
BEYOND THE SCHOOL GATE: SCHOOLS, COMMUNITIES AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

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Abstract: *In England, as in many countries across the economically developed world, governments have seen the reform of the school system as a major strategy for promoting social justice. The focus has been on the continual 'improvement' of schools through increasing central control of curriculum and pedagogy, the introduction of high-stakes testing and accountability, and the creation of education quasi-markets in which schools compete to attract students. Whatever the achievements of these reforms, it is increasingly clear that they have been unsuccessful in overcoming the deeply-entrenched relationship between socio-economic disadvantage, low educational achievement and limited life chances. This paper argues that reform efforts need to be refocused so that the work of schools is aligned more fully with wider public policy efforts to address disadvantage. In particular, it advocates the development of 'community focused' schools which look beyond their gates to the social justice issues in the areas they serve. The paper shows how such schools have developed in different forms in many countries, and concludes by suggesting that their work can become part of an 'area approach' to promoting social justice.*

Key words: *Schools, community, full service, disadvantage, education policy, England*

Introduction

When Tony Blair was leader of the New Labour opposition in England, he famously declared that his three priorities in office would be, 'education, education and education' (Blair, 1996). This was no merely casual remark. New Labour governments have displayed a remarkable faith in education both as the engine of economic development and as a means of achieving greater social justice. In the context of economic globalisation, they have seen education as the means of equipping the nation with the highly-skilled workforce needed if it is to compete successfully countries where wage costs are much lower. In the context of persistent social inequality, on the other hand, they have seen education as the means of counteracting the effects of social deprivation and equalising the life chances of young people from more and less disadvantaged social backgrounds. As Blair subsequently put it:

...we cannot hope to prosper as a nation if we do not educate all our citizens properly.

(Blair, 2005)

These views have led New Labour governments to pursue, amongst other things, a vigorous programme of school reform. They inherited from previous Conservative administrations a system in which the curriculum was controlled centrally, children were tested and schools inspected regularly, results were published, and a quasi-market was established in which schools competed to recruit students. Declaring a 'an unprecedented crusade to raise standards' (Blair, 1999) New Labour governments from 1997 began to prescribe teaching methods, set expected performance targets for schools and encourage the radical intervention in schools which failed to meet these targets. At the same time, they have been aware that the English education system has historically been bedevilled by a long tail of low achievement, linked to social disadvantage, and manifesting itself particularly in schools serving concentrations of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Accordingly, strategies were developed for, amongst other things, supporting disadvantaged children in classrooms, addressing their personal and psychological difficulties, recruiting the best teachers and head teachers, and offering additional resources, vigorous support and decisive intervention to their schools.

However, the outcomes from all of this activity are, at best, ambiguous. There are real doubts as to whether, and how far, the successive waves of reform of the school system have actually raised standards of achievement (see, for instance, *The Primary Review*, 2007). In particular, there are doubts about whether they have succeeded in narrowing the gap in educational achievements or in life chances between children from more and less advantaged backgrounds. It remains the case that children from poor backgrounds tend to lag behind their peers before they enter school (Hansen & Joshi, 2007), that they tend to do badly while they are in school (Cassen & Kingdon, 2007), and that, far from their life chances being transformed by schooling, social mobility is, if anything declining (Blanden et al., 2005). Whatever the reforms of education may have achieved, they have not, it would appear, broken the fundamental link between social background, educational outcomes, and life chances.

It is difficult to escape the conclusion that Basil Bernstein's famous dictum from nearly four decades ago (Bernstein, 1970) continues to hold good – education cannot compensate for society. Whilst reforming schools and offering additional support to children may be necessary conditions for overcoming the effects of social disadvantage, they are not in themselves sufficient conditions. In the face of the overwhelming effects of socio-structural factors such as class, gender and ethnicity, mediated by family functioning (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003), the work of schools constitutes actually a rather weak countervailing factor. They might be able, perhaps, to make a difference at the margins, but they cannot hope to change patterns that are effectively shaped outside their gates (Mortimore & Whitty, 2000).

