EDUCATION 2040: CURRICULAR, PEDAGOGIC, STRUCTURAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS OF LETTING THE LEARNERS LEAD

MIKE DOUSE
Freelance International Educational Advisor, UK

PHILIP UYS
Freelance International Educational Advisor, Australia

ABSTRACT

Contemporary technology, along with the tangible/virtual duality of present-day learner consciousness, are, in the authors' opinion, necessitating and enabling a fundamental educational transformation. A central feature of this development will be 'letting the learners lead', including (from secondary onwards) their identification of the content of their curriculum. This paper considers how this pedagogical innovation might operate in practice.

Nine United Kingdom (specifically South Wales) senior secondary students were invited to decide what they would "like to learn in the coming academic year". The group then explored how their agreed set of subjects (including, for instance, Sign Language; History of Coal Mining in My Locality; Mental Health and Me; Being Ready for the Next Pandemic; Pantomime…) might best be learned. These approaches and findings were shared with, understood by, and generally supported by a group of upper secondary school students in Australia and, to a lesser extent, by another group in Bangladesh. Dialogue with a small number of professors and other United Kingdom professionals also took place.

The tentative conclusions and implications are that (a) university entrance requirements are predominantly aimed at student selection rather than at covering necessary pre-tertiary knowledge; (b) if, somehow, the competitive element – including the allocation of grades – could be eliminated, then giving learners the opportunity to shape their curricula becomes feasible; (c) letting the learners lead is seen (by a sample of them) as realistic and (with some reservations) desirable; (d) much of this learning would involve on-line research through the confident utilisation of familiar devices and systems (i.e. how 'non-school' information is now acquired); (e) there would also be on-line and face-to-face discussions with experts and practitioners; (f) teachers, with radically restructured roles, could offer valuable coordination and encouragement; and (g) the school as 'place' (as opposed to 'process') may wither away as the transformation proceeds. The authors are keen that their provisional findings should be tested by educational planners and researchers in other educational situations across the world.

INTRODUCTION

Made necessary and feasible by information and communications technology, reflecting the duality (tangible and virtual) of contemporary consciousness, and exacerbated by COVID, education is beginning to undergo a fundamental transformation (Douse & Uys, 2020a). This revolution is epitomised by the notion of 'letting the learners lead' (Douse, 2021), from the secondary stage onwards, with significant implications for curriculum (Douse & Uys, 2018a), digital age consciousness and online learning (Douse & Uys, 2019a), pedagogy (Douse & Uys, 2018b), the

teacher (Douse, 2022), educational technology (Uys & Douse, 2022), educational planning (Douse & Uys, 2020b), educational psychology (Douse & Uys, 2018c), education and equity (Douse & Uys, 2019b), and other aspects and components of evolving education worldwide.

This study's purpose is to explore what form those implications – notably that of letting the learners lead – might take. It is based upon our encouraging a group of senior secondary age learners to discuss what they might choose to learn, were the opportunity for them to make such decisions available. Would these young people wish and be able to break away from current perspectives and agree upon alternative curriculum content? Would this have 'face validity' or would it appear unworkably radical and who would be entitled to judge? What would other senior secondary learners far beyond South Wales think of these efforts and of their outcomes?

The lead author who has dedicated himself to facilitating genuine learner-led discussions without consciously imposing his own views upon the participants believes that, in comparable conditions and given similar challenges, groups of learners of similar ages and stages might well have responded in parallel ways. It is hoped that other educational planners and researchers will test that belief in various environments across the world.

BACKGROUND

Giving learners increased control over what and how they learn is a longstanding educational objective, albeit varying widely in intention and detail. For example, within the intellectual ferment at the turn of the 20th century, and inspired by educational thinkers such as Maria Montessori and John Dewey, Helen Parkhurst (1922) created the Dalton Plan aimed inter alia at "promoting each student's independence and dependability… pupils work at their own pace, and receive individual help from the teacher when necessary. The underlying aim is to achieve the highest mental, moral, physical and spiritual development of the pupil" (p. 5-6). This Dalton Plan, with various refinements, is still practised in a small number of schools across a large number of countries.

Several recent initiatives directly involve learners in deciding upon what is to be learned and on driving the curriculum. For example, Hamilton (2018) vividly describes an initiative wherein 180 fifth and sixth graders at a Philadelphia, USA school "defined their own curriculum for the remainder of the school year" establishing that "students can learn by reflecting on themselves and by reflecting with their peers" (p.2), with teachers creating structures for students to research and discover… students want to explore questions and topics they care about and see as important". In this instance, they came up with: War, Civil Rights, Freedom, and Changes Over Time.

