teacher Commitment**

The teacher in a developing country should aim at creating a sense of social responsibility, avoid producing a sense of capitalist elitism among administrators, abolish the inhibition of colonial servitude and reverence to substitute it by fraternal dialogue and co-operation, offer useful and relevant experience, and avoid exploitation and wastage. Hence the need of teacher commitment. To be meaningful and substantial, participation is to include involvement in the formulation of policy, involvement in the planning of programmes and projects to implement that policy, involvement in practical implementation of policies and execution of programmes, and involvement in the evaluation of programmes and projects. Such general lines could apply to the commitment of any identified group in the socio-economic development of society; they apply to the teacher in particular since it is he who has to make an educational policy work for the benefit of society itself.

The teacher's demand for participation in the management of schools implies in its turn the fulfilment of the educational policy required by the State. It has already been made clear that it is the teacher who makes a policy work, but somebody had added that it is also the teacher who is generally blamed for shortcomings of unsound policies. If this is so, then teachers must be ready to take and to share risks and since risks could be very expensive, the teacher needs to be well trained and well informed before he is entrusted with his job.



Moreover school organization has to be established on a sound basis. This implies that teachers have the possibility of seeing their school in perspective, of having the possibility of working in a team and of being enabled to understand administrative problems.

### **The Head-Teacher's Role**

The head-teacher's role is vital. He needs to establish friendly relations with his staff and to be entrusted with full responsibility for the running of the school. It therefore follows that the head of a school cannot act alone: he has to consult teachers on the organization of classes, distribution of lessons, the time-table, general activities and the curriculum. Michel Praderie, in "Participation in French Educational Planning", has emphasized this point: "The key to successful operation essentially lies with the school's head, who has an ambiguous role: that of heading an educational team and being responsible for administrative matters".

Moreover teachers need teaching-aids. Foremost among these should be the library, the so called 'heart of the school'. A well organized library could weld teachers into a team ensuring that the school stay on the right lines -- if children are eager for information and know how to use books to develop their curiosity, a measure of progress would certainly be achieved. Teachers could be encouraged to improve upon their teaching, to help and share in the organization of a school library and to give advice as to what type of books are to be obtained.

### **Examples of Experimentation**

An example of how teacher participation could be applied, is the School Council as envisaged by a committee headed by Sir John Lockwood which proposed the setting up of Schools Council for Curriculum and Examinations. This Council, proposed in 1964, aims at reviewing and developing curricula, teaching methods and examinations in schools, through research, assistance, advice and the publication of relevant material. It operates through a structure of interlinked committees served by a secretariat.

It is one example of how teachers could participate effectively in the formation and application of one aspect of an educational policy. They investigate aims, devise and develop new materials which appear to be needed, test experimentally and revise the materials provided, diffuse the ideas gained by holding conferences, publishing their discoveries and allowing an opportunity for evaluation. The teacher is thus given an opportunity to participate in the organization of his school and the educational

system of his country. He is not just another cog in the wheel of 'democratic' bureaucracy.

The desire to experiment and encourage teacher participation has also been expressed in Malta. The MUT Report on Education in Malta (1967) pointed out that "unless one and all pull together as a united team no progress can be achieved, and we shall fall short of our ideals", and proposed the creation of a machinery whereby authority is delegated down the line. Since then ventures in participation have been made, but the effectiveness and success of experiments in participation within the fold of educational institutions still has to be assessed.

The Development Plan for Malta 1973-80 pointed out that "the Government has embarked on a fundamental reform of the educational system: a reform which takes account both of the organization of schooling and of the academic and practical objectives of the educational process". This implies diversity and flexibility and therefore should encourage experimenting and pioneering. This can only achieve results if the teachers are asked to co-operate and to give their intelligent advice and help in the management of education at all levels and at school level in particular.

The idea of consultation, of inviting teachers to participate in the organization of schools, is taking root: by the end of 1977, School Management Committees were introduced in eleven state schools while a Workers' Committee was subsequently introduced in the Department of Education. According to a report entitled "Workers' Participation in Decision Making: Malta National Report" which was presented at Ljubljana in 1977, these committees can deal with discipline, school funds and requisites, school activities, curriculum development, physical conditions and hygiene and other matters connected with the running of the schools. But they have to function within the policy of the Education Department.

An OECD Conference on Participatory Planning in Education (1973) has noted that "Participation becomes a reality only when the participants have an effective voice both in the purposes of the organization and in making these purposes operational". In this sense the Conference emphasized that such an organization implies control of i) the structure and content of the educational task, ii) personnel training for the system, iii) the structure and flow of resources and rewards, and iv) planning.

Teachers can participate in the organization of schools on an advisory, consultative and managerial basis. Recent studies imply this by the very fact that they tend to concentrate on the various functions being demanded from the teacher in modern society: he has been called co-operative group leader, organizer of others, conveyer of information, therapist, self-instruction

specialist, counsellor and subject-matter specialist. It is within this context of the teacher's role, that we should see how this innovation of participation in the management of schools could be applied.

First, it must be realized that innovation has to be seen as meeting a need felt by the school, teacher and community. There must be adequate leadership to stimulate, guide and structure the innovative approach.

Second, it must be realized that teachers' organizations must be consulted.

Third, it must be realized that teachers, above all, should be made to have full confidence in the reforms that may be proposed.

Fourth, assuming that the delegation of formal decisions to local units is accepted, an interior authority structure should ensure the co-ordination and interdependence of the various levels involved. This reminds me of Bozidar Pasaric's remark that participation "passes principally through two tightly connected and interrelated phases: first, the process of decision-making, and second, the execution and control of these processes in accordance with the strategic decision."