It is tempting, in this situation, either to believe that educational change must wait upon more fundamental social change, or to despair of the possibility of educational change entirely. However, there is, I suggest, an alternative which emerges when the dichotomy of what happens within the school gates and what happens beyond the school gates is questioned. Traditionally, in England and many other countries, schools are largely detached from those parts of children's lives that occur outside the gates. They work with children for only some of their childhood years (eleven in England), for only some weeks in those years, for only some days in those weeks, and only some hours in those days. For the most part, they have little involvement in what happens to children outside school and often find it difficult to work with agencies that have greater involvement. Many school leaders are uninterested in what happens beyond the school gates, and even those that are have only limited means at their disposal of intervening in prevailing social and economic conditions (Ainscow et al., 2007; Ainscow et al., 2008; Cummings & Dyson, 2007)

However, this picture is not universally true. From at least the 1920s, some schools in England have interpreted their role more broadly, seeking to offer services and activities for their students outside school hours, to become proactively involved with families, and to play a part in the community as a whole. In so doing, they have enhanced their capacity not simply to teach their students but to engage with other factors in their lives that might impact on their achievements or, more generally, on their life chances. New Labour governments have, not surprisingly perhaps, become interested in the possibilities opened up by such schools. They have, therefore, launched a series of initiatives aimed at developing what they choose to call 'extended' schools, culminating in the attempt to develop one full service extended school in every local authority area (DfES, 2003), and, more recently, a programme aimed at enabling every school to provide access to extended services (DfES, 2005).

These developments form part of an international movement for the development of schools of this kind (Dyson, in press). These schools carry different labels in different places - full service schools, community schools, extended schools, schools plus, and so on. They are perhaps best referred to as 'community focused schools', a term coined in Wales to define a school that:

...provides a range of services and activities, often beyond the school day, to help meet the needs of its pupils, their families and the wider community.

(National Assembly for Wales, 2003, par. 1.2)

The lack of an agreed label indicates that there is little agreement about how these schools might operate, what their aims should be, or what outcomes they might realistically produce. It is also the case that, whilst there are substantial research literatures dealing with schools in disadvantaged areas, school-community relations and other cognate topics, the research base that deals specifically

with schools of this kind is limited both empirically and theoretically. As one review of the international literature suggests, there has been “little systematic, rigorous evaluation of the concept [of the community focused school] and its implementation” (Wilkin et al., 2003, p. v.).

In this situation, we simply do not have enough high-quality evidence or analysis to present an authoritative research review. It is inevitable that what follows in this paper, therefore, will be somewhat speculative. Nonetheless, community focused schools, I believe, raise significant questions about what schools might be and do, and, particularly, how schooling might relate to wider social policies for tackling disadvantage. With this in mind, I shall attempt in the remainder of this paper to indicate some of the features of community focused schools in England and internationally, to consider some of the differing assumptions upon which different examples are based, and to review briefly such evidence as we have about their likely impacts. Most important, however, I shall address some of the issues to which such schools give rise and some of the opportunities which, I believe, they open up. It is then for practitioners, policy makers and researchers to interpret these issues and opportunities in their own contexts, and to consider whether community focused schools in some locally-appropriate form might have something to offer.

What community focused schools do

Community focused schools are highly variable in the way they operate and the services and activities they offer. As Joy Dryfoos, one of the pioneers of ‘full service’ schooling in the USA, puts it:

Although the word ‘model’ is used a lot, in reality no two schools are alike; they are all different. The quality that is most compelling about community school philosophy is responsiveness to differences: in needs of populations to be served; in configurations of school staff; in capabilities of partner agencies; in capacity for change in community climate; and in availability of resources. These programs are always changing in response to changing conditions ...

(Dryfoos, 2005, p. vii)

Two examples, drawn from very different contexts, will serve to illustrate some of the differences and commonalities amongst these schools:

The *Arturo Toscanini Complex* (ATC) is a campus in New York City in the USA, hosting three middle (grades 6-8) schools. It is located in a disadvantaged and multi-ethnic inner city context and offers a menu of activities which includes:

- extended day provision, including homework support, literacy tuition, creative writing and tutoring;

- programs focusing on personal and social development;
- fitness and health programs;
- performing arts activities;
- access for students and families to health, dental health, and mental health services;
- social work support for students and families;
- opportunities for student involvement in leadership activities and community issues; and
- English as a second language, welfare assistance, family support, health insurance advice, and cultural and leisure activities for parents and community members.

