

THE PLACE OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS (CONT)

After tendering my submission on Vocational Education in Schools to the House of Representatives Education and Training Committee it occurred to me that we tend to plan naturally enough for the normal and the healthy, who have expectations of acceptable lives, relationships and careers. Yet life is not like this for every boy or girl, or indeed for every adult.

If the term vocational education can be regarded as synonymous with preparation for life's journey then it needs to offer a number of possibilities to meet different student requirements. One such requirement is emotional and mental health.

Recent research on the biological/psychological nature of early childhood shows that Good Mental Health starts early. This was made clear at the launch of Mental Health Week 2002 by Dr Margaret Sims, Coordinator of Children and Family Studies, E.C.U.

Neuron derived pathways which stem from healthy; loving; and stimulating influences in the home set the scene for a sound subsequent pattern of learning, loving and living. Vocational courses which consolidate this across the generations are much to be desired. The whole ethos of school should foster love and service to others and what is taught should echo this. This was born out by Ms Margaret Cook – Attachment and Love, A Consumer Perspective. Some consideration is needed as to what can help older students not only at school but also as they journey through life. They need to acquire the knowledge for themselves so as to become adequate parents in their turn. In addition to love and attachment they need empathy.

In an appendix to my original submission I suggested some quite widely conceived Vocational Courses. There can also be courses which explore appropriate subjects in depth – Photography is obviously one. Floristry another; Childcare; Hospitality; Tourism Nursing and Health are all subjects which could lead to certification and industry validation. No doubt other subjects could be chosen but the logistics for a school would have to be taken into account. Too many schools all in the same area offering the same courses would have to be avoided.

There have to be courses which relate to people (extrovert) and course which relate to things (introvert). There should also be courses which marry the two. But perhaps more important as boys and girls grow, they develop a clear conscience as the foundation of their personality.

“History with its flickering lamp stumbles along the trail of the past trying to reconstruct its scenes, to revive its echoes and kindle with pale gleams the passion of former days. What is the worth of all this? The only guide to a man is his conscience. The only shield to his memory is the rectitude and sincerity of his actions. It is very imprudent to walk through life without this shield, because we are

so often mocked by the failure of our hopes and the upsetting of our calculations but
with this shield, however the fates may play, we march always in the ranks of honour"

(Colville. The Fringes of Power Winston Churchill's tribute to Neville Chamberlain

Arthur Davies

9/10/02

24 Castlegate Way

Woodvale

WA 6026.