### **A School Management Plan**

Assuming that teachers are ready for participation, we have to see how this idea of commitment and involvement could be applied:

Each school could have a School Management Committee chaired by a head-teacher and having power to deal with such items as Administration, Curriculum and Examinations, Cultural Activity, Library, Social Work, and Discipline. These different sectors of management could be organised in terms of sector-committees formed from among the teaching grades particularly concerned with each. Teachers could be given the power to choose and to elect their representatives on these committees. Indeed I am thinking in terms of power exercised by delegation both from above and below. The various chairmen of these committees could together form the School Management Committee which would be able to ensure co-ordination, correlation and co-operation.

Before saying more about these sector-committees, I should state that I am envisaging a web-like pattern of organization, which would involve teacher participation within the school, within relations with various external bodies which could serve to complement the education of society, and relation to the central authority. Thus the various School Management Committees could serve to ensure the establishment of a Teachers' Conference in which all teaching grades, the employer, teacher's organizations, interested parties in education, and parents would all be represented. This could serve to help review and

evaluate renewal and reform in education, professional standards and experiment. It could provide a liberal forum where Education could be freely and constantly surveyed and discussed. Moreover the School Management Committees could also serve as a link with the Central Authority and the Ministry of Education which could retain its Council for Education for purposes which have already been established.

It appears that according to the plan being envisaged, power and authority would not solely be delegated along a vertical line from top to bottom but rather in the form of an extremely wide-angled pyramid where the delegation of power and consequently active participation, would follow a series of lateral and longitudinal lines. Thus it should be realized that all teachers should be concerned with the well-being and administration of the school and therefore many decisions should be taken on the spot.

An Administration sector could deal with such things as school building and maintenance, circulars, attendance and congregations, distribution of lessons and time-tables, parents' days, school calendar activities, class size and selection, assessment of students, provision of equipment, school funds, contact with other schools and with the Central Authority. This implies that class-teachers and form-teachers would not simply act as attendance record keepers and general students' counsellors. They will have to bear more responsibility -- after all participation should not only bring with it sharing in decision-making; it would not be a sound policy to accept participation of power without responsibility, or to ask for full co-operation without granting the right to participate in formulating and assessing policy.

Some teachers should be elected to deal with the Curriculum. With the establishment of the posts of heads of departments, teachers of particular subjects could be given the opportunity to discuss, and examine their syllabus in terms of the classes entrusted to their care. It is here that inter-class discussions (and even inter-schools) and educational tours, could be organized. Here the function of the Education Officer should come to the fore. He could collect information from various schools, organize meetings for teachers on particular subjects, assist in in-service training for teachers and encourage the development of 'subject organizations' which would help the teacher to keep in touch with his fellow workers all the time.

The Library and the organization of Cultural Activity must be considered as two essential factors of education. When the term Library is used, I am implying a fully equipped and used library. This means that the teacher in charge or librarian must have ample time and assistance to ensure that information and documentation could

constantly be provided for students and teachers. The teachers who can help in the organization of the library could well be entrusted with providing such aids as tape-recorded programmes, films and printing. Being considered as the 'power-house of words and ideas', the library could serve as the ideal place where students work on assignments that would arouse their interest and increase their experience. The school could ensure valuable co-operation with the Public Library authorities, but it must also be realized that "it is not enough merely to persuade pupils to acquire a public library ticket, nor simply to insert 'library' periods into the school time-table".

Similarly we cannot relegate Cultural Activity to the occasional school excursion or the prize-day play. Specialist teachers could be entrusted with the organization of sport activities, cultural competitions, exhibitions, debates, drama, choir, gardening and environmental care for the students within the school. All such activity could help to enhance the atmosphere within the school, to create a feeling of belonging to a society, and to develop further the character of the students. Teachers would have to come up with suggestions and help in the organization of such activities. Some time during school hours could be dedicated to this variety of extra-curricular activity to give to every teacher and pupil the possibility of participating in projects or programmes where they are best able and inclined to give their share.

Social Work is a sector in which a lot of progress needs to be made. We have started with educational guidance and counselling but we need more professional partners. These could include school psychologists, speech pathologists, school nurses and health education officers. Their number per school could be determined by the needs of each particular school and in terms of its student population. Those in charge of counselling could help students prepare for employment or future studies by organizing career programmes, visits to industries, meetings with Employment Officers, etc. Health Officers could help in ensuring cleanliness, in checking disease, in ensuring the

health education of pupils. The class teachers need to keep in contact with such people and help in the running and supervision of welfare activity in schools, school canteens, and to provide corrective measures that will result in optimum learning for each student who has to grow and face the problems that modern society often creates.

A polluted environment, permissive society, drug addiction and a host of other unwholesome companions tend to influence the behaviour of students. Today it is being made clear that teaching is not an easy job: teachers have to face indiscipline, indifference to learning, misconduct, truancy, perversion and delinquency, especially in secondary schools. Late in 19th century England it could be reported that "teachers were frequently jeered at and insulted on their way to and from their duties". They had "often to invoke police protection to escape molestation". In recent years in Malta we have had some startling incidents too. It must be realized that because in the past many lacked an opportunity to learn, many did not yearn for learning. Hence those students coming from a deprived environment cannot readily and sheepishly accept the teacher. However, we should be bitterly angry when harm is done to our schools by grossly exaggerated accounts of indiscipline or even when we note indifference to the teachers' plight, especially the teacher who earnestly desires to maintain discipline in difficult classes. Sometimes teachers argue that their authority in class is undermined by too much office red-tape and bureaucracy and even by outside bodies. However, we may say that it has been accepted that today's teachers do have to face difficult and problem children and that the authorities have agreed to do something about it.

