

Et Nos Mutamur:
The Future of
Teacher Education

An Inaugural Lecture

GIVEN IN THE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF RHODESIA

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UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF RHODESIA

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An Inaugural Lecture

*given in the
University College of Rhodesia
on 9th October, 1969*

by

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SALISBURY
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF RHODESIA
1970

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THE CHANGING TIMES

The first Inaugural Lecture ever delivered at this University College was delivered by Professor Basil Fletcher, the founder of that Institute of Education which it is now my honour to serve. He delivered his inaugural address, in fact, before the University College had opened, before any formal teaching had taken place within its walls, before it had enrolled any undergraduate students. The atmosphere in which he spoke was one of excitement and promise and hope. The Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland was in being but still new and young and radiating energy, enthusiasm and confidence. Economically the country was expanding rapidly and vigorously. It all seemed a brave new world and Professor Fletcher could appropriately throw himself into the theme of how the new University College could contribute to the making of that world. He saw its role as essentially the production of the truly educated men the new society would need. He chose as his theme, therefore, "The Educated Man" and spent his time in an analysis of the qualities, the skills and the fields of knowledge that needed to be developed and studied before any man could justifiably claim to be educated.

Six and a half years later Professor Fletcher's successor, Professor Alan Milton, was called on in his turn to deliver *his* Inaugural Lecture. The year was 1963. The political, economic, and social experiment of the Federation was being pulled down in ruins and its final dismemberment had been decided on and dated. Politically it was a time of confusion and great tension; economically there was stagnation, even retrogression; socially there was uncertainty, insecurity

and anxiety. Alan Milton could not afford to model his address on the philosopher-educationist lines adopted by his predecessor. The problems were too pressing, the atmosphere too dark and too troubled. Essentially, then, though with such fluid eloquence that he effectively disguised it, his approach was, as he himself emphasised, that of a pragmatist. His concern was to see that educationally at least there should be carried forward into the post-Federation era whatever was good of that era and that a new thrust forward should take place to make good the deficiencies and inadequacies of what was to be inherited. He limited himself, toughly, to talking "mainly about teachers", posing in his opening remarks the question—"How in this country and at this time can its university most effectively take direct action in the making of good teachers?"—and devoting the rest of his time to an elaboration of the ways such direct action might be undertaken. Happily for this country—and, indeed, for me personally—that he did so! For he carried his thoughts into action and it is on the blue-print that he drew up that I and my colleagues have ever since been working.

Now, the climate of thought and feeling in this institution and in this country has changed in the 6½ years since Professor Milton delivered his Inaugural Lecture as dramatically and as drastically as in the 6½ years separating that address from his predecessor's.

It is, in fact, because I am so struck at the chasms dividing 1969 from 1963 and 1963 from 1956 that I have founded my theme on the Latin cliché—*Tempora mutantur et nos mutamur in illis*.

CHANGE IN EDUCATION

I have chosen it as part statement, part question, part plea.

In so far as it is a statement, it indicates what both my predecessors were conscious of, and sensitive to—a realization that their work, more perhaps than the work of any other department within this institution, was subjected to all the uncertainties of rapid and often unforeseen, perhaps unforeseeable, change. The work of an Institute of Education is specifically concerned with teacher education and teacher education is obviously related to school, college and university education. Hence, whatever affects education in general affects teacher education. And in education in general there seem to me to be four main areas in which change takes place—in organisation and structure, in content, in techniques and, above all, in expectations.

Professor Milton touched on all of them. He pointed out that “perhaps above all, since 1956 education has become part of the social policy of African countries: estimates of occupational requirements are foundation documents in education development plans, ‘Education and Economic Development’ is the password” and a little later he noted that “the children of tomorrow . . . will become citizens in a country which a technological and social revolution will have totally altered, where yet unknown skills will be required, and where new demands will be made on their intelligence, resource, and moral stamina. The traditional, western subject matter of study, the notion that certain things have to be learned because they have always been there, will have to give way. The very physical shape of schools and classrooms will change to take account of new material and new media of instruction. Direct teacher control and ‘lesson’ techniques will be replaced by methods based upon new knowledge of how individual children learn, of what is the effective size and nature of groups, of what promotes learning readiness, of the part to be

played by audio-visual aids and of programmed learning”.

Professor Milton's thesis, as this extract will reveal, was that just because we live in times of unprecedented technological and social revolution, a great thrust forward in education is certain. But is it? My impression of the world of 1969 as compared with that of 1963 is that it has experienced very considerable disillusion and is altogether more cynical and less sanguine: and it is in this sense that I see my title as posing a question.

