Editorial:

This Issue

It is ironic that the increasing economic growth and prosperity in the western world today, appears to be accompanied by a decline in the social and emotional wellbeing of children. Layard and Dunn (2009) argue that children and young people today are being increasingly exposed to a world of violence, family break-ups, poverty, individualism, consumerism, and competition, robbing them of the joy and innocence of childhood and bringing distress and anxiety in their lives. They are living in a 'SEBD-provocative world'. This is the thrust of the opening section in the first paper in this edition. Paul Cooper (UK) argues for the need to consider the negative influence of this 'affluenza' and other socio-cultural correlates on children's emotional wellbeing and behaviour in seeking to develop social policies and educational practices conducive to children's healthy social and emotional development. In the second part of the paper, Cooper focuses on the education for children and young people with social, emotional and behaviour difficulties, and calls for more sophisticated conceptions of the meaning of inclusive education for such students. He underlines the dangers of positions driven solely by ideological concerns about how provision ought to be irrespective of evidence of what works or does not work, and calls for a more rational and dispassionate look at the ways in which the inclusive education construct affects teachers and students in the real world.

The importance of evidence based practice in education also underpins the contribution on social and learning programmes by Maurice Elias (USA). Elias argues for the need for long term sustainability of such programmes in schools instead of the most often quoted short-term effectiveness. Using a series of case studies of evidence-based social-emotional learning programs implemented successfully over a number of years, the author describes the key principles that characterize programmes that were found to be well-sustained over time. Simple debates about fidelity vs. adaptation of programmes have been found to be unrealistic. New programmes need to be adapted to the existing context where they are being implemented for them to have long term sustainability.

The next two papers examine social and emotional learning programmes from a very contrasting perspective, challenging the very validity and usefulness of such programmes. Gale MacLeod and her colleagues (Scotland) state that emotional education programmes are problematic, arguing that the construction of behaviour problems in school as problems to be managed through targeted interventions, obscures aspects of constitutive parts of the pupils' reality. They underline the socio-cultural correlates and contextually-functional role of challenging behaviour in school, and propose a less restrictive and oppressive model to the development of emotional education. In a similar vein, Valerie Sollars (Malta) challenges the use of social and emotional programmes in early childhood education. She construes social and emotional competence as natural processes and argues against the need for preventive programmes as long as the adult-carers themselves experience positive relationships and act as positive role models for young children. The paper discusses various interpretations of quality education and care in the early years as natural contexts for social and emotional development, and emphasises good practice which promotes emotional education without the need for formal social and emotional learning programmes.

The last contribution by Michael Fielding (UK) discusses the 'radical' potential of student voice in education, interrogating current practices in seeking to create spaces for the authentic student voice to emerge. The author outlines the recent developments in research partnerships between adults and young people within the context of formal schooling, underlining the current limitations while arguing for a position that puts person-centred relationships at the heart of education and schooling in general, and student voice partnerships in particular. The radical traditions of thought and practice are proposed as the guiding light for the way ahead, facilitating emancipatory partnerships between adults and children and young people in education, ones based on social justice and creative human growth.

Readers' Voices

In our last editorial, we mentioned that we wanted also to hear from readers about their reactions to individual papers, book reviews, editorials, and the journal as a whole. We are therefore very pleased to announce that we have now opened a readers' comments page on our journal website where you can make your contribution to the debates surrounding the interface between emotion and education. You are encouraged to send your comments to the editors who will publish selected contributions on the readers' comments page.

Reference:

Layard, R and Dunn, J. 2009. *A Good Childhood.* London: Penguin

Paul Cooper & Carmel Cefai, April 2010

pwc5@le.ac.uk, carmel.cefai@um.edu.mt