In our schools Discipline Boards could be established to deal with difficult classes and teachers could be given more power to deal decisively with recalcitrants. It is only when teachers are respected as masters in their classes, that their decisions are accepted and respected by difficult pupils... and parents. Pupils who are being

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# Young People's Needs: A Head Teacher's View\*

Rev. Charles Caruana S.J.

It is common to hear parents and teachers complain about how difficult the task of educating our children has become. One hears a compilation of alleged transgressions: vandalism and violence, rebellious spirits and anarchic ideas, ingratitude and excessive independence. Adults assert that they were different (that is, better!) in their younger days.

## The need to understand children

This criticism may be valid. Society today has made the work of educators more strenuous. However, our task as educators is so hard because we seem to find it increasingly difficult to *understand* our children's needs and their mentality. We forget that they do not have the same needs - and the ability to express those needs - that adults have.

## The Contribution of Modern Psychology

Possibly the greatest and most useful contributions that modern psychology has made to education are the insights into the mind and mentality of young people and it will be to our advantage as educators to pay heed to these new discoveries.

Parents and teachers should remember that though we too went through the experience of growing up, memory can play tricks on us: our recollections of the past are often dim and vague.

## Aspects of Childhood and Adolescence

Childhood and adolescence are periods of intense and fast physical growth; this results in the use of great energy, followed by tiredness. Because they are changing fast young people often feel confused and cannot understand their own experiences. At times they feel depressed and nervous, at times they are cheerful and euphoric. They need "safety valves" for these tensions. They

need physical exercise and movement to "let off steam".

Then, the intellectual growth of the child and adolescents is often misunderstood. By nature they want to learn; they are receptive to nature around them, but they are quicker to respond to sense experiences rather than intellectual approaches. Teachers could remember this and adapt their teaching methods accordingly. Learners should be allowed to be more active and to discover on their own, rather than passively absorb what they are told. Our teaching methods tend to be still too intellectual and abstract, leaving the learner passive. This constitutes a serious deficiency in our educational system.

Another aspect of young people's personality that needs great attention is the emotional one. Younger children are more open, while adolescents are more reserved, but at both stages they have emotional needs. Their most urgent need is love, which is as essential to them as the air they breathe. It is easier to love the younger child than the adolescent, often enough a rebel, and difficult one. However, at this stage too, love is essential. Though it is given more discreetly, it needs to be expressed - even externally and verbally - if we do not want adolescents to close in within themselves and increase their isolation.

Adolescents go through a period of great uncertainty and doubt. They feel insecure, because they cannot understand the changes they are undergoing, cannot control their feelings. We need to accept this emotional instability, and handle it prudently and wisely.

Another important change in the adolescents is in the area of their autonomy and independence; they need to be allowed this slowly but surely. Often there is a crisis of authority, and we need to inject in our relations with the young, both at school and at home, a modicum of discipline, but we also have to understand that over protectiveness and excessive dependence harm the growing person. Overprotectiveness makes of the learner a timid creature, fearful of taking risks and facing danger, of becoming decisive and confident. Personal responsibility has gradually to

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\* These extracts are taken from a speech delivered by Rev. C. Caruana, S.J. on Prize Day (1982) at the Gozo Seminary.

replace parental authority. Our children are too often excessively reserved. They must be encouraged to form relationships with their peer group, that they may belong and overcome their loneliness, to join clubs, to work with others on common projects and thus develop "team spirit", to foster the desire to do something for others; a sense of altruism can be inculcated to overcome instinctive selfishness.

### **The role of Educators**

In brief: educators have to see beyond the

learners' physical and academic needs; it is not enough that they are physically healthy and are doing well in examinations. Our duty is to form their total personality: physical exercise and sports should help them become active and use their initiative; developing their imagination and fantasy should make them more creative, inventive and alive; if we show them love, they will grow to love others and be happy in relating with them; if we respect their desire to become more independent they will become men and women of ideas, willing to take risks, and to accept responsibility.

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## **TEACHER PARTICIPATION IN THE MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOLS**

*continued from p. 22*

trained to live in a society, must learn to respect and recognize the law of peace and order if they are to enjoy the benefits of a welfare state and help to reduce social problems and tensions which would impose a heavy demand on national expenditure.

### **Conclusion**

It therefore follows that in the Republic of

Malta the teacher should have the right and the duty to participate in the management of schools. Studied and evaluated innovation could be diffused from the centre to the periphery of the educational organization while spontaneous innovation could pass from one periphery to another. The dialectic between these two would provide routine evaluation which would be the regulating force in the creative process. Teacher participation in this process would ensure the fulfillment of an education policy - a policy bound to change - that would never become stagnant.

# Issues and Events

## Education and Work

The relationship between education and productive work was discussed in a recent Conference on Education organized by the International Bureau of Education in Geneva. The Recommendation drawn up at the end of the seminar concerns the interaction between education and productive work and includes among its provisions the following paragraphs:

"27. Programmes of initial and further training staff, vocational or general, should include provision for some form of practical work and should emphasize the basic principles applied in such work, including its organization, interdisciplinary thinking, problem-solving and team-work.

28. Teachers in both general and specialized vocational and technical education should be given opportunities for updating and further developing their knowledge and understanding of the world of work at regular intervals and through appropriate arrangements, such as visits to work places, seminars and workshops on working life situations and problems, and shorter or longer periods of attachment to productive work; such opportunities should be particularly frequent for teachers of subjects directly related to working life and for those who provide educational and vocational guidance or who organize and supervise practical activities within or outside the educational institution concerned."