Even more recently, Shelby Scoffield (2023) invited her sophomore students to tell her "what they needed to do to demonstrate mastery of the California State English Language Arts standards… create their own six category rubric, each with criteria that could be classified into four levels of proficiency: advanced, proficient, basic, and not yet… (then) create a project that demonstrated mastery of each of the standards listed in the rubric" (p.1). Scoffield reports that "students were engaged and enjoyed the learning process… student scores exceeded expectations… I have learned to get rid of assignments to focus on how I can help students master the standards in ways that will fully engage them in the process" (p.2).

More generally, Anderson (2016) reports that "in elementary schools, we train kids to be teacher-pleasers. In middle school, we teach them how to jump through hoops to get grades, and by high school, they have learned how to simply comply to get by" (p.3-4). To combat this, he advocates student ownership of work, extending to helping them learn how to choose well. This goes further than the very many – and often successful – initiatives in student-centred learning (O'Neill & McMahon, 2005), wherein the curriculum is geared, by teachers and others, to respond to their notions of the needs, interests and aspirations of the learners, involving "self-directed learning (with) learning outcomes focusing on what the student will be able to do rather than on the content covered by teachers" (p.2).

Not every call for wider and improved participation in curriculum development activities advocates a role for learners. For instance, one comprehensive investigation (Mkandawire *et al*, 2019) concludes that "all key stakeholders including student teachers, practicing teachers, curriculum specialists and those aspiring to be teachers… curriculum specialists as leaders of curriculum development and review" are the right people to ensure how curricula should "be changing to address the fast changes in human evolutional and revolutionary developments" (p.8). In their defence, they cite Paulo Freire's (2014) call for the general public's participation in curriculum choice and review "so that education is designed to optimally serve the core interest of the general public" (pp. 17-19). We see it, reflecting the dynamics of this digital age, as properly and, indeed, inevitably serving the interests and aspirations of the learners, and as defined by them. That being the focus of this research.

METHODOLOGY

Nine secondary students, four boys and five girls, aged 16 (and in two instances 17) years, in attendance at nine different schools in and around Cardiff (extending to Pontypridd, Aberdare and Brecon) all within South Wales in the United Kingdom, volunteered to take part in discussions addressing *if it were up to me, what would I like to learn in the coming academic year*. This is an approach successfully applied by the lead author, in various settings, for over half a century, for example in Douse, 1972.

The outcomes of these discussions were then supplemented by separate meetings between the lead author and four senior university faculty members – one in each of medicine, engineering, law and accountancy – addressing *what a student needed to 'know, understand or be able to do' before commencing a first or bachelor's degree* in that subject. At least one of the nine students attended those four discussions which took place at Cardiff University (two), University of South Wales Treforest, and Cardiff Metropolitan University. The group of nine students had an opportunity to review a draft of this paper – a few minor suggestions were made and each of these was accepted by the authors and incorporated. This entire process took place between April and August 2022: lockdown had ended but the restrictions of – and online possibilities evolving during – the COVID months were in all participants' minds.

In November 2022, this process was described to a class of senior secondary students at an independent school in Australia, who were invited to determine what they would *like to learn in the coming academic year*. They were then given the South Wales group's subject list and an open discussion then took place. A similar activity took place at a secondary school in Bangladesh in December 2022, involving eighteen Year 11 students. These two 'validation exercises' each occupied

a double lesson (some ninety minutes) and, in terms of depth of treatment, was far less thorough than the original South Wales discussions and visits, which occupied some twenty hours for each young learner spread over some six weeks (excluding the subsequent meetings with professionals plus a final get-together in August).

'WHAT WE WOULD WISH TO LEARN' – AND HOW?

After much discussion (and some healthy disagreement), the group of learners reached a 'working consensus' on what they would like to learn during the coming academic year, leaving aside the requirements of universities, professional bodies and employers for particular competencies as demonstrated by examination results (as addressed below). Not all of the learners wished to study all of the agreed 'subjects' but there was general agreement that this set comprised a workable menu from which each individual might choose at least seven. For present purposes, that was regarded as a reasonable compromise and the group then addressed how each of the 'subjects' might best be learned, as now summarised.