I think we *are* aware of the forces of change pressing on us—perhaps more aware than we have ever been. I think we are aware that education is not, and cannot be, protected from those forces. I think we are very conscious of the ferment of change within education itself. But I think, too, we are not nearly as certain that change represents progress or will necessarily bring improvements and there has been a great wave of disillusionment as to what education can, and ought to be out to achieve.

It was, for example, only some 15 years or so ago that there developed the notion that education is the basis of economic growth. Once propounded it spread like a wildfire and, as Professor Milton noted, in 1963, “Education and Economic Development” was the password. Today, more realistically, it is being pointed out that no causal connection can be shown to exist between educational development and economic growth, and increasingly there is support for Professor Vaizey's observation that education may be something rich countries spend their money on rather than the cause of their wealth.

It is even being suggested that underdeveloped countries, who have been bleeding themselves white in their efforts to meet programmes of rapid education expansion, have been tragically wasteful of their precious

resources. At least two fundamentally important lessons are painfully being learned. First, it is clear that the education provided needs to be much more realistically geared to the actual situation in each country and thus that in Africa, for example, where over 80 per cent of the population is, and will continue to be, dependent on agriculture, it is folly to concentrate exclusively on a literary, academic education. Secondly, it is clear that where there is no hope of providing secondary education except for a small minority, it is folly to gear primary education as though it were a stage in a continuous on-going process: it is an even greater folly to treat secondary education as a preparation and an equipping for higher education. Primary education, secondary education and higher education have each to be treated as complete units in themselves and the concept of education as a ladder-climbing process has to be abandoned.

This is clearly of direct consequence upon the nature and aims of teacher education. The kind of training which will produce teachers able to pick out the ablest 10-15 per cent of children and push them hard and fast and far along the academic road is a very different kind of training from that which will produce teachers who realize that for the huge majority of their pupils no further formal education will be provided beyond that in their present school and whose concern, therefore, is in the here and now to equip those pupils for the role they will next year be playing in the post-school world.

Yet here, too, as in so much else, there is little evidence that a spectacular revolution has occurred. Education, in fact, is discouragingly resistant to the forces of change: indeed, it is by its very nature committed to opposition to innovation. I cannot place the quotation but somewhere recently I read: "The

formal education system is bound to society in a way that is almost ideally designed to thwart change" and indeed, if only because a prime concern is with the transmission of culture, the school is and will remain conservative. There is a good deal of justification for the cynical and widely held view that education is always 50 years behind the times: it may, indeed, be a compliment to education as suggesting it is effectively carrying out this main function. The problem of innovation in education becomes, then, both a problem of innovation *and* of education—a delicate and difficult problem of new wine but only leathery old bottles in which to put it; or in more specific terms a problem which arises from the hard fact that the impetus from technology has already produced an inherent conflict between the schools' traditional role, which was essentially conservative, and its responsibility to a society that demands adaptation to change.

This then, is the first way in which the whole process of innovation complicates the problems in education in general. The second is to be found in the fact that though advocates of change are certainly more numerous today than they have ever been, they are as far as at any time from agreement as to what most urgently needs change, what the direction of change should be and what machinery should be used for bringing it about. Hence there are today strong schools of thought urging that the way ahead lies primarily through root-and-branch curriculum reform and renewal; equally strong schools of thought maintaining that the main requirement is for a total restructuring of the learning-teaching patterns and relationships; and powerful proponents of a policy for bringing the technological revolution into the classroom and for fully using it there.

The mood in education today, in short, is one of

confusion and very considerable pessimism. Yet I see signs as we approach the 1970s of real hope and I fancy we may be approaching a point at which a real break through may be achieved: first by providing a new theory of instruction on which a new-model education can be built and secondly by revitalising educational expectations.

With regard to the first, the greatest significance lies in the phenomenon that, in spite of their isolation from each other, in spite of the lack of any master strategy and in spite of their diversity and different emphases, the innovative growth-points in education are beginning to show common features, "All begin with the determination to cut out the dead wood from the existing curriculum, to redefine the *content* of courses, to clarify its *structure*, and to specify the *objectives*. All insist on the importance of sequence, first in the careful ordering of the subject matter itself, and second in ensuring that the conceptual level of instruction is in keeping with the pupil's stage of development . . . Equally all insist that wherever possible the learning situation should be kept open-ended—in other words, that the pupil should be trained in habits of self-directed enquiry and logical inference through being allowed to discover abstract principles for himself. Gone, one hopes for ever, is the abject notion that the art of teaching is nothing better than the process of imparting information, the philosophy of someone-who-knows-telling-those-who-don't".¹