The B.Ed.(Hons) teacher education programme by the Faculty embodies the above principles. \*

\* *Innovation*, Newsletter of the International Educational Reporting Service, 1982, No. 33.

## Physical Education in the Primary School

"There are clearly many teachers who dislike teaching physical education and who attach

little importance to it". This observation is not about P.E. teaching in our Primary Schools — although it might as well have been — but it is the conclusion drawn from a survey\* carried out by Anne Williams, a lecturer in Education at Birmingham University. The results of the survey show that teachers are not well-prepared to teach physical education. In some cases teachers do not understand, and are unable to implement, the schemes-of-work they have themselves drawn up. In the words of Anne Williams, "Staff with no specialist training and limited interest in the subject feel obliged to draw up schemes-of-work. . . . A number admitted that they did not implement these schemes-of-work themselves because they did not fully understand them".

For more effective teaching of physical education, the writer suggests that specialist P.E. teachers should be appointed to go the round of schools, not to take up a full teaching load themselves, but to advise and assist the class teacher and "to provide extra-curricular opportunities to support and extend the work" the teacher does with his class. These specialists should have considerable knowledge of their subject, get as much active support from heads of schools as they can, be tactful in dealing with their colleagues and be mindful of the difficulties class teachers face.

\* *Education*, Nafferton Studies in Education, Vol. 10 No. 2, 3-13.

## Curriculum Change

That it is difficult to introduce changes in school curricula is a fact which can hardly be gainsaid. Local attempts at the abolition of highly selective examinations in the early seventies are proof enough of this. Many times opposition comes from schools and teachers who do not make the implementation of change easy more out of fear of loss of status or position than for any valid educational reasons.

In a new book\* on the subject of curriculum change the author, Ivor Goodson, provides evidence of how teachers organize themselves to prevent the introduction of new subjects in the school curriculum. They feel that the inclusion of new subjects which cut across traditional subject divisions may bring about a diminution in the status of their subject accompanied by a diminution in their role as subject specialists. Moreover, the author blames the schools for placing emphasis on the teaching of academic subjects assessable through traditional written examinations and de-emphasizing practical subjects with a strictly vocational bias. "High status in the secondary school curricula," he states, "is reserved for abstract theoretical knowledge divorced from the working world of industry and the everyday world of the learner. To these subjects go the main resources of our educational system". The author concludes that such a policy is a perfect formula for a country's economic decline.

The status of the traditional subjects is reinforced not only by the examination system and university entry requirements, but also by the organizational structure of the schools themselves. In schools there are separate subject departments each with its respective head, rooms, resources and equipment. Not surprisingly, therefore, those who propose the entry of new subjects like environmental studies, design, technology and computer studies in the curriculum of the secondary school have to surmount formidable obstacles.

\* Goodson, I., *School Subjects and Curriculum Change*, (Croom Helm), 1982.

## Classroom arrangement

In the previous issue of this Journal we reported the results of a study\* undertaken by the Department of Educational Psychology of the University of Birmingham, of the best way to make seating arrangements in classrooms. The research team was led to conclude that, when pupils are expected to work independently they should be seated in rows, but seating at tables is better when pupils are working in groups. This favours, therefore, the adoption of both rows and tables, depending on the learning tasks pupils are assigned.

In a recent article \*\* published in "The Times Educational Supplement", the author, Alan Weeks, has firmly contested this position. He condemns the use of rows as "a pseudo-military relic, not only unsuitable for discussion, topic and demonstration lessons, but also an inefficient vehicle for chalk-and-talk lessons." He suggests that the best way to organize the classroom is to adopt the mural system. This consists in placing desks or

tables against three sides of the classroom, so that the pupils will be able to face the teacher during the delivery of a lesson and go back to their tables for writing tasks. The writer admits that there are occasions, during lessons which involve short periods of talk interspersed with short periods of writing or working sessions, for instance, when this system can be inconvenient. This difficulty can be overcome by the use of a second blackboard at the back of the room.

He argues, however, that the real benefits which this system offers during discussion, topic or demonstration lessons cannot be outdone by any other. It makes for an increase in pupil involvement and breaks the domination of teacher-pupil talk with some pupil-pupil talk during discussion, makes the centre of the classroom easily accessible to the pupils during topic work and provides a more flexible arrangement during demonstration lessons. More importantly, the writer concludes, it helps the teacher to switch from one teaching style to another. Whether the mural arrangement will bring about more efficient learning, however, needs to be empirically validated.

\* "Rows vs. Tables: an example of the use of behaviour ecology in two classes of 11-year-old children", by K. Wheldall, M. Morris, P. Vaughan, and Yink Yuck Ng in *Educational Psychology*, Vol. 1 No. 2.

\*\* "Stand By Your Desks", Alan Weeks, in *The Times Educational Supplement*, 14.1.83.

## Three-day Seminar on Teaching Practice

In May, the Faculty of Education organised a three-day seminar to discuss "The need for Greater Coherence between Theory and Practice" as a follow-up to the half-day seminar on Teaching Practice held in June last year.

It was opened by the Hon. Minister of Education. The speakers were from the Faculty, Education Officers, Heads of Schools, and three visiting speakers from U.K. Universities. The Seminar was very well attended by Faculty Staff, personnel from the Education Office, Headteachers and Student-Teachers.