Many early contributions to the discussion were grounded in the current context of General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) subjects including the need to study a language. The possibility of that language being Welsh was attractive to three of the group (one presently attending a Welsh-language school) but others resisted, sometimes strongly. Once **Sign Language** was mentioned, there was almost immediate approval and the discussion moved on to how best proficiency might be acquired. Deaf students (and, in one case, a family member) could readily be identified and it was agreed that one or more of these could be met with at the outset, and then this group could practice together – making use of available online guides – and reaching competence in terms of being able to communicate to a high level. After some discussion it was unanimously agreed that the standard should be British (as opposed to Welsh) sign language and that specialised societies could be approached for advice, support and standardised assessment.

There was also an initial belief that learners of this age should study some history, narrowing in discussion to local history, and eventually focussing on *History of Coal Mining in my Locality.* While there are no longer any working pits in this region, there are mining museums and records of all kinds ranging from video clips and films to memoirs and novels. Former (albeit aging) miners could be met, along with historians of Welsh mining, and, perhaps working in small groups, histories of particular mines, of the miners' union, and of the industry generally, could be developed. All group members were quite excited by this possibility and (as with one or two other hypothetical subjects) were keen to commence their research straightway!

While possibly talking about their own challenges, all group members knew 'someone' suffering from depression or related conditions. It was agreed that this subject should be entitled *Mental Health and Me* and no-one opposed this being on the subject list. Where there was division was in relation to how this could be studied in a practically effective way: a 'good young and sympathetic teacher' might suffice, some felt, while others believed that a 'series of sessions with a professional' would be needed. Given guidance and a reading list, including online sources, might, some considered, be the way to go about it. This matter was never entirely resolved.

In relation to mental health, and to some other subjects, the issue of extracurricular activities was raised: 'the school' is a focus for sport and a range of interests such as music, drama, debating and service clubs including mountain rescue and ecological organisations. Rather surprisingly

(to the authors) there was some feeling that the school was not always the right centre for these activities: "If you want to play football, join a local junior team… for music, there are church choirs and choral societies… join the scouts and guides if you want to… if you're serious about chess, you'll be welcome at the local club". Limited funding and possibly a decline in teacher morale may well have reduced the school's role in activities outside the classroom. Nevertheless, this is a major factor in what a traditional UK school may offer and it requires further research.

As already mentioned, COVID-19 was still very much in evidence as these discussions were taking place. There was a recognition that the United Kingdom, and the rest of the world had been caught unprepared and that an important and interesting area of learning would be *Being Ready for the next Pandemic*. There was a belief that, after meeting some health professionals, the group could plan an investigation: as with many 'subjects', initial sources of information – articles – organisations and experts – are readily available on the internet and all group members are adept at handling this form of research. What might evolve could be a 'report, agreed by all of us, to be submitted to local MPs including the Health Minister'.

A love of and an interest in household pets was common amongst the participating students and this led to a wish to learn about a particular breed of dog (a minority preferred cats) and it was agreed that this should be *Border Collies* (very common in Wales, traditionally a working sheepdog but now also a family pet). The intention would be to know about them – the history of the breed, numbers and geographical spread, performance in shows, mentions in literature – and how best to care for them. Here again, the internet offered a clear way forward: three border collie associations, several kennels in South Wales, and veterinary services – all readily identified.

Some students wished to include a Shakespeare play, as is required by present public examination specifications. Others disagreed, though still feeling that there should be some form of drama content, whether it be studying a modern composition, or basing investigations around theatre visits, or actually writing, producing and performing an original play. Once the subject of *pantomime* was suggested, a host of ideas were put forward: reading up about it, going to see one or more of them (Aladdin in Cardiff and Dick Whittington in Newport), meeting the actors and others involved backstage, performing an extract for fellow-students and families. All group members were ready to research the extensive origins and traditions of panto, covering, for example, cross dressing, topical references and audience involvement – going much further than the contemporary treatment of a prescribed play.

The theme of *Going on Strike* was very topical during the time of these discussions with postal, transport, medical, legal, teaching and several other groups of workers withdrawing – or threatening to withdraw – their labour. It was agreed that two or three case studies could be carried out, starting from the basic employment, conditions and legal situation, through to the consequences of striking, the negotiations, public opinion, and the eventual settlement, or lack of. Group members would study media coverage and, between them, meet with strikers, employers, union organisers and affected members of the public (possibly including a survey). Attention could also be given to the legal position and the history of labour withdrawal, South Wales having been the cradle of unionism and strike action.

