

## Editorial

This issue of *Concept* is the first to be published on-line and the first under new editorship. The shift from being a paper-based to an on-line journal is a combination of necessity and opportunity. Our publisher for the past seven years, NIACE, has decided to streamline its publications and this has involved removing *Concept* from its journal list. At the same time, Edinburgh University Library offered us the support needed to make use of the Open Journal System (OJS) to provide an on-line journal. We are grateful to NIACE for the support which they have provided us up until now, and particularly grateful to Morag Watson and Angela Laurins of Edinburgh University Library, who have guided us through the process of delivering the journal. Any errors which you experience are most likely to be due to the editor's slow learning rather than the system.

Open Journal Systems are part of an Open Access Movement designed to bring scholarly writing to a wider audience. Academic writers publish their work in refereed journals which are normally published by commercial publishing companies which then sell the journals, primarily to academic libraries. Pressure has come from the academics and information specialists who want to put the results of their research to a wider public without compromising academic quality, whilst at the same time the financial squeeze on libraries from increasing journal costs has led to explorations in the opportunities provided by on-line publishing. These principles clearly resonate with those of *Concept*, with writers drawn from community education practitioners as well as engaged academics. Whilst not a refereed publication, *Concept* is certainly an attempt to engage in rigorous critical reflection on practice and policy in the fields of community education. It also seeks to encourage such debate well

beyond the university and professional practice. Thus, we hope that in its new, on-line format, will reach a wider audience for these debates whilst continuing the quality and relevance of writing. In order to introduce readers to OJS, Simon Bains, the Head of Digital Library at Edinburgh University, has provided an introduction to the Open Access movement and the values which has driven it.

The remainder of the articles in this issue focus on the work and impact of three key men with a major influence on community education in different forms, plus an ongoing debate on the question of whether community education has continuing relevance. Emilio Lucio-Villegas from the Paulo Freire Institute in Seville, Spain, introduces the work of a man with probably a bigger influence on community education than any other. Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and other educational theories emerged from his adult literacy campaigns although Lucio argues he is more accurately considered as a cultural worker who used literacy as a medium for liberation. Another cultural worker and fellow Brazilian, who used theatre and acting as the liberating medium, was Augusto Boal, who died this year. Freire's influence on Boal is clear from the title of his *Theatre of the Oppressed*, and Boal's own influence continues in theatre work, but also in education, in political activism and participatory policy making. Gavin Crichton, whose own work is evidence of the continuing influence of Boal, celebrates his life in an obituary article. A third man who has made a major impact on community health work, especially in his native India, is Binayak Sen. His commitment to health care and human rights through the People's Union for Civil Liberties, with the miners' union, the unorganised workers and the tribal people of Chhattisgarh in central India, led to the charge of sympathy with Maoist guerrillas and his imprisonment for nearly three years. Whilst Amnesty International has taken up his case,

the mining companies continue with their human rights abuses.

All these influential men were at some point imprisoned for their social action. Cultural and community health work in many parts of the world are a highly risky business. For those of us in the part of the world which has benefited from such oppression (for example, one of the extractive companies accused of human rights abuses is associated with a subsidiary of Royal Bank of Scotland), the threat comes from incorporation and contraction. Community education workers are increasingly facing the depoliticisation of their work through such mechanisms as management targets and consumer individualism. Here, “critical practices are being marginalised or eradicated ... [along with] ... growing co-optation and corruption of practices to meet neoliberal ends over associational, democratic and empowering community education”, as David Wallace describes in his introduction to *The Edinburgh Papers*, which form the backdrop for the first paper in this issue.

In 2007, a group of university based teachers and researchers in community education met at the University of Edinburgh to debate the contemporary position of the profession. Their purpose was to “develop a response to the current state of professional practice and to rearticulate a sense of social purpose for community education”. The articles presented were published in 2008 as *The Edinburgh Papers* and stimulated considerable debate in amongst academics, practitioners and community activists. A sustained critique has been delivered through the web and paper pages of various publications, by Robert Hamilton, a community worker and activist with considerable experience of practice as well as training other practitioners.

*Concept* wishes to further this debate by providing access to the original *Papers*, a link to Hamilton’s *Pedagogy of the Depressed*

(<http://bellacaledonia.wordpress.com/2009/02/15/the-pedagogy-of-the-depressed/>) and, by way of a response, a presentation delivered by Mae Shaw (one of the authors of the *Papers*) at *Democratising Democracy*, a symposium organised by the National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education. In a response to Hamilton’s critique in *Scotregen*, the journal of SURF, Scotland’s Independent Regeneration Network, Mae Shaw and Ian Martin commented “at the very least, we must take issue with the idea that somehow ‘the community’ can be presented as an unproblematic and uncontested good thing, whereas the state is necessarily a bad thing. In our view, both are promising and both are problematic.” This argument is at the heart of Shaw’s paper reproduced here as *Repoliticising Democracy, Community and the State*. This dialogue should stimulate further discussion amongst readers of this journal and we would invite and encourage academics, practitioners and activists to contribute to the debate.

Mae Shaw is of course the founder of *Concept* and the editor for its nearly 20 years of production. The journal owes its existence and its success to her vision and leadership. *Concept* was ahead of its time in seeking to create a space for critical theoretical rigour in the practice of community education, as well as community relevance for academics. Taking over the editorial role from Mae is a daunting task although her support and encouragement is considerable, as is her arm-twisting. The editorial team certainly hope to sustain the high quality of work from the field of community education – practitioners, academics and activists – and intend to develop the on-line manifestation to make use of the opportunities which that brings. To that end we invite suggestions and contributions from our readers.

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