On the first day Prof. C.J. Farrugia, Head of the Faculty of Education, spoke about 'Initiation and Teaching' and stressed the importance of experimentation and innovation in the practice of teaching. He stressed that students are to try out theoretical models, ideas, concepts and skills in teaching situations. To achieve this aim, collaboration is needed between faculty staff, Education Officers and heads of schools. Mr. R. Alexander, Lecturer in Education in the University of Leeds, and Chairman of the Committee of



C.N.A.A. (U.K.) dealt with the theory/practice issue and surveyed recent developments in initial teacher education in Britain. The speaker argued that, for Theory to be connected intimately with Practice, it must be a practitioner's theory which means that it has to be pragmatic and specific to teaching and learning situations.

The first day of the seminar came to an end with a forum on the evaluation of a video-taped lesson given by a second year student in the Faculty. It was interesting to see how the various speakers on the panel expressed different views on a particular classroom performance.

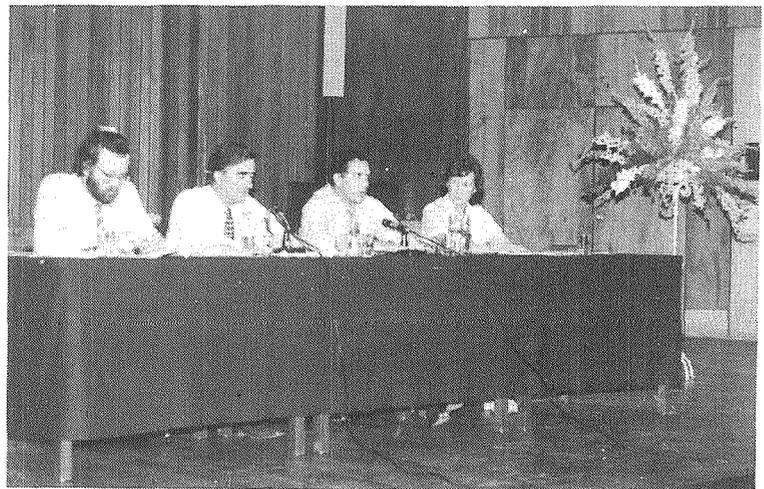
In his address on the second day, Mr M. Morgan, Principal of Froebel Institute, London, and an external examiner to the Faculty, discussed "The Assessment of Teaching Practice" and offered the Pass-Fail system of assessing student-teachers as an alternative to the five-point grading procedure which is being used at present in the Faculty. Dr. J. Debono, Assistant Director of Education, spoke about "The Department's Expectations from Student-Teachers" and stressed the importance of classroom management as a prerequisite for effective teaching and learning. Following this, a panel of speakers offered their views about teacher quality which is the subject of "The White Paper on Education" published recently in Britain.

In his talk "Focus on the Student-Teacher" on the final day, Mr D. Cuschieri, Senior Lecturer in the Faculty, pointed out the difficulties the student-teacher encountered as a result of the various and occasionally different expectations of the Education Department, the Schools and the Faculty. In her paper "The application of Theory and Practice in the Early Years of Teaching", Miss

A. Shrubsole, Principal of Homerton College, Cambridge, spoke about what is expected of the new teacher, what the teacher's needs are, who can best meet these needs and how can the new teacher's induction into the school be provided adequately. The Seminar was brought to an end with a Forum on "The Need for Greater Coherence between Theory and Practice". The members of the panel agreed that the various messages a student-teacher received from tutors, education officers, headteachers and fellow-teachers should be coherent in order to reduce, if not totally eliminate, the possibility of conflict between the theoretical and the practical aspect of teaching.

The Seminar proceedings will be published as a supplement to "Education", the Journal of the Faculty, later in the year.

*J. Fenech*  
(see also p. 30)



# BOOKS NOTICED AND REVIEWED

— a guide to some recent accessions in the Faculty of Education

## The Challenge for the Comprehensive School

*D.H. Hargreaves, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 242pp., 1982.*

This book focuses on the secondary sector of Britain's educational system and it departs from a firm commitment to the comprehensive structure of secondary schooling. It is written with the practising teacher in mind and is intended to start off a conversation between the academic and the teacher in the classroom. This justifies the writer's effort to eliminate sociological jargon as much as possible so as not to scare off the uninitiated reader.

In this book the writer makes an impassioned plea for comprehensive education, because he believes that only this can meet the challenge which education faces in the coming decades. He, perhaps rather gratuitously, states "that the secondary school largely through the hidden curriculum, exerts on many pupils particularly but by no means exclusively, from the working-class, a destruction of their dignity which is so massive and pervasive that few subsequently recover from it" (p. 17). Such emotive language is reminiscent of the writings of Holt, Neill, Goodman and others of the same persuasion and it does not help in making the writer's message more forceful. This "destruction" of the pupils' dignity is brought about, the writer argues, by the upsurge of what he calls "the culture of individualism" and, concomitantly, the dissolution of the idea of community. The challenge for the comprehensive school, therefore, lies in bringing back, through the curriculum, the idea of community with that of individualism embedded in it, because "true dignity and morality have a social and corporate aspect" (p. 111). To do so comprehensive education must state its aims boldly and explicitly and take the promotion of dignity to be its overriding aim.

Such an aim, the writer vociferously argues, cannot be reached without bold and drastic curricular reform. And here he provides a curriculum plan for the comprehensive school. This plan presupposes the abolition of the 16+ examination so that opportunities for changes in content and method of teaching will be created, as has

happened in the Primary sector after the abolition of the 11+. Such a proposal, however, can hardly find any favour, to say the least, with the educational policy-maker and the politician. But if it is accepted, the curriculum will comprise two elements: a) a compulsory core which incorporates the traditional school subjects and the introduction of some new ones together with remedial options to teach basic skills to those who are deficient in them, and, b) the inclusion of an integrated course in community studies taught by teams of teachers, and expressive arts, crafts and sports. The writer favours a curriculum which covers a wide range of knowledge, skills and abilities to be taught to all pupils up to the age of 15. At this age, then, pupils will choose either to continue their education or to leave at 16, when they reach school-leaving age. The former will take their 'A' levels and the latter will be offered more vocational courses through which they will acquire work experience and vocational skills.