(see http://www.childrensaidsociety.org/files/factsheet145+2new06_1.pdf)

By contrast, Camps Hill Community Primary school in Stevenage, England, caters for children up to the age of 11. Although it is located in an area of relative disadvantage, Stevenage is a medium-sized 'new town' rather than an inner city area, and Camps Hill works with a range of other schools to deliver community focused activities. These activities include:

- a Mums and Toddlers group, open to the whole community;
- a Nurture Group, for children aged 5 to 7 with severe behavioural, emotional and social needs and where parents learn alongside their children;
- community arts events;
- before and after school clubs for students;
- public use of the school premises for leisure and arts activities;
- projects with local businesses where business people work with students to tackle real community issues;
- a Parents' Lounge where parents can learn, or socialise with each other in a space they feel is their own, and which is available for use by other community groups;
- drop-in/advice sessions for parents in conjunction with the School Health Team.
- work placements in the schools' nursery for older students from nearby schools
- an annual Family Learning Week in which staff help parents to learn alongside their children.

(see http://www.continyou.org.uk/case_studies/camps_hill_hub_community)

Despite the differences in provision and context between these two examples, they reflect features that are common to community focused schools in many places (Dyson, in press). These include extra-curricular provision for students, support for students' social and health needs (often provided by professionals other than teachers), work with students' families, and opportunities for community members to use school facilities, and engage in arts, leisure, learning and vocational

development activities. In many cases, these activities and forms of provision take the form of relatively minor additions to the school's core educational provision, requiring little adjustment of existing staffing, structures and practices. Elsewhere, however, schools become quite different kinds of institutions, with large numbers of staff who are not teachers, a wide range of facilities other than classrooms, a user population much wider than the student population, and significant adjustments in management structures and funding arrangements to support their community focused role (for examples from the English context, see Ball, 1998; Craig et al., 2004; Cummings et al., 2007; Wilkin et al., 2003).

Rationales

The provision and activities of community focused schools are underpinned by more or less explicit rationales. Their leaders typically have in mind some view of what they might achieve by reshaping the role of the school, and why such a development is needed in the situation they face. Typically, these rationales are related to the issues of social and educational disadvantage which we raised earlier. Dryfoos, for instance, makes the case for community focused schooling in the following terms:

...schools are failing because they cannot meet the complex needs of today's students. Teachers cannot teach hungry children or cope with young people who are too distraught to learn. Anyone working in an inner-city school, in a marginal rural area, or even on the fringes of suburbia will tell you how impossible her or his job has become. The cumulative effects of poverty have created social environments that challenge educators, community leaders, and practitioners of health, mental health, and social services to invent new kinds of institutional responses.

(Dryfoos, 1994, p. xvii)

However, by no means all community focused schools are founded on the same set of assumptions. In England, for instance, the identification of such schools with strategies for addressing (particularly) urban poverty has competed against very different, and somewhat longer-established rationales. Many years ago, Henry Morris, then Chief Education Officer of the predominantly rural county of Cambridgeshire, proposed the establishment of 'village colleges' which continue to serve something like their original purpose even to this day. Morris was concerned that the expanding and industrialized towns were threatening the rural way of life because of the economic opportunities they offered and the social, leisure and educational facilities to which they gave access. He wanted his village colleges to consolidate and extend the community facilities that were available in rural settings as a means of retaining the population and enhancing their quality of life. In this way:

The isolated and insulated school, which has now no organic connection

with higher education, would form part of an institution in which the ultimate goal of education would be realized. As the community centre of the neighbourhood the village college would provide for the whole man, and abolish the duality of education and ordinary life. It would not only be the training ground for the art of living, but the place in which life is lived, the environment of a genuine corporate life. The dismal dispute of vocational and nonvocational education would not arise in it, because education and living would be equated. It would be a visible demonstration in stone of the continuity and never ceasingness of education.

(Morris, 1925, p. XV)

Dryfoos and Morris are separated, I suggest, not so much by time (as the continued existence of village colleges confirms) as by context – urban disadvantage versus rural remoteness – by different views of what is needed in those contexts to create a viable society in which all people have acceptable life chances, and by differing conclusions as to the part that schools can play in this process. For Dryfoos, schools have to become foci for interventions in the lives of children and their families in order to overcome the pressing problems created by poverty. For Morris, on the other hand, schools are community hubs, enriching the lives and opportunities of local people, and contributing to the viability of their communities. Nor are these the only rationales for community focused schools. In South Africa full service schools are about locating services for children with special educational needs in mainstream schools so that they can be included in those schools (Department of Education., 2005). In Saskatchewan, Canada, 'community schools' concern themselves, amongst other things, with cultural affirmation and community empowerment for First Peoples (Saskatchewan Education, no date). In some of the new democracies of central and eastern Europe, the focus is on fostering democratic engagement, as students and adults tackle social problems in their communities (see, for instance, <http://www.cs-network.ru/>).

