

THINK PIECE NO. TWO

MARCH 2016:

THE PURPOSE AND QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN ENGLAND INQUIRY: WRITTEN EVIDENCE SUBMITTED BY THE CoED FOUNDATION

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CONTEXT

The Education Committee of the UK Parliament are undertaking a major review of the Purpose and Quality of Education in England. This is an ongoing enquiry as the committee has yet to publish its findings. The scope of the inquiry included the following areas:

- What the purpose of education for children of all ages in England should be
- What measures should be used to evaluate the quality of education against this purpose
- How well the current education system performs against these measures

The CoED Foundation Trustees and Advisory Board submitted their response in March 2016 which is found below.

CoED's RESPONSE

- 1) The CoED Foundation is a charity established in 2012 which is dedicated to bringing compassion into teaching and learning, and is chaired by Professor Mick Waters (www.thecoedfoundation.org.uk). This submission was prepared by members of its Trustees and Advisory Board who are happy to provide oral evidence if committee requires. This submission represents a synopsis of our thinking which is outlined in far more detail in the Foundation's first book published in late autumn 2015, *Towards the Compassionate School: From Golden Rule to Golden Thread* edited by Maurice Irfan Coles, a copy of which has been sent to the committee's chairman.
- 2) **Essentially we argue that:-**
 - 2.1. There are two main interrelated drivers that underpin the purpose of education: individual and societal. Education exists to provide the individual with the necessary values, knowledge and understanding, skills and attitudes to allow them to fulfil their potential in 8 key areas of learning.

2.2 To be successful schools must take into account and provide for the particular needs of pupils having regard for their 'racial', ethnic, cultural historical, linguistic and religious backgrounds.

2.3 The key purpose of education is to help develop young people as compassionate active citizens who care for themselves, for each other, for the world and for the planet.

2.4 This is not easy to measure but the book, *Towards the Compassionate School* offers a wide range of descriptors which can form outcome measures against which schools can judge themselves.

2.5 The present education system performs poorly against the outcomes because the discourse and the science which backs it up are new.

2.6 A new paradigm and narrative is required, one that is based upon collaboration and service.

QUESTION ONE: THE PURPOSE OF EDUCATION

3) There are two main interrelated drivers that underpin the purpose of education: individual and societal. Education exists to provide the individual with the necessary values, knowledge and understanding, skills and attitudes to allow them to fulfil their potential in a number of key areas of learning. There are various ways of describing, clustering and organising these areas which we have simply summarised into eight generally accepted domains and which any education system should cover:

- Mathematical and Numerical
- The Artistic and Creative
- Linguistic
- Religious, moral and spiritual
- Health and well being
- Social and Political
- Technological
- Scientific

4) Young people are not however empty vessel into which knowledge is poured but come to schools with a varied range of skills and values and needs. To be successful schools must take into account and provide for the particular needs of pupils having regard for their 'racial', ethnic, cultural historical, linguistic and religious backgrounds. Education should aim to work with others in ensuring that the individual leaves compulsory education secure in their own, often multiple identities. In part this security will be based upon their success in the domains of learning and in their expectation that, regardless of their abilities, they can play a useful part in their community and can continue to climb their own educational and vocational ladder.

5) Education's primary purpose is to marry individual pupil need and potential with the needs and values of the wider society of which they are members, and of the world in which they live. It has to be taken as read that society requires young people to leave our schools with advanced skills in numeracy, literacy and oracy, technology,

science and creativity in order for them to achieve in their chosen fields and for society to replenish itself economically. But that is by no means its only purpose. As important as rigorous standards in academic and other subjects are, there are other skills, sometimes erroneously described as 'soft,' which include the ability to collaborate, to work in effective teams, to see the bigger picture, to be emotionally and spiritually literate.

6) The CoED Foundation believes that an education system that downgrades and downplays these latter skills is simply not fit for purpose in the 21st century, but also miseducates our children for it does not prepare them for complex, interdependent and diverse world in which they live, a world which faces previously unimaginable challenges. The greatest of these challenges include climate change, the mass migration of displaced peoples, physical and mental health problems, and the vicious spiral from the fallout of terror and counter-terror; all of which have the potential to undermine the values we hold dear and which schools attempt to transmit.

