Editorial

The emergence of new forms for education and health fit for the challenges of the 21st century

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... There are many indications that the future enters us ... to transform itself within us long before it happens. Rainer Maria Rilke¹

It's a great pleasure to introduce these articles for *London Journal of Primary Care*. The articles feature the adventurous and innovative practice of three different schools: two in England and one in the USA. The Intergenerational School is in Cleveland, Ohio; Lime Tree Primary School is in Kingston, South West London; and Malorees Infants School is in Brent, North London. The schools have been testing out new ways of shaping what they do in their different settings and in particular the relationship between health and education. They each have their different stories to tell and despite their different contexts there is remarkable commonality in their thinking and action.

How many of us would like to be noticed and heralded as pioneers? People who are questioning existing boundaries, stepping into the unknown and bringing about new forms of social organisation? That is what these three schools have been doing. Their energy, knowledge and enthusiasm can help inspire the pathways for those of us finding the journey of renewing our practice and learning to work with others from different fields challenging.

James Martin,² in his book on the meaning of the 21st century, pulls no punches about the seriousness of the interconnected challenges humanity faces in relation to population, resource depletion and climate change. He likens our situation to a bottleneck that will grow narrower as we approach it. If we can face it and work together with the right mind-sets and action, he is optimistic we can pass through the bottleneck and flourish as a species on the other side. If we collectively continue to avoid facing up to our situation or respond with helpless inertia, we may be in for a difficult future.

Mobilising the resources, hope, resilience and creativity of the next generation and equipping them for the bottleneck is a key task for both health and

education practices at the moment. These schools are aware that this is our challenge and that there is no time to waste.

The three articles provide really helpful examples of the professional foresight and collaboration needed for children and young people at this time. As Whitehouse asks in his article:

Can this new model help support human flourishing in this time of global ecological crisis?

The writers have grasped the reality that we cannot educate for the 21st century with the same assumptions that governed 20th century thinking and contributed to some of the problems we are now dealing with. They are working with a different vision of what is needed. Peter Senge³ also identifies that, in order for us to focus on the road ahead for humanity, we have to work together differently; he spells out the 'fitness for purpose' required of 21st century educational endeavour and the recreating of the infrastructures that govern our lives. He comments on how difficult it can be to change daily reality.

Occasionally (however) something different happens, a collective awakening to new possibilities that changes everything over time – how people see the world, what they value, how society defines progress and organises itself, and how institutions operate. The Renaissance was such a shift, as was the Industrial Revolution. So, too, is what is starting to happen around the world today. (p. 5).

Senge identifies three essential guiding ideas for creating a more sustainable, secure future: (1) the importance of taking account of future generations, (2) institutions matter, and (3) all change is grounded in new ways of thinking and perceiving. The three articles here show that the shift that Senge describes is already underway. The American Buddhist scholar Joanna Macy refers to this shift in her writing as the shift to a life-affirming society through 'The Great Turning'.⁴ The stories from these schools demonstrate that education and health can be pro-active in

prototyping change, developing models of success and in the process lead the way for their wider communities.

So it is a pleasure to introduce these unique and inspiring stories. Examples like these, of positive change and the opening of new pathways, are greatly needed. They encourage us to realise we have the capability to create new ways of working if we can just create the know-how and act on it. In his article, Whitehouse describes how the wider community has gradually taken to the innovative new organisational forms at The Intergenerational School in Cleveland, Ohio. The school aims to promote ecological sustainability, lifelong learning and individual and community health. They have designed an integrated, intergenerational healthcare model based in the school that they have term 'InterWell'. He argues that:

Intergenerational learning is one way, perhaps the best way, to foster collective wisdom and innovation. Such education is necessary for cultural and evolutionary change. We now need to reinvent ways for the generations to learn, work, and play together.

Clarke describes how a visionary partnership in Kingston between health and education set up a new school in Surbiton. Lime Tree School is designed to put health and educational excellence together as the purpose of the school and to put the school at the centre of community life. The school puts a central focus on sustainability, wellbeing, lifelong learning and an active lifestyle. Clarke asks:

Is it time to look outside of our organisational constructs to achieve a set of shared objectives using the resources of many?

Gallimore describes the transformative journey her school went on as part of 'The Adventurous School' project, creating new vision, relationships with the community and a different kind of curriculum. The project aimed to:

Honour the unnoticed, quiet experiments that professional educators engage in daily to re-inspire the wellsprings of public schooling.

The project was set up on a fundamental belief that successful schools take responsibility for their own destiny. Alongside their accountability to national norms, they define their own goals and inhabit the territory between conventional expectations and new innovative directions. Schools for the 21st century, she argues, need to be creative, productive, living places where children learn how to thrive in complex and ever-changing situations. If they are to survive the demands of James Martin's 'bottleneck', we need to teach our children how to be adventurers.

Each of these case studies illustrates the way colleagues involved have taken agency in their settings and evolved new organisational forms and structures

that reflect a different vision for what they are about. They haven't waited for commands to come from elsewhere. As Gallimore notes:

Exploring and really knowing a school's aspirations and values helps illuminate the gap between vision and current practice and catalyses movement into the new. Change becomes a more natural, inevitable consequence rather than a process of orders and instructions.

Biesta⁵ defines agency as an ability to operate independently of the constraints of existing social structures. In the Intergenerational School they have developed practices that understand the importance of learning across the different age groups and fostering nature-based programmes that help bring about purposeful and healthy living in the community. In Lime Tree, health and wellbeing are also playing a central role in creating a healthy community. At Malorees, Gallimore discusses how they have changed the assumption of the traditional school, which separates children from their world and teaches them to be passive and compliant.

The ingenuity and foresight of these schools can teach us more about the nature of successful social change. There are several themes that the schools share and discuss but there are five main ones that emerge from these three articles and that can be considered further in discussion.

- Broader definitions of both health and education based in reciprocal relationships between the generations that includes our interdependence with the natural world.
- A renewed view of what it means to be a healthy person who can learn, which includes head, heart, spirit and body, not just mental cognition.
- A positive view of people, who can take responsibility for both their health and learning.
- An understanding that institutions only have authentic meaning and purpose through working for and with the communities they serve.
- Learning is a lifelong process that does not only take place in school. When it is integrated with health it creates wellbeing and agency as well as academic achievement.

Blueprints and exhortation are perhaps outdated 20th century modes of operating. The stories in these articles are ones of initiative taken at the point close to the customer and their context. Jeremy Hunt, the Secretary of State for Health, was recently reported as suggesting that health policy was cruising along meeting targets, but missing the point. The same could equally be said for education. The *point*, and our challenge, is service delivery designed with the long-term needs of the customers and future generations in mind and supporting them with appropriate expert-

ise, guidance and provision in taking responsibility as far as they are able for their learning and healthcare.

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