These examples could be multiplied many times over. Underpinning all of them is a sense that schools have to become involved in tackling issues beyond their traditional boundaries. However, this leaves ample scope for differences of view as to what those issues are, where and how far beyond the boundaries of the school they lie, and what the school can and should do in response to them. Ultimately, of course, these views rest on fundamental assumptions about the purposes of education, the origin of social problems, and the characteristics of viable societies. Such assumptions are frequently implied by advocates of community focused schools and the actions of the schools themselves, but are, unfortunately, rarely made explicit.

What community focused schools can achieve

In this situation, there are real difficulties in assessing how far the promise of community focused schools has been realized in practice. Where rationales differ

so markedly, it is inevitably difficult to assemble an evidence base to support their effectiveness. Moreover, the outcomes envisaged by some rationales – community viability, say, or the empowerment of marginalized groups – are inherently difficult to assess. Not surprisingly, therefore, most evaluations have focused on schools that are trying to improve educational and life chance outcomes for disadvantaged students and adults, and, within that, have focused on those outcomes that are easiest to measure. Even here, however, the complex, multi-strand nature of most community focused schools make the identification and attribution of outcomes difficult, and there are real doubts about the quality of research that has thus far been produced (Keyes & Gregg, 2001; Wilkin et al., 2003).

Nonetheless, the evidence that is available seems to point towards a positive, albeit somewhat tentative, conclusion (see, amongst many others, Dyson & Robson, 1999; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Sammons et al., 2003; Szirom et al., 2001). Where schools work beyond their traditional boundaries, they put themselves in a position to have a greater impact on the educational and life chances of their students, of their students' families and, in some cases on the well being of the communities where students live. A review of the evidence on 'community' schools, for instance, whilst noting the limitations of many evaluations, concludes nonetheless that such schools produce positive outcomes in four areas:

- **Student learning:** Community school students show significant and widely evident gains in academic achievement and in essential areas of nonacademic development.
- **Family engagement:** Families of community school students show increased stability, communication with teachers and school involvement. Parents demonstrate a greater sense of responsibility for their children's learning success.
- **School effectiveness:** Community schools enjoy stronger parent-teacher relationships, increased teacher satisfaction, a more positive school environment and greater community support.
- **Community vitality:** Community schools promote better use of school buildings, and their neighborhoods enjoy increased security, heightened community pride, and better rapport among students and residents.

(Blank et al., 2003, p. 1-2. emphases in original)

The situation in England

As I indicated above, England has a long tradition of community focused schools reaching back until at least the 1920s. The most recent versions of this approach – the extended and full service extended schools introduced by New Labour governments – have an interesting origin. New Labour's concern with disadvantage – labeled as 'social exclusion' (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001, 2004) – focused particularly on the way a wide range of disadvantaging factors came together in the poorest parts of towns and cities. It accordingly set about formulating a national neighbourhood renewal strategy to tackle these factors in a coordinated way (Social Exclusion Unit,

1998). As part of this process, it investigated the contribution that might be made by what we are here calling community focused schools, but what at the time the Government chose to call 'Schools Plus' (DfEE, 1999).

The consequence is that recent developments in England have had a rationale that is much closer to Dryfoos than to Morris. In other words, they have been based on concerns about the destructive impacts of poverty and disadvantage, and on assumptions about the capacity of community focused schools to intervene to prevent or mitigate those impacts. However, they also embody a recognition that, in disadvantaged areas at least, a focus on improving the quality of what happens within the school gates will be ineffective unless it is accompanied by interventions in what happens to children in their families and communities beyond the school gates. As one Government briefing puts it:

Across government, we see [extended schools] as a way of ensuring that all young people get the best possible start in life, making the most of all their potential and skills, developing confidence and the motivation to learn and achieve as they move through the years of compulsory education; staying safe, healthy and active as they move into adulthood, and making a valued and valuable contribution to the communities around them....[I]n those places where social and economic needs are most acute, where there is stubborn and multiple deprivation, schools are a vital element of renewal. They are often the only truly universal service for young people in an area.