Given a shared interest in computer gaming, it was agreed that one contemporary game deserved to be included and *Halo Infinite* was nominated. Initially, the course would involve no more than "getting good at it through playing it and discussing it afterwards, like we now do with rugby" but, after discussion, it was recognised that looking at the development of gaming, and the

marketing of products (Halo Infinite was the 2021 'game of the year'; it will soon be outdated) and the gaming industry should be explored, covering also the skills involved in creating this kind of game. But, basically, as one student put it, "we will compete between ourselves getting better and better scores, learning a few other things as we go".

All students were committed to green causes (two had been on demonstrations) and so a course in this area was likely from the outset. Once the implications of Russia's invasion of Ukraine started to be felt, the subject *Phasing out Oil and Gas* was identified. It was recognised that this was a massive area of study and that it would be difficult to remain objective. Here and elsewhere, there was some feeling that a 'teacher' could lead them through the magnitude of political arguments, scientific and non-specialised articles and statements by environmentalists and fossil fuel companies – but it was also agreed that "not all teachers would be able to do this impartially (and) without taking over our research".

The possible inclusion of *Veganism – a Plant-Based Diet* was contested. While there was a willingness to learn about it, only two students were in favour of trying it out in practice. While clear ways of researching the subject were apparent – internet information supplemented by discussions with practitioners, and possibly with at least one opponent – for the moment this area of study was placed upon the 'reserve list'.

Of the traditional secondary school subjects, only *Mathematics* was advocated for inclusion in the set of 'what we would wish to learn'. Once its function as a requirement for advanced study had been cleared from the group members' minds – and that was not easy – the value of it, in itself, and – for a few students – the fascination with mathematical games and puzzles became evident. Another challenge was that, across the nine students, there was a great difference in mathematical achievement, two or three racing ahead and "very seldom needing a teacher… we can help one another when we get stuck" while others are pleased to put the subject behind them. Another for the 'reserve list' or, possibly, an 'optional'.

The subsequent finding regarding a knowledge of *Chemistry* being regarded as essential for admission to medical and related university programmes (see below) was given attention by three group members, in informal discussion after a relevant meeting (again, see below). Neither they, nor to their knowledge any of the other six, were interested in becoming doctors nor, indeed, in studying science subjects at the tertiary level. They reminded this paper's lead author that they had been asked to decide what they would like to learn during the coming academic year, leaving aside the requirements of universities, professional bodies and employers. "If I intended to become a medical professional, or a scientist, then those subjects would be included in my list – I don't and they aren't" summed up the discussion. This paragraph in common with the entire draft version was subsequently checked by the entire group and remained unchanged.

VALIDATION BEYOND SOUTH WALES

The 19 members in a class of senior secondary students at an Australian independent school responded enthusiastically to the invitation to determine what they would *like to learn in the coming academic year*. After 45 minutes they were given the South Wales group's subject list and a lively and largely positive discussion ensued. They chose a contemporary Australian play rather than pantomime, preferred blue heelers to border collies, and liked the idea of learning an aboriginal language as well as or instead of Australian sign language. Other South Wales subjects,

including being prepared for the next pandemic, veganism and mathematics were fully accepted, while Australia-focussed considerations of energy, and of labour laws, were advocated. 'Australia as British' was a proposed subject and others were hinted at although not detailed in the time allowed. More generally, it was clear that this group of young people understood and were sympathetic to the general idea of 'letting the learners lead'.

The 18 Year-11 students in a secondary school in Bangladesh were initially less responsive than were those in Australia, finding it very difficult to move away from existing university and professional entrance requirements, and from 'getting a good grade'. Until the South Wales list was revealed to them, their creativity had been limited to suggesting minor changes to existing curricula, such as allowing laptops to be used in exams or making computer studies compulsory. However a lively discussion on some of the subjects, such as 'Mental Health and Me' and 'Being Ready for the Next Pandemic' took place indicating that, once the examples had been seen, the general idea was now understood. 'Pantomime' had to be explained and, then, the idea of including traditional Bangla theatre was agreed to, along with the idea of studying 'Sylheti Nagari', a local language. 'Tea Growing' could readily replace 'Coal Mining' in this locality and the inclusion of 'Mathematics' was unanimously endorsed. When asked how feasible was 'letting the learners lead', most of the class felt that it was "a good idea but not likely to happen". However, when asked "in the year 2040, should senior secondary students like you be able to choose what to study?" the entire class voted 'yes'.