The evidence is here, then, that we are arriving at a framework on which the new education can be built. Even more important, however, there is emerging the energising creative force without which inertia, complacency and formalism cannot be overcome. For suddenly, the expectations of education are being

¹ W. Kenneth Richmond: *The Teaching Revolution*, Methuen, 1967, p.3.

lifted to unbelievably new heights as it becomes clear that our concepts of educability have grossly underestimated the potentialities and abilities of children. The classic statement of the new thinking is Jerome Bruner's now frequently repeated assertion that "any subject can be taught effectively in some intellectually honest form to any child in any stage of development".²

Bruner asserts that "no evidence exists to contradict it; considerable evidence is being amassed to support it" but probably the very great majority of teachers would claim that the whole of their experience is testimony against it. It is not, of course: it is simply evidence that they have not found the "intellectually honest form" in which what has to be taught can be taught effectively to *particular* children in *particular* stages of development.

It is worth noting in passing, that European education in Rhodesia provides some of the accumulating evidence in favour of Bruner's hypothesis. It is a comic bit of nonsense to claim that European children in Rhodesia are, in intelligence, genetically better endowed than their cousins overseas. Yet consistently for many years now, a significantly higher percentage of them have reached academic levels which have been asserted to be quite beyond the abilities of their overseas cousins. Clearly, it is possible to teach far more subjects to far more children in an intellectually honest fashion than was generally believed even 6½ years ago.

But Bruner's assertion goes beyond this. Essentially it claims that *every* child is educable, that—to quote a proposition from behind the Iron Curtain—"if the pupil fails to learn the fault is in the teaching". It is a revolutionary idea. At present many pupils *do* fail to learn. If we accept that the reason is not to be found in them it

² Jerome Bruner: *The Process of Education*, 1960.

must lie in the teacher or the subject matter or the methods being used or in the way the system is organised.

I myself believe we may in the end well find that not all children are educable and that the extreme position held by Bruner is untenable. But I believe I and my teacher colleagues have been altogether too swift in the past to ascribe failure to weaknesses in the pupils. We are being driven now to seek the reasons elsewhere and thus to some fundamental re-thinking of the structures of education, the courses, the content, the methodologies and perhaps above all to a consideration of the effectiveness of our teacher education programmes and of the inadequacies of the teachers we have produced.

There seems, indeed, to be considerable justification for the claim that "the fuse which will assuredly spark off a genuine teaching revolution in our time is to be found in changes in the concepts of educability".³ That fuse is spluttering now.

CHANGE IN TEACHER EDUCATION

All this "has profound implications for the future of the teaching profession and for initial and later professional training. In particular it demands a large and rapid growth in professional stature. Teachers must themselves become problem-solvers, not only in their own schools, but collectively. Support in the anxious business of responding to change is to be sought in teachers themselves, not in the rule-book, in the stereotyped text-book or in the examination syllabus."⁴

The demands of the modern world are such as to require not merely a mastery of subject matter and

³ W. Kenneth Richmond, *op. cit.*

⁴ Payne Memorial Lectures 1965-6 C.O.P.

considerable intellectual discipline but flexibility and adaptability. Further, as was pointed out over 20 years ago, "It is not easy, indeed it is impossible, to separate effective thinking from character. An essential factor in the advancement of knowledge is intellectual integrity. To isolate the activity of thinking from the morals of thinking is to make sophists of the young and to encourage them to argue for the sake of personal victory rather than of the truth."⁵

If we fully accept that these *are* the skills and qualities demanded for life today, it will become axiomatic that they are the skills and qualities the schools of today must be concentrating on developing. But teachers who themselves neither possess these qualities nor accept them as their objectives are clearly incapable of nurturing them in their pupils. Further, where those involved in teacher education are equally deficient in these qualities and equally unconvinced of their importance they are equally unlikely to stimulate their development in their students.

The key to progress in education, it appears, is to be found above all else in the teachers. Unless the teaching force as a whole is geared and responsive to change, changes, however necessary, however urgent, will not take place. Yet teachers have been and still are ill-equipped for doing tomorrow anything different from that which they have been doing today or were doing yesterday. Indeed, as I have suggested, the very idea that the role of education is to equip for change cuts clean across the concepts of education inculcated in them through the very educational process they have themselves experienced from the infant school to the university or training college.