(Department for Communities and Local Government, 2006, p. 7)

The evaluation of these developments has often suffered from the familiar problems reported above. However, the full service extended schools initiative received a relatively well resourced and robust evaluation, combining the analysis of performance data with case studies of process, theory of change evaluation of outcomes, and cost-benefit analysis (Cummings et al., 2007a, 2006, 2005). The findings of this evaluation confirm and extend the international findings reported above. Specifically, these schools were having significant positive impacts on highly disadvantaged students and families. In some cases, these effects were quite literally life changing: young people who might have dropped out of education were retained in the school; and adults who had lost all aspiration for themselves rediscovered their ability to learn and found the confidence to gain qualifications and move from unemployment to employment. There were some indications that full service extended schools were improving more rapidly than other schools in disadvantaged areas, and that they were able to narrow the gap somewhat between the achievements of more and less disadvantaged students. There were also some indications that, in time, they would begin to have widespread effects on engagement with learning and other indicators of well being in communities as a whole and might, given the right conditions, play a part in the transformation of those communities. Finally, when the costs of interventions were calculated, they were high, but so too was the financial value of the benefits, and, since these

benefits accrued chiefly to the most disadvantaged, there was a significant element of redistribution in the initiative.

Some caveats

If we return now to the starting point for this paper – the stubborn link between social background, educational achievements and life chances in England – it would appear that community focused schools have much to offer. Rather than attempting to combat the effects of disadvantage through educational interventions alone, they provide a means whereby those effects can be tackled across a range of arenas – children's lives outside the classroom, the dynamics of their families, and the cultures and opportunity structures in the communities where they live. However, it would, I suggest, be premature to assume that the development of community focused schools offers in itself a solution to the problem of educational disadvantage. There are four important caveats to be entered in respect of the potential of such schools.

First, although community focused schools are, by definition, outward-looking and eager to form partnerships with other community agencies, their view of socio-economic disadvantage nonetheless remains essentially 'school-centred' (Cummings et al., 2007b). By this I mean that their priorities have to be on teaching and learning, and the focus of their concern with disadvantage has to be on how it impacts on educational achievement. This may make them reluctant to engage with wider social agendas, or lead them to address those agendas selectively, or to try to 'capture' the resources of community agencies in support of educationally-focused action. This in turn may make them problematic partners for other agencies and may lead to their being viewed by other professionals and by community members with some suspicion. As one community worker in a disadvantaged area once told my colleagues and me:

Schools are like a monster, they eat up everything in their path, then spit it back out again...Schools are like a secret society. They make plans that involve others but the others are always the last to know. Others are used by schools for their own ends; they're self-interested.

(Crowther et al., 2003, p. 32)

Such tendencies are, of course, particularly marked in the current English situation, where school leaders are encouraged to act autonomously, and where they are placed under intense pressure to produce improvements in their students' attainments over very short time scales. In such circumstances, it is very difficult for even the most socially-aware leaders to 'de-centre' and commit themselves to a wide-ranging, long-term and multi-agency approach to disadvantage.

Second, and related to this, the capacity of community focused schools to make a real difference to socio-economic disadvantage is severely limited. The

weapons in the hands of schools tend to be directed at the difficulties experienced by individual children and their families. They are able to offer powerful forms of individual support and encouragement, overcoming crises in children's and families' lives, and keeping vulnerable children and adults engaged with education. It is much more difficult for schools to engage with the large numbers of people who live in disadvantaged circumstances in the areas they serve, or to address issues that cannot be solved by additional personal support. So, it is hard for them to bring about changes to local cultures, for instance, or to address the infrastructural problems – in terms of access to housing, transport and employment – which local people face (Cummings et al., 2007a). It is, of course, impossible for schools to tackle the origins of disadvantage in underlying social structures and processes (Dyson & Raffo, 2007). If, as some have argued (Lipman, 2004, 2007), educational problems are ultimately driven by the forces of economic globalization, there is little that even highly committed community focused schools can do other than treat the most immediate and superficial symptoms that manifest themselves in their student populations.

Third, the inevitable school-centredness of community focused schools easily slips over into a problematic form of paternalism. It is difficult for school leaders, faced with the multiple problems presented by children and their families, and determined to intervene in those problems so that children can achieve, to avoid seeing children and adults in disadvantaged circumstances in deficit-oriented terms (Cummings et al., 2007b). It then becomes difficult for those leaders to recognize and build on the strengths of local people, to take their views of what is needed locally fully into account, or to involve them in the governance of community focused approaches. Ultimately, there is a danger that, in trying to ameliorate the problems of people in disadvantaged circumstances, community focused schools contribute to their disenfranchisement and oppression. As the American researcher, Robert Crowson argues, viewing schools simply as the provider of services to disadvantaged communities may actually constrain the potential of those communities, ignoring the broader community development agenda focused on developing the resources which communities can access and manage for themselves (Crowson, 2001).