This is a curriculum proposal which is based on a valid and perceptive analysis of the situation in British schools, yet, I feel, that there is very little likelihood of its being taken up and implemented. It requires too drastic a change in British educational policy. This does not make it, however, a less interesting one.

*Joe Fenech*

## Teaching and Learning Languages

*Stevick, Earl W., Cambridge University Press, 1982.*

It is difficult to know these days what you are going to find in a book with a title that contains any of the words: Teaching, Learning or Language. The contents depend to a very large extent on the author(s)' orientation which could range from the psycholinguistic by way of the psychological to the methodological taking in linguistics and sociolinguistics on the way, apart from a number of other considerations, especially when the subject is the teaching or learning of English as a foreign language. Stevick's book, however, sets out to do exactly what the title says. It discusses what is involved in the process of learning a language and goes on to

describe some of the techniques a teacher can use to promote such learning. As an added bonus the final sections provide some insight into the workings of the English language.

From a teacher's point of view, the middle sections of the book — those dealing with classroom techniques — are the most useful. But one should not dismiss the first five sections too lightly. In these sections Stevick draws an important distinction between learning and acquisition, which should help the language teacher understand better the implications of certain classroom activities, and also discusses the different kinds of competence a learner must develop in order to be able to use a language well. There is also a lucid account of what is known about the part that memory plays in language learning.

Part 2 "begins to answer questions about 'How?'" Here the teacher will find various suggestions for helping the learner to memorise lexical items and gain control of the grammatical patterns of language. The author discusses a number of techniques that may be used to add variety to, and maintain the students' interest in, the learning of these patterns. He thinks, quite rightly in my opinion, that there are occasions in the learning of languages when the student must be made to focus fully on the pattern as a "linguistic artifact" without being asked to think at the same time about the relationship between the linguistic meaning and what is going on in the classroom. There is still a place for drills in FL teaching but Stevick is extremely sensible about such drills, concentrating on how two or three of these can be manipulated to the advantage of the learner rather than bemusing the reader with a shopping list of drills which differ from one another only in the ingenious labels employed to describe them. There are many other good things in this part of the book but I shall mention only one — a section entitled "Writing for your own students". Here the reader is taken through the process of learning in small steps, as grammatical units and lexical items are presented one by one in a strictly controlled manner. At the same time he is set the task of writing in the target language using only such grammar and vocabulary available to him at any one stage. As one works through this exercise one begins to appreciate the importance of sequencing language teaching material in accordance with some clearly formulated linguistic principle as well as the constraints within which the beginner learner has to operate.

In the final part of the book, Stevick provides brief descriptions of the English language on the level of phonology and on the grammatical level. The section dealing with the sounds of English is handled very competently and should prove quite useful to someone who has never done a course in phonetics but the grammar section would, I feel, be

of very limited value to the non-native English speaker, since the slot-and-filler approach adopted tends by its very nature to rely exclusively on that kind of intuition which only a native speaker possesses.

This stricture apart, however, the book is a model of its kind. Stevick set out to write a "book of beginnings" "for beginners", a book "about practice and not about theory". In my opinion he has admirably succeeded in his aim. There ought to be a copy of this book in every school in Malta.

Denis Cuschieri

## Child Development: A First Course: SYLVIA Kathy and LUNT Ingrid

Grant Mc Intyre, London, 1982 .

This book is an excellent introductory text in child development which I can unreservedly recommend to those starting to study child psychology as part of their professional training in education or nursing. The authors have organised the material into three parts: Part One deals with theories of child development, Part Two applies those theories into practice while Part Three is a mini-course in methods of research used in child study.

*Part One* reviews learning theories, theories of attachment and language acquisition bringing into the various chapters the work of Piaget, Freud, Harlow, Lorenz, Bowlby, Skinner and others. Chapter 2 ("Do babies need mothers at all?") and Chapter 7 ("Piaget's research into the minds of children") are especially interesting with the latter chapter providing a clear but authoritative introduction to Piaget's massive work.

*Part Two* deals with practical aspects: play in early childhood; adoption and fostering with illustrations from the longitudinal study by Barbara Tizard and her colleagues. The chapters on childhood problems is particularly interesting: behaviour modification techniques contrasted with the psychoanalytic approach (play therapy). Both techniques are described by using case studies and extensive quotes from Mc Auley and Mc Auley's *Child Behaviour Problems* (Mac Millan 1977) and Axline's *Dibs: In Search of Self* (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1971). The chapter on intelligence (Chapter 15) gives a good overview of the topic

with examples from the Stanford - Binet and the W.I.S.C. together with a balanced evaluation of the usefulness of the intelligence test in the school context. One criticism I have about this chapter is about the use of the W.I.S.C. as an example of a test providing a profile of abilities - surely this is not what the W.I.S.C. is particularly good for since the meaning of the sub-test scores is not reducible to such simple translation as "mental abilities". A much more valid example could have been provided by Thurstone's PMA tests or the more recent British Ability Scales.

*Part Three*, consisting of one chapter, reviews very briefly the main methods used in developmental investigations (longitudinal vs cross-sectional study; the experimental method; observation; correlational approaches, etc.) as well as some of the more fundamental statistical concepts. The book also contains a useful glossary of terms used in child psychology; the glossary is especially helpful in the Piagetian and Freudian terms. Some terms, like "milestone" "schedule of reinforcement" seem to be, rather unfairly, left out. I

disagree with one or two definitions, however. I.Q. is rarely calculated these days using the formula  $MA - CA \times 100$ ; the deviation I.Q. has practically taken over; "attachment" is "the emotional tie between mother and baby" - why "mother"?