7) Our children, regardless of their ethnic and cultural backgrounds, are heirs to one of the world's most mature, compassionate, multicultural democracies and it is education's role to induct them into its core values and encourage them to become active and citizens who are willing and able to challenge. Similarly, they are heirs to an education system which has placed a duty on schools to practise and teach equalities, and to promote the spiritual, moral and social and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils and of society. Previously key innovative change agents in these processes included local education authorities, subject and other associations, and semi-independent bodies like the Qualifications Curriculum and Development Agency. Increasingly however centralisation of powers to the DFE and the demise of many of these groups have by default down played these key purposes in favour of greater concentration on the narrowly academic. A renewed emphasis on character education and other movements like values education, slow education, holistic and happiness education are attempting to redress the balance. Nevertheless, the overall position remains starkly negative: there are still massive class and ethnic differentials in achievement rates, our children are reported to be some of the unhappiest in the world, mental and physical health of young people continues to worsen-the former at an alarming rate. In addition teacher drop out at all levels, especially with more recent recruits remains worryingly high. Something is clearly not right. Perhaps the dominant paradigm, the sets of practices and thought patterns that give meaning to people's lives, is wrong.

8) Ask many young people what they think education is about and you may well receive an answer on the following lines: 'You go to school to pass exams to get a better job to make more money to get more things.' This is hardly surprising as the dominant paradigm and the narrative that underpins it, probably since the 1980s, has been one that is based upon consumption and individualism. More and more powerful voices are challenging this narrative because literally it is unsustainable, in a world of finite resources continuing to pursue a consumerists dream can only be at the expense of others. There is a new paradigm however, or more precisely a

paradigm based upon older spiritual and ethical 'truths' eloquently expressed by the American poet Wendell Berry:

'It is not "human genius"
that makes us human, but an old love,
an old intelligence of the heart
we gather to us from the world...'

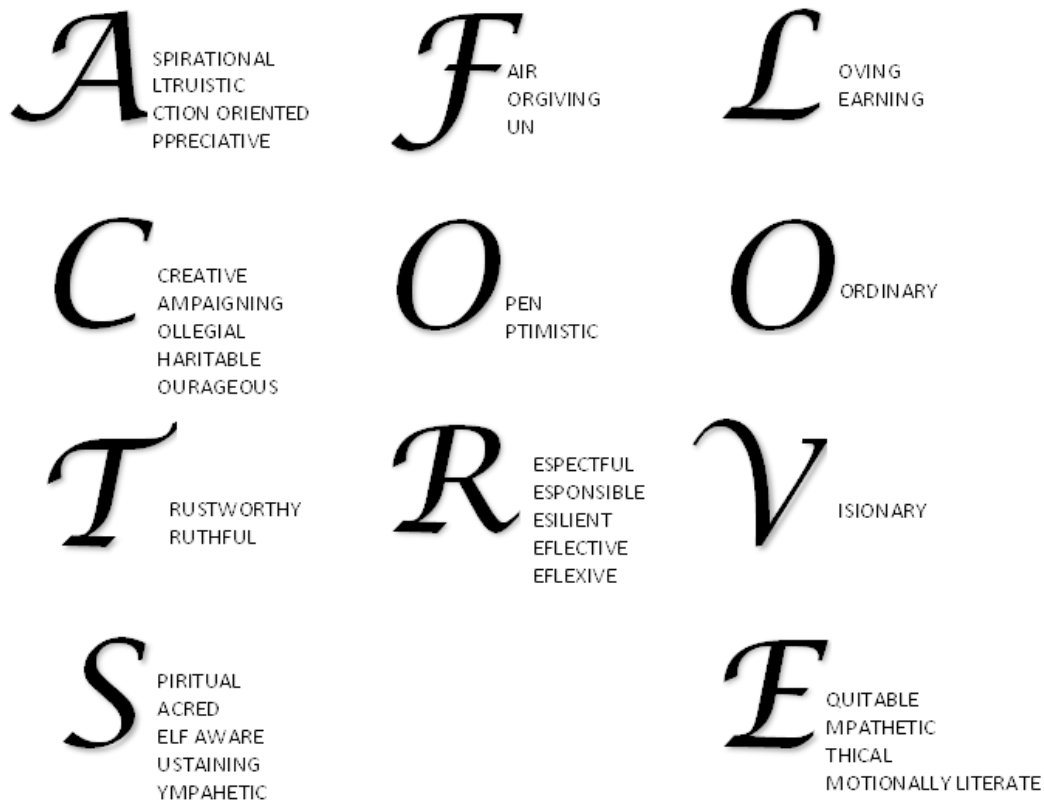
9) It is this 'old love,' this intelligence of the heart, that schools must seek to capture and to nurture, to herald the new paradigm that is based upon collaboration and service. There are five powerful drivers for this narrative:

- ✓ The first is time honoured and is simply encapsulated in the Golden Rule of treating everybody as you would wish to be treated. This century has seen its revival by all major religious and ethical groups who have come together to argue that this is common to them all and that, via the Charter of Compassion, the golden rule should be at the heart of all we do. (<http://www.charterforcompassion.org>)
- ✓ The second is startling in its originality. We now know how the brain works! Neuroscience allows us to empirically demonstrate that we are all wired for compassion and that the more compassionate we are the more compassionate we become, so that this virtuous circle allows the brain to become hard wired to be compassionate. The obverse is of course equally true.
- ✓ The third follows: Compassion can be taught, caught and cultivated
- ✓ The fourth, equally empirically evidenced, is that successful organisations are built upon compassionate values
- ✓ The final, that compassion is essential for good mental and physical health, comes from the world of psychology and medicine whose research and insights have yet to impact upon the world of education.

Educational evidence, however, has always made the link between high self-esteem, high expectation and high achievement. Simply put, if you feel good about yourself you achieve better. Compassion starts with self and extends outwards.

10) The word compassion does however need definition. It is now commonly accepted that there are three components to compassion-the recognition of a person's or a groups suffering; an empathetic response to that suffering and active determination to alleviate that suffering and where possible its causes. The CoED Foundation describes compassion simply as love in action and after much discussion encapsulated their vision in a simple mnemonic, Acts for Love which detailed the values of a compassionate person. These values apply equally to young people, to teaching and support staff, to managers and governors. They form the bedrock of a compassionate education system.

A COMPASSIONATE HUMAN BEING MIGHT BE ...



- 11) These values are the cornerstone of what we consider to be the purpose of education. Towards the Compassionate School outlines in detail how this can be achieved through Mindfulness, SMSC, Physical and Mental Health and wellbeing, and the Compassionate Curriculum. The final chapter lists the characteristics of a compassionate school and these form the baselines for school assessment and further development.

QUESTION 2: WHAT MEASURES SHOULD BE USED TO EVALUATE THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION AGAINST THIS PURPOSE?

- 12) Perhaps we are too quick to measure and too immediate in demanding results from inputs. Much of compassionate education can only be assessed over the long term. As a result will health rates improve? Will crime rates diminish? Will young people be happier and less stressed? Will they achieve better results? Will they model the new paradigm of service and collaboration? These are big evaluation questions but there are some principles to be established. A fundamental but contested principle in any measurement of the quality of education is that it should be something that is *done with* rather than *done to*. It should be about supporting schools in their own evaluation frameworks with outside bodies acting as calibrators and validators. A

system that is narrowly data driven ignores the wider purpose of education and overly concentrates on a few selective areas. The best evaluating of systems and of individuals is formative as well as summative. In some areas outlined in the compassionate school, there are already in existence a number of excellent kite mark that can be usefully employed. Some, like the Healthy Schools Award for example, were discontinued by the Coalition Government but can easily be resurrected. Others like the Arts Council's Arts Mark, UNICEF's the Rights Respecting School, and Fair Trade and Eco schools are still in robust health. Considerable international research is underway to find a way of measuring happiness and of measuring empathy. Education is at the foothills of these developments.

13) To date, outside the pages of *Towards the Compassionate School*, little thought has been given to how you would assess the progress of schools in the areas of compassion. The authors have in some cases used Ofsted criteria, adapted and amended it and offered a number of characteristics as a baseline for schools to chart their own compassionate journeys. The trick perhaps is that we offer it and describe it, rather than measure it. For much of the journey is process rather than outcome driven.

14) Given however that all governments demand outcomes against their investment we outline six measures that can be used to evaluate the quality of compassionate education. These are an amended and updated version of the principles that informed the Education Act 2004:

14.1 Schools should encourage, advise and demonstrate how young people can become and remain healthy in the areas of Intellectual, Practical, Spiritual and Emotional Intelligence. They should be able to assess and evaluate information, manage risk, and make lifestyle choices that develop and maintain healthy lifestyles.