⁵ *General Education in a Free Society*: Report of the Harvard Committee 1945, Harvard U.P. p.72.

It requires something like the blinding flash of insight which struck the tentmaker Saul on the road to Damascus to achieve a conversion from entrenched modes of thought and a whole way of life to revolutionary new ways of thinking and behaving. Such flashes come rarely and to but a few individuals and there is no hope that the great body of teachers will miraculously change their convictions or abandon their conventions. Fortunately, perhaps, miracles may not be necessary. We cannot strike fire in teachers. But we can and must equip them more adequately than they are at the moment for the role which as teachers they must play in the future, for the role they ought, perhaps, to be playing already.

This, in my view, involves a fundamental rethinking about teacher education. First, let me observe that in my opinion initial courses of training today are by and large as good as they can be and although I shall later be advocating changes to produce teachers both more competent and more dedicated than those being produced at present I believe that if the quality of teacher preparation is really to surge ahead then the dynamic must be injected at levels other than, as well as at, the period of initial training.

The sources and the nature of that dynamic can, I believe, be identified with certainty. The first I have already, in fact, stated. It is that what above all else is needed is a large and rapid growth in the status, in the stature, of the teaching profession. The second, quite simply, is that we need to alter fundamentally our present definitions of teacher education. The two are, of course, closely related. For, with regard to the first, my conviction is that no real progress in teacher preparation will be possible until responsibility is carried firmly on the shoulders of the teaching pro-

fession itself for accepting into its ranks those who aspire to join it. For as long as the supply of teachers remains a matter left to a benevolent administration and their training to people-whose-job-it-is in universities and colleges, for so long will teacher training sit on its present plateau. It can only be lifted by teachers as part of the very process of lifting themselves.

Anyone, therefore, deeply and sincerely concerned to improve the quality of teaching in the schools will, I believe, direct his energies not primarily at improving the work *in* the schools; he will concentrate his effort not particularly on the training of teachers; he will throw himself into the task of securing for teachers a large increase in responsibility and decision-making.

In his valedictory address as Director of the Institute of Education, Hull University, Professor E. B. Castle touched on this: "The question of the autonomy of the school and the responsibility of the teacher is of paramount importance for the future of English education. To become mature persons we have to accept responsibility, and in a school we have to create conditions that encourage staff and pupils to be responsible persons. I should like to see developing a situation where the professional administrator makes as few decisions as possible and teachers make as many decisions as possible. Too many administrators treat too many teachers as juvenile employees; a head entrusted with the moral welfare of 500 children may not be allowed to give a member of staff half a day's leave, or deal with more than petty cash. Is not the administrator's job to service education rather than to direct it? The best administrators know this and wisely throw responsibility on to the school staffs; although in fairness it must be admitted that they do not always

find among teachers the response they have a right to expect.”⁶

Hastily I must point out that Professor Castle had his eyes on the English scene and that in this respect as in the concepts of educability Rhodesia may well be ahead. But encouraging as this may be, it does not mean that Rhodesia has reached a final or satisfactory position.

I repeat then, my conviction: the future of teacher education will be decided by the future of the teaching profession, the possibility and the degree of its progress being dependent primarily on the possibility and the degree to which teaching becomes fully and honourably a profession.

Earlier I suggested that the second identifiable source of energy to vitalise teaching lay in a redefinition of what we mean by teacher education. Even at the present rate of change in the schools it is not surprising that “most self-respecting teachers find it increasingly difficult to keep abreast of all the latest developments and techniques; while married women, returning to the classroom after a decade or so, are apt to feel sadly out of touch”. The importance of refresher and retraining programmes is constantly growing, therefore. I suspect, indeed, we may already have passed the point at which, whenever we talk of teacher training or teacher education, we ought to mean on-going education and training extending over the entire period of teaching life rather than that concentrated initial, indeed initiating, period for which we usually reserve the term.

An article in a very recent edition of the *Times Educational Supplement* highlights this point. “Young teachers starting this week their first year of teaching might well, under present conditions of service continue

⁶ E. B. Castle: *Courage in Studies in Education*, Vol. III, No. 3. University of Hull, July, 1961.

their working life until the year 2013: their older colleagues in the staffroom will in some cases have started their probationary year in 1925.

What differences in schools and in teaching methods our new batch of recruits will experience in the next 40 years is a matter for conjecture, but the meeting of these two generations in the staffroom is a cogent reminder that the initial training of teachers can only be an introduction to the processes of the classroom.