The book is quite attractively produced; the style is very readable and is practically free of the jargon of the trade. The authors also make use of "boxes" placed in the text in which new concepts are expanded - a feature which makes the book excellent for study purposes. The book is, as far as I could judge, free from typing errors - I could only spot one (page 221, where the cross corresponding to the scaled score for "Similarities" is missing).

All in all, a book which together with that equally admirable book by Helen Bee: *The Developing Child* (Harper & Row, New York, 1981) should be in every child psychology student's library.

Joseph M. Falzon

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## Seminar on the Teaching of Italian Overseas

The Faculty of Education in collaboration with the Italian Cultural Institute organised a seminar on "The Teaching of Italian Overseas" between the 9th and 13th May.

The Seminar was attended by University lecturers, teachers of Italian and students. The guest lecturers were Prof. G. Petronio, Chairman of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Trieste, and Prof. G. Freddi, Head of Language Teaching at the University of Venice and Director of the Linguistic Centre, C.L.A.D.I.L., in Brescia. The main aim of the seminar was to evaluate the situation of Italian teaching overseas.

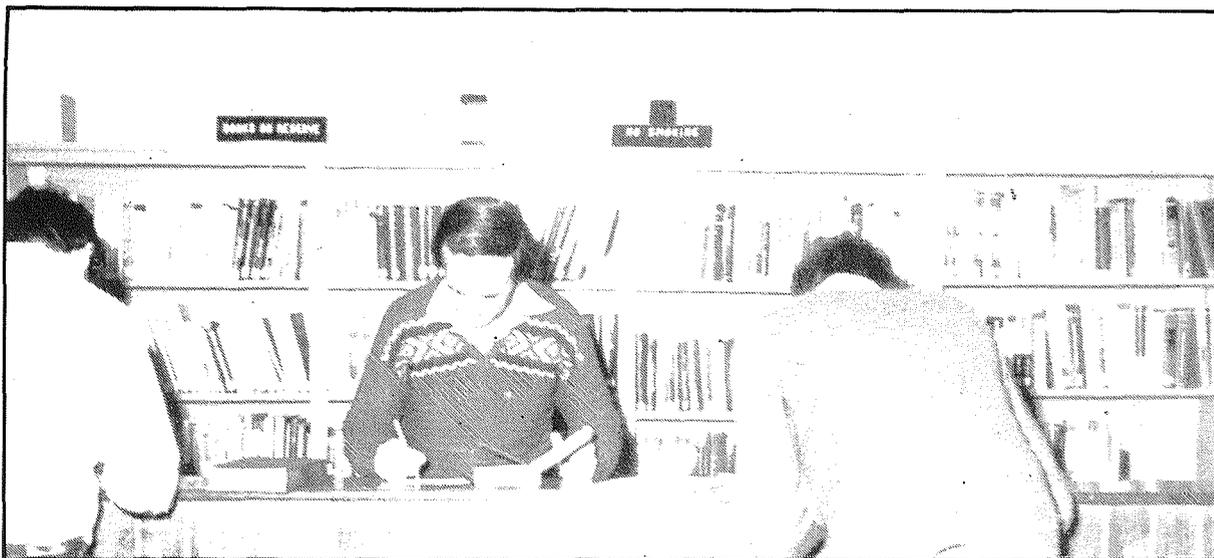
Prof. Petronio delivered a series of lectures on Post-War Literature in Italy. These included the following topics: post-war literature in Italy and the neorealism movement; new currents of Culture; the years of experimentation; the situation of Italian Literature today and literature of and for the masses.

Prof. G. Freddi delivered a series of lectures on language teaching, which reflected as well as the situation of the teaching of Italian in Malta. The vital question was raised whether Italian in Malta should be considered as a Second language or a Foreign Language. The main topics of his talks were: a model of a didactic unit for the teaching of Italian; the teaching of Italian as a national, second and foreign language; a survey on the conditions of the teaching of Italian overseas.

On the last topic further discussion with Prof. C.J. Farrugia and Dr. J. Eynaud, of the Faculty of Education, and Dr. J. Mangion, of the Education Department, were held. These were mainly aimed at carrying out research both at University level and in the Secondary Schools in Malta to investigate methodological criteria and the problems arising on the teaching of Italian in Malta. Purposely for this research, questionnaires were handed out by Prof. Freddi and Prof. Petronio to the Faculty and the local authorities to be compiled and sent to the Linguistic areas and to exchange views on the teaching of Italian in Malta and overseas.

J. Eynaud

# At a Glance



A list of articles in some of the educational journals available in the 'reference library' at the University.

compiled by Frank Ventura

## ***European Journal of Science Education, Vol.5, No.2, April-June 1983.***

- Piaget's clinical experiments: A critical analysis and study of their implications for science teaching, *Frutz Kubli*
- Science education in the primary school: The problem of the initial training of teachers in Italy. *G. Bonera, L. Borghi, A. de Ambrosis and C.I. Massara*
- The issue of 'sensitive' inter-disciplinary science-oriented curricula in the social service, *Uri Zoller and Shoshana Weiss*
- Institutionalized in-service training for science teachers, *J.A. Bloch, W. Bänder, K. Frey and J. Rost*
- Problem-solving ability and cognitive structure, *R.F. Kempa and C. Nicholls*
- Some issues arising from an examination of women's experience in university physics, *Ian Lewis*
- An analysis of laboratory activities in Nigerian schools, *M.B. Ogunniyi*
- Laboratory counterexamples and the growth of understanding in science, *J.A. Rowell and C.J. Dawson*
- A study of schoolchildren's alternative frameworks of the concept of force, *D. Michael Watts*
- The use of WES for teachers' perceptions of the school environment, *B.J. Fraser*
- The Differential Psychology Laboratory and the Research Department of the Institute National d'Etude de Travail et d'Orientation Professionnelle (INETOP), Paris, *F. Bacher*