UNIVERSITY ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS DISSECTED

An analysis of several United Kingdom *medical* faculties' entrance requirements showed that A level Chemistry was a constant prerequisite (see above) while some but not all universities also required grade A level Biology, with some schools preferring a third related science subject. Specifications such as "(grades) AAA including Chemistry and one from Biology, Maths or Physics, and one other subject" make clear that, apart from Chemistry, no one of these is regarded as essential. In addition to the different A level requirements, it is necessary to have "at least five GCSEs (A-C) including science, English, and maths", while some universities offer special arrangements (such as a 'foundation year') generally aimed at those who come from disadvantaged backgrounds and or from families that do not have a tradition of entering higher education.

A former professor of medicine reported that

> *all of these entrance requirements boil down to an intense process of competition. Certainly there is a genuine need for first year medical students to know their chemistry plus some basic biology – the ability to 'think scientifically' is at the heart of it. We expected them to have done some experiments but, most of all, they need good grades. I have come across a mature student with no science at all beyond O levels, but excellent A levels in arts subject: we simply gave her the A level chemistry textbook and she joined the course two months later and kept up with everyone else. Excellent marks and a good impression at interview are the main requirements: everything else can be sorted out later.*

Engineering is not quite so specifically demanding, in terms of gaining entry, as is Medicine, with A-level grades AAB all the way down to BBC being specified, typically "including Mathematics

and a second science from Biology, Chemistry, Computing, Economics, Electronics, Environmental Science, Geography, Geology Human Biology, Statistics, Further Mathematics and Physics". One prestigious university requires "A*AA to include Mathematics and Physics (but not) General Studies and Critical Thinking", while a less prestigious one will accept "(grades) BBC to include Mathematics and Physics or Technological Studies". A successful civil engineer who teaches part-time at a South Wales university observed that:

> *students usually know they're going to go for engineering from around GCSEs and choose the same set of A-levels that they'll go on to do at university. They really must have maths and I'd advise physics and computer sciences – if they don't have those subjects, they'll have to catch up in year one. Unlike most other disciplines, an engineering degree is a continuation of what they were doing in their last years of school.*

As far as becoming an *Accountant* by means of a university degree is concerned, a wide range of advice regarding A-Levels is available, with Accountancy itself, Mathematics, Business Studies, Economics, Further Maths and a Science subject all being suggested. However, different universities specify differing requirements and, indeed, it is possible to enter some degree programmes with only A-level Arts subjects (such as English, History and French). A recently retired chartered accountant and long-term Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) lecturer commented that

> *a school leaver may find work in an accountancy firm and take the professional qualifications part-time or else obtain a degree and get exemptions. Either way, he will find it difficult if he isn't at home with maths and, of course, with computer technology. If you have those basic skills – if you like dealing with numbers and the ideas behind them – it doesn't really matter what A-levels you did or didn't do.*

Obtaining admission to a *Law* school is highly competitive but with limited requirements for particular A-levels. As one lawyer[1] puts it:

> *Students who want to take law are often told to study the likes of English literature and law at A-level, but I personally think people should study what they enjoy doing and are good at. Law students don't have to study law beforehand. I think English and history probably help in the sense that they refine your essay writing skills. My essay writing skills needed work when I got to university, but I caught up in the end!*

And, as widely proclaimed on the UK's Open University's sites, advertisements and documents,

> *Most of our courses [Arts and Humanities, Science, Business, Social Sciences et cetera] have no entry requirements but there are some learning skills you need to be successful.*

Entering the world of work directly from school is likely to require (a) *trainability* – a readiness and a capacity to acquire specific skills – and to upgrade those and acquire fresh proficiencies on lifelong bases; and (b) what are referred to as *soft skills* such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, time management, critical thinking, decision-making, organisational competencies and stress

[1]Anke Batty, quoted at https://www.theuniguide.co.uk/advice/a-level-choices/what-a-levels-do-you-need-to-study-law

management. The students' identification of 'Mental Health and Me' suggests some awareness of these kinds of requirements.

CONCLUSIONS

After some initial hesitation, a small group of senior secondary students accepted the notion of their being able to determine what they should learn, and how it should be learned, and came up with an agreed set of subjects for them, for the following academic year, with, in the authors' opinions (and of those of some students in Australia and Bangladesh), a reasonable level of face validity. Taken together, the agreed subjects were, we feel, interesting, challenging, original and realistic.