Under these circumstances in-service training assumes an importance at least as great as that of initial training”⁷

In-service courses have greatly increased in recent years but no one can pretend the present provision adequately meets the need. The same article in the *Times Educational Supplement* reports the findings of a questionnaire completed by 7,224 teachers. Of them “two-thirds had attended at least one course in the previous 3 years, But what is a course? 56% of those recorded were less than three days in length, 84% less than a week. The average length of a course worked out at five and a half days,

The average number of days of course-attendance in the 3 years was 11.”

We are, in my view, driven back to a tough re-formulation of the duties and responsibilities of the administration. I believe the present emphasis upon initial training arises not from sound pedagogical reasons but because it simplifies administration and it reduces costs. It simplifies administration because, under the present system, once you have placed a teacher you have solved a vacancy problem and it will not recur until either he has retired or been promoted. On any worth-while system of in-service training the

⁷ H. E. R. Townsend: *In-service Training: The Facts*. T.E.S. 12th September, 1969. p.15.

problem will recur again and again as the teacher disappears for a term or a year for further studies. And concentration on initial training reduces costs since it is much cheaper to subsidise the training of a single youngster straight from school than to subsidise someone who is probably married and certainly up to this point an independent wage-earner.

The administrative difficulties, however, ought not to be decisive. And it would be interesting to see what differences in costs would be entailed if, for example, the initial training were reduced, say, by one year and a further period of study required of every teacher on completion of his third year of service and thereafter prior to any promotion.

Although I have emphasised that in my view it is not at the level of initial teacher training that the quality of teachers and of teaching may be most effectively improved, I do not wish to suggest that improvements at that level are not essential. It is, for example, the critical period for the formation of attitudes. The present conventional view of teaching is that it is a nice safe job, offering in its right hand protection from the hazards, upheavals and uncertainties of life and in its left, dull and monotonous routine. It is imperative this be destroyed. Excitement, zest, challenge and self-fulfilment which it does truly possess—these, and I suggest an almost apocalyptic sense of urgency, must be communicated to students perhaps as the highest priority of all during their training.

And secondly the old pseudo-dichotomy between “academic education” and “professional training” must be firmly and finally destroyed. That dichotomy, though not unknown in the Colleges of Education, shows itself most markedly wherever the Universities have become involved in the preparation of teachers. It is obviously true that subject teachers need to have

subject knowledge and skills. But this academic expertise is a mere pre-requisite and does not make less necessary a real understanding of those to whom it is to be taught, why it is taught at all or how to teach it.

Subject specialism, you will see I am arguing, is only one part of the subject-of-teaching and it is a mastery of all the parts equally that is required. It is possible, but not, in my view, probable that these competences can be acquired sequentially and it is, in my view, one of the unhappy possibilities of English B.Ed. structures that they will give far too heavy a weight simply to, in the school-subject, not the teaching subject sense, subject mastery. If they do, they will serve only to entrench outmoded and inappropriate concepts of the role of the schools and of the nature and characteristics of the educative process. Responsibility rests on the shoulders of the Universities. Indeed, their own futures, I fancy, are largely at stake, not in the sense that they will collapse unless they preserve existing linear patterns of education which place them gratifyingly as terminal and unless they preserve in the schools the subject specialisms which characterise their own structures and dominate their own teaching; not in that sense but in a contrary one that unless they can effectively and adequately meet the needs of the times they may find themselves moved to a peripheral position as archaic anachronisms.

Among the needs of the times, I hope I have persuaded you, is the need for a great and rapid growth in the professional stature of teachers and that such growth in itself involves the enriching and professionalising of preliminary training. And for the universities the warning signs are out. Is not the eager advocacy of a binary system of higher education, is not the conferment of degree-awarding powers on the National Council for

Academic Awards and is not the planning of the Open University already portentous ?

Some three or four weeks ago—after I had begun the painful exercise of giving at least preliminary thought to the subject I had recklessly suggested I might undertake tonight—there arrived on my desk, somewhat to my dismay, a pamphlet from the United Kingdom entitled “The Future of Teacher Education”. One sentence read: “Society is changing rapidly, schools follow this trend haltingly, . . . the whole field of teacher training must be urgently re-appraised.”

My thesis has been that this last statement, though true, is not enough. The whole field of education and the whole question of the status of the teaching profession require urgent re-appraisal. Teacher education can move only within the framework of the one and the limits of the other. Both are at present grievously restrictive. It is with this in mind that I regard my Latin aphorism, part statement, part question, to be also and, above all else, a plea.

Nisi mutantur illa, nos mutari non possumus.