14.2 Schools should ensure that all young people are safe at home and in school, are cared for and loved. They should be provided with the necessary skills and attitudes to remain safe from sexual and economic exploitation, from crime and anti-social behaviour. In addition they need to be safe from bullying-both actual and cyber-, and from 'racial,' gender, transgender and homophobic discrimination. They should develop the necessary skills and emotional resilience to be able to cope with any prejudices and discrimination they may experience in adult life and be sufficiently robust in character to be safe and confident within their own skins and identities. They need to feel safe in practising their own religion and be provided with a clear moral understanding as to why all forms of extremism (especially violent) are morally wrong

14.3 Schools should ensure that young people can enjoy their schooling and achieve and attain to their maximum potential. They should be setting and supporting young people in achieving challenging academic, creative and technological targets within a supportive and collaborative framework.

14.4 Schools should ensure that throughout their schooling young people can make a positive compassionate contribution to their school, community and the wider world. They need to be provided with the skills, attitudes; knowledge and understanding that allow and encourage them to support their peers and others,

to mentor those younger than themselves, to take part in decision making processes and to become compassionate active and enterprising citizens, able *to make themselves effective in public life* Over time the education service should support young people in the development of their often multiple identities, in building positive relationships and in developing a level of self-confidence that allows them to cope with the challenges of an increasingly diverse, complex and often hostile world.

14.5 Schools should encourage young people to achieve a degree of economic wellbeing that is predicated upon a desire to achieve academically, socially, and creatively so that they are prepared for the world of work and further and higher education.

14.6 School should be teaching young people how the brain works, how it has evolved and how we are wired for compassion.

QUESTION THREE: HOW WELL THE CURRENT EDUCATION SYSTEM DOES PERFORMS AGAINST THESE OUTCOMES?

15) The inescapable answer is very poorly partly because of course compassionate education is not yet part of the national discourse. That is changing rapidly, witness for the example Professor Ken Robinson's comments on compassion (<http://www.charterforcompassion.org/index.php/sir-ken-robinson>) and even more recently the Archbishop of Canterbury's New Year's address from a compassionate school that is adapting wonderfully to the arrival of refugees. (<http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/5656/watch-the-archbishop-of-canterburys-new-year-message>) The sad reality of the present system is that it measures very little and constrains much. If you judge a school almost exclusively by academic data then you use children as a unit of performance. The present system appears only to value what it measures thus ignoring the wider purpose of education in favour of a narrower, exam driven, predominantly academic system.

16) Perhaps the current system is the antithesis of a compassionate education because by outcome and not necessarily intention generally it:

- Ignores education research and best school practice
- Is selective very early on
- Is impersonal and mechanistic
- Over emphasises the teaching of reading and writing, downgrading oracy
- Ignores a range of other skills
- Encourages teachers to teach to the test
- Encourages teachers to return to more traditional methods
- Encourages schools to be competitive and league table oriented
- Encourage schools to be overly Ofsted compliant.

17) Conclusion:

If the purpose of education is to help create a compassionate caring society where young people feel safe and secure, feel able to develop their own talents for their

own good and for the good of society, the wider world and the planet itself, then we have a huge job to do. The conclusion is however inescapable: unless we begin on this task the future for our children and grandchildren looks very bleak indeed.



CEO of the CoED Foundation

MAURICE IRFAN COLES

Maurice has worked in the public and private sectors for 45 years, he began his career as a teacher in London; and as a Staff Inspector in Birmingham he specialized in anti-racist education. Over eighteen years he held eight different portfolios and led two large support services. Maurice was a registered OFSTED inspector in all 3 education phases and he was the first CEO of the School Development Support Agency (SDSA), a social enterprise based in Leicester City which continues to operate with an annual turnover of £3 million.

He has led on a number of collaborative projects including the internationally acclaimed Islam and Citizenship (ICE) Project, Curriculum Enrichment for the Common Era, a company dedicated to producing heritage materials and the Sacred Spaces Project which placed artists in four faith based supplementary schools. Maurice has published extensively on School Improvement, Race Equality, Intercultural Education and CPD. He has published three books; Faith, Interfaith and Cohesion: The Education Dimension, Every Muslim Child Matters and 'Towards a Compassionate School: From Golden Rule to Golden Thread'. His report, Mending Broken Britain: Education's Response provides causal analysis and recommendations concerning the UK riots of summer 2011. Maurice comes from a Christian background, converted to Islam, and has been married to a Hindu for over 30 years. He believes compassion; humour, collaboration, organisation and commitment are the keys to stopping conflict, and building a just and cohesive society.