The conventional school, with required attendance in teacher-led classrooms, for, say 36 hours per week for, say, 41 weeks per year appears to be an entirely inappropriate response to the bulk of learning preferences of those senor secondary learners. The authors' earlier notion of seeing the school as a process' rather than a 'place' (Douse & Uys, 2020, p.13) is reinforced here. It may be concluded that this small-scale study reinforces earlier work in this area (as summarised above) to the effect that students, suitably primed, can make sensible decisions on what they wish to learn, and on the (far from conventional) support needed to enable effective and enjoyable learning.

DISCUSSION

It became clear, through their agreed set of subjects, that we do our students a serious disservice if we treat them primarily as future adults. It is primarily what they "are" rather than what they may "become" that is significant – and that realisation is what educational planners and policymakers should consider in the first instance. Education is not exclusively (nor even predominantly) a preparation for a career, nor for citizenship, nor for life in general but it needs to be – and be recognised as – relevant at the point of learning.

The question of selection looms large. Examination performance provides the major criteria for student selection and learners aiming for popular programmes at prestigious colleges must perform well in A-level subjects, often of no particular relevance to their university courses. While deploring this state of affairs, we recognise the challenge involved in enabling selection panels to operate effectively in the context of learners determining what they should study. Perhaps planners might consider how a portfolio of subjects studied could be part of the selection process, although choosing what to learn in the shadow of what might help get you in to a particular programme is very much against the spirit of 'letting the learners lead'.

If feasible, the Open University practice of self-selection might be utilised as widely as reasonable, although it might be difficult to apply this to, say, medical and related subjects (where a knowledge of chemistry is generally regarded as an essential pre-requisite), along with some science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) programmes (where there is a continuity in the study of mathematics and science subjects between school and university). This requires further exploration on the part of educational planners and decision-makers.

It may be noted that the South Wales group (and, as far as became clear in the limited time available, the Australian students) did not want their work to be *marked or graded*, although "constructive feedback might be valuable". Certainly, each member of the group of nine was strongly

opposed to their contributions in each subject being ordered ("you came top… you came bottom") but there was a (contradictory?) feeling that there needed to be some official confirmation that this work had been completed satisfactorily: more for the individual learner than for any external purpose. This uncertainty relates also to the appropriate role of 'the teacher' in the transformed learner-led educational situation.

In South Wales, this exercise involved a '*teacher-figure'* who assembled the group, set the scene, facilitated and encouraged the discussions, and recorded (as objectively as possible) the outcomes. If this arrangement became the norm, and if all learners had been prepared for it during their primary years, that teacher-figure's organisational role would, if not wither away, at least significantly diminish. However, as readily recognised by the nine students, teachers would still be needed, relied upon and valued for key guiding and facilitating (but not leading, assessing or punishing) roles.

Essentially, this involves a very different kind of teacher, from the secondary stage onwards, and lifelong, enabling and encouraging learning but no longer organising it. We foresee teachers coming into their own as concierges and facilitators of learning, and as escorts to wisdom, deserving and receiving widespread respect and ["…far fewer but much more effective and substantially better rewarded" – see Douse, 2022, p.15]. Educational planners, policy makers and, indeed, teachers' unions and professional bodies might well give attention to this forthcoming transformation, ensuring that these higher-level responsibilities are recognised and accomplished to the optimum benefit of teachers and learners.

While the empirical work was carried out in the United Kingdom, and to some degree verified in Australia and Bangladesh, it is reasonable to suppose that comparable (but not identical) kinds of subject areas, and general acceptance of the transformed process, would emerge were similar secondary student discussions set up and supported elsewhere across the world. It would be interesting to receive and compare the results of such initiatives in various locations: in those countries whose learners obtain the highest PISA scores, for example, or in low-income developing countries. The authors are ready and keen to co-operate with other researchers and educational planners interested in assessing the likely consequences of letting the learners lead.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The views of those university and other professionals interviewed made an appreciated contribution as did the teachers and students at the Australian and Bangladesh schools who each devoted an afternoon to this exercise. The time, enthusiasm and commitment of the nine South Wales students is especially appreciated: this paper embodies their ideas and the authors trust that they have presented them accurately and objectively. It was agreed in advance that anonymity would be preserved and this undertaking has been respected.