Finally, despite all the research efforts around community focused schools, what we know about their impacts and potential is actually extremely limited. This is not simply because of the poor quality and other technical limitations of the research noted above. It is also because the best-researched initiatives tend to have been located in urban areas of concentrated disadvantage and, indeed, have been established precisely as a response to these challenging conditions. This is certainly true, for instance, of the full service extended schools initiative in England which explicitly sought out schools in the most disadvantaged places in every local authority area as locations for extended provision. The consequence is, however, that we know relatively little about how community focused approaches work in less disadvantaged areas, or what they might offer to students and communities who are not living in disadvantaged circumstances.

In particular, taking Crowson's cautions about service-provision seriously, we do not know whether targeting additional services on students and families with the greatest difficulties is actually the most effective way in the long term to meet those difficulties. As Moss et al. (1999) point out, community focused approaches targeting disadvantaged students, families and communities emerge, particularly in the US and UK, out of particularly polarised social conditions, and out of particular assumptions about the wider social role of schools. Other countries think differently about schools, families and communities and counter disadvantage in other ways than by targeting additional services through community focused schools. It is not at all clear, therefore, whether community focused schools as we have described them here represent the best way forward everywhere, or simply represent the most promising way forward in situations that have already been allowed to become dysfunctional.

A way forward?

These caveats should give us pause for thought. Community focused schools have much to offer. However, they cannot by themselves solve the problem of social disadvantage or the reproduction of disadvantage in the educational arena. They are no substitute for wide ranging social and economic policies arising out of a deep political commitment to social justice. On the other hand, I wish to argue that there are ways of extending the impact of community focused schools, even in situations where the wider policy context remains ambiguous.

It is, for instance, not inevitable that the leaders of such schools will fall prey to the temptations of paternalism and school-centredness. There is no reason in principle why school leaders should not be committed to notions of social justice that go beyond raising educational achievements, nor why community focused schools should not become catalysts for the development of community activism (see, for instance, Anyon, 2005; Lipman, 2004). Indeed, some of the community focused schools my colleagues and I have researched have placed considerable emphasis on educating their students for future community leadership roles, have handed over control of many of their extended activities to community groups, and have offered support and encouragement to those groups in taking direct action to improve conditions in the areas where they live (Cummings et al., 2007a). Even in situations where there are strong incentives to think of local people in deficit terms, therefore, the implication is that paternalism is a danger but not necessarily an inevitability.

Similarly, there is no reason why the impacts of community focused schools should not be multiplied by locating their work within an overarching strategic framework for local action. In one local authority in England, for instance, a radical reform of the school system is explicitly linked to the physical and economic regeneration of what in recent years has been a highly disadvantaged town (Barnsley Metropolitan

Borough Council, 2005). Learning is seen as central to the creation of a skilled workforce able to attract employers into the area. Schools, therefore, are being reconfigured as 'learning centres' responsible for the education of both children and adults. These centres are located strategically around different areas of the town, where they work closely with teams of workers from child, family and community agencies. Head teachers join local partnerships responsible for commissioning work from these multi-agency teams and developing an area strategy. Not surprisingly, in this local authority, these developments are stimulating some radical rethinking about what the curriculum of such a centre should be, how children and adults are best taught, what 'learning centre' buildings should look like, and how the concerns of educationalists should interact with those of professionals in other agencies and of people in local communities.

This process of rethinking is, I suggest, in many ways the most significant aspect of the emergence of community focused schools. In England, as in many other countries, the structures and practices of schooling have remained substantially unchanged for generations. Perhaps more important, the role of schools as rather isolated factories of learning has been substantially unchallenged. Community focused schooling may, in some cases, do no more than marginally adjust this factory model, addressing some of the superficial manifestations of social inequity and making children and their families more manageable in the context of an essentially unreconstructed school system. However, as schools begin to work beyond their traditional boundaries, important questions are raised about what schools are for and how they relate to other social and economic interventions in the pursuit of greater social justice. Although these questions may, ultimately, be answered in rather traditional ways, the potential for something different to emerge is real. It is, I suggest, a potential that demands to be exploited.

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