## ***The School Science Review, Vol.64, No.229, June 1983***

- The development of modular science in Essex and

- surrounding counties, *A.R. Titcombe*
- Criterion-referenced testing in science - thoughts, worries and suggestion, *A.H. Johnstone et al.*
- Experiments in school science, *G Van Praagh*
- Computer simulation of experiments: a valuable alternative to traditional laboratory work for secondary school science teaching, *J.L. Moore and F.H. Thomas*
- Infants and study air science, *A. Ward*
- Choice Chemistry, *D.K. Fleming, S. Haddon and A. McCulloch*
- Teaching heat - an analysis of misconception, *M.K. Summers*
- Grants of the alkali industry, *D.J. Adam*
- Chemistry and the philosophy of science, *FM Akeroyd*
- A taxonomy of scientific words, *JJ Wellington*

## ***Journal of Biological Education, Vol.17, No.1, Spring 1983***

- The Assessment of Performance Unit's science testing programme, *Angela Dixon*
- Microorganisms and Man, *W.C. Noble*
- Interlink - collaborative projects in wildlife, environmental, and biological education in Scotland, *Robert J. Ollason*
- Fern gametophytes in culture — a simple system for studying plant development and reproduction, *A.F. Dyer*
- Computer simulation of a microbial genetics experiment as a learning aid for undergraduate teaching, *M.J. Day, P.F. Randerson and J.R. Bartlett*
- Tutorial CAL and biology education, *P.G. Butcher and P.J. Murphy*
- Realized niche: the effects of a small stream on sea-shore distribution patterns, *C.M. Wilson, J.H. Crothers and*

*J.H. Oldham*  
Teaching the principles of genetics with the aid of the herediscope, *E.A. Branford Oltenacu*  
Do facts have a place for science? *Colin S. Hutchinson*  
A comparison of biology teaching in junior and senior high schools in Israel, *P. Tamir*

**Journal of Chemical Education Vol.60, No. 5, May 1983**

Chemists as Autobiographers, *Margaret Millar and Ian T. Millar*  
The History of Science in China: A Field Trip, *Otto Theodor Benfey, George Ingram, and Joseph S. Schmuckler*  
A Chemistry Teaching Experience in the People's Republic of China, *Shih-Fan Ting*  
Does Quantum Mechanics Apply to One of Many Particles? *F. Castano, L. Lain, M.N. Sanchez Rayo, and A. Torre*  
Classical Number and Density of States, *William L. Hase*  
Thermodynamics of Dilute Solutions, *Gabor Jancso and David V. Fenby*  
Le Chatelier's Principle: The Effect of Temperature on the Solubility of Solids in Liquids, *L.K. Brice*  
The Chelate Effect Redefined, *J.J.R. Frausto da Silva*  
Modernization of the van Doemter Equation for Chromatographic Zone Dispersion, *Stephen J. Hawkes*  
Resolvability and the Tetrahedral Configuration of Carbon *George B. Kauffman*  
The Flat and Direct Way to R and S Configurations: Two-

Dimensional Designation of Absolute Configuration, *Y. Brun and P. Leblanc*  
Programmed Study Aids for Solving Problems in Advanced Undergraduate Organic Chemistry, *Philip J. Chenier and Todd M. Jenson*

**Journal of Education in Chemistry, Volume 20, No.4, July 1983**

What is chemistry? *P.G. Nelson*  
Students' mistakes in problem solving, *M. Selvaratnam*  
Computer programs for A-level chemistry, *G.A. Herdman*  
Kinetics — comparing statistical methods, *J.D. Bossaerts, G.L. Lemièrre and F.C. Alderweireldt*  
Two British women chemists, *G.W. Rayner-Canham*

**Journal of Physics Education, Vol.18, No.3, May 1983**

May leader: Teaching physics is not enough, *Tom Stonier*  
The responsibility of scientists, *W.F. Williams*  
The limits to a physics teacher's responsibility, *G McClelland*  
The message of Hiroshima — recollections and reflections of a nuclear physicist, *Sakae Shimizu*  
Science and peace education — big bang or damp squib? *JJ Wellington*  
... or a torch lighting the way to the future? *P Isaacson*  
A 'phenomena laboratory' for physics students, *M.A. Houlden, J.N. Jackson and M.F. Thomas*  
Microcomputer measurement of the velocity of sound in air *PA Bates*  
A career in medical physics, *P.N.T. Wells*

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

*CHARLES GALEA SCANNURA* has an M.A. in history from the University of Malta. Interested in historical, cultural and social organisations. Presently Head Social Studies, Junior Lyceum, Blata-l-Bajda.

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*JOSEPH DEBONO* holds a PH.D. in Education from the University of London. He retired as Assistant Director of Education in charge of State primary schools in 1983, and is currently living in the United States.

*JOSEPH GRIXTI* is a lecturer in the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta. He is at present doing doctoral research in literature at the University of Bristol.

*MARIO CAMILLERI* graduated with first class honours in Education from the University of Malta in 1982. Presently he teaches at Lija Primary School. His article in this issue is an excerpt from the dissertation "Children's Humour" he wrote for his degree.



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