[2]While Mike Douse organised that activity and chaired the discussions, the actual authors were eight secondary school students. They were named in that publication, leading to some unpleasant consequences, and so it was subsequently agreed that young learners' names should not appear in reports of that nature – and this is the practice being applied in this present exercise.

REFERENCES

Anderson, M. (2016). *When students learn to choose, they choose to learn, The key to student motivation and achievement,* ASCD. https://www.learningpersonalized.com/students-learn-choose-choose-learn

Douse, M. [ed] (1972). *Sex education in New South Wales schools*, Discussion Paper (available in the New South Wales Health Commission library in Sydney) produced by eight secondary students[2] based upon a seminar organised by the NSW Health Commission on 1st October 1972, NSW Health Commission, Australia

Douse, M. (2021). Let the learners lead (the worldwide transition into post-digital age, post-pandemic education), *Educational Planning, 28*(4), 63-75.

Douse, M. (2022). *Teachers in 2040: Far fewer but much more effective and substantially better rewarded*, The Education and Development Forum (UKFIET) blog, posted 22 August 2022, https://www.ukfiet.org/2022/teachers-in-2040-far-fewer-but-much-more-effective-and-substantially-better-rewarded

Douse, M., & Uys, P. M. (2018a). Secondary curriculum in the time of digitisation, *Journal of Education and Culture Studies, 2*(1) October 2018 http://www.scholink.org/ ojs/index.php/jecs/issue/view/182

Douse, M., & Uys, P. M. (2018b). Convivial pedagogy in the time of digitisation, *Journal of Education and Human Development, 7*(4), 1-15. DOI: 10.15640/jehd.v7n4a1; https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/ #inbox/FMfcgxw BVDBm SmGHgkWVNXx DLMNhjMpq?projector=1&message PartId=0.1

Douse, M., & Uys, P. M. (2018c). Educational psychology in the time of digitisation, *Research Journal of Educational Studies and Review, 4*(4). ISSN: 2449-1837; http://www.pearlresearchjournals. org/journals/rjesr/archive/2018/Oct/Abstract/ Douse%20and%20Uys.html

Douse, M., & Uys, P. M. (2019a). Equity and education in the time of digitisation, *International Journal of Education Humanities and Social Science, 2*(4). ISSN: 2582-0745; http://ijehss.com/view1.php?issue=4

Douse, M., & Uys, P. M. (2019b). Digital age consciousness, 'online learning' and the global school. A presentation to *World Conference on Online Learning*, Dublin City University, November 2019, https://www.academia.edu/40399737/Digital_Age_Consciousness_Online_Learning_and_the_Global_School

Douse, M., & Uys, P. M. (2020a). *One world one school – education's forthcoming fundamental transformation*. ISBN: 9798626785883; ASIN: B0861B163X. http://www.globe-online.com/ oneworldoneschool.pdf or at: https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0861B163X

Douse, M., & Uys, P. M. (2020b). Educational planning in the time of digitisation, *Educational Planning, 25*(2), 7-23. http://isep.info/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/25.2.1.Age-of-Digitisation.pdf

Freire P. (2014). *Pedagogy of hope: reliving pedagogy of the oppressed*. London, England: Bloomsbury Publishing. https://www.edutopia.org/article/guiding-students-drive-their-curriculum

Hamilton, H. (2018). *Guiding students to drive their curriculum, Edutopia.* https://www.edutopia.org/article/guiding-students-drive-their-curriculum

Mkandawire, M. T., Maulidi F. K., & Luo Z. (2019). *Who should be deciding what is to be taught in schools? Perspectives from secondary school teacher education in Malawi*. Sage Publications; https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2382120518767903

O'Neill, G., & McMahon T. (2005). *Student-centred learning: what does it mean for students and lecturers*. Dublin: AISHE. https://uk.search.yahoo.com/yhs/search?p=O'Neill%20G%20and%20McMahon%20T.%20Student-centred%20learning

Parkhurst, H. (1922). *Education on the Dalton Plan*. New York: E. P. Dutton & Company. https://archive.org/details/daltonlaboratory00deweiala/page/n5/mode/2u

Scoffield, S. (2023). *An innovative way for high school students to take control of their own learning,* https://www.edutopia.org/article/high-school-students-control-learning

Uys, P. M., & Douse, M. (2022). Edtech: The miracle that failed – and how it might be resuscitated, *UKFIET blog*, March 2022. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358580777_Edtech_the_Miracle_that_Failed