

Editorial

Eurig Scandrett
Queen Margaret University

Exposing sharp contradictions in the social, cultural and economic fabric lies at the heart of the educational process which contributes to social change. Often these contradictions are hidden in the technocracy of policy implementation or else in the unseen shadows of practice. Making this explicit and confronting these in the context of collective experience becomes the job of the educator. Three of the articles in this issue of Concept expose contradictions in the relationship between policy and practice in Scotland – in adult literacy, community planning and post-compulsory education - although with implications for practicing community education in a range of social policy contexts furth of Scotland. In the fourth article, a controversial arts film generates contradictions more explicitly, and interpreting the implications of this becomes the work of us all as learners. Finally, exposing contradictions continues through the poetry of Jo McFarlane, an artist and activist and with the mental health survivors' movement and 'oor mad history'.

For Janice Macfarlane, there lies a contradiction in the social practice model in literacy education where the learners' mother tongue is Scots. Social practice literacy teaching, as with other forms of critical adult education, seeks to locate learning within the social context of the learner, validating the cultural knowledge which is brought into the classroom and engaging in the task of building on this knowledge in dialogue with new learning. The practice of literacy teaching in Scotland however often faces a contradiction: "the discrepancy between learners speaking Scots, but poring over teaching materials in standard English". In Macfarlane's experience, this is a widespread problem both in policy and practice, with the implication that literacy education risks reinforcing internal colonisation of Scots-speaking learners when faced with the presumption of power by the historically colonising language. Macfarlane's research indicates the emancipatory implications of providing literacy education in Scots, with Scots-speaking tutors using Scots language materials, whilst at the same time, there is a risk to valuing learners' mother tongue whilst the language is associated with stigma and deficiency in the wider context of work and public discourse. This is particularly threatened in the current rise of neoliberal policy. Thus, she concludes, "Scotland's policy context for literacies ... shows two sides, one upholding learner-centred social practice and the other colonising learning for market imperatives."

This policy trend is seen acutely in recent reform of 'post 16 education' in Scotland, which is based on front-loaded economic determinism (or 'employability') – a range of provisions for 16-19 year olds focused on getting them into jobs, and targeted work with the most vulnerable younger school leavers by community education to remove barriers to employment. In his critique of this policy, Jim Crowther points out that such a narrow function of educational institutions is an injustice to those who will receive this training (because of its narrowness of curriculum to incorporate into a failing economy), and for those who will not (because older learners will be excluded). Crowther argues for a curriculum which is vocational in the full sense of people of all ages engaging with what is meaningful to them – which would include, where appropriate, meaningful employment in fulfilling jobs with good conditions.

Kaela Scott addresses the tension caused by the dual role of Community Learning and Development services in policy on Community Planning. On the one hand, community workers' responsibility is to work with the community on agency and setting of agendas, informed by the values of empowerment, equality and challenging discrimination. On the other hand, Community Planning policy requires community workers to assess the quality of participation provided by services. Whilst this tension has the opportunity for communities genuinely to influence the nature of the services they receive, there are inevitable problems of agendas being set elsewhere, and the space for participation being restricted. However, engaging critically with these 'invited spaces' for participation, can bring the opportunity for the community to construct 'demanded spaces' where local agendas can be negotiated. The complexities of the community and what constitutes local agendas is explored in Scott's article, as are the dilemmas faced by community workers engaging in such work.

Paul de Roo writes a provocative piece about an even more provocative film *Episode III – Enjoy Poverty* by Renzo Martens. De Roo was invited to write for *Concept* after showing the controversial film at the 2011 Popular Education Network conference in Seville, Spain, an event that stimulated fierce emotional reactions in the workshop and arguments which continued well after the conference itself was finished. Martens' film is part of a movement within the arts to locate the artist within and as part of the art work itself, often provoking extreme ethical conflicts. De Roo interprets Martens' actions in *Enjoy Poverty* as holding a mirror to the well-meaning, clear conscientised westerner to expose our 'hereditary guilt' and confront our ongoing, active participation in the impoverishment of the African poor. It is this confrontation which De Roo argues, creates such a visceral negative reaction when the film is screened in the west. Whether he is right about this interpretation is of course subject to debate – at the PEN conference there were at least as much reaction against the exploitation involved in the production of the film as against the guilt of being confronted with our complicity, while for most popular educators present, it came as no surprise that we are accessories to an exploitative system. This is what leads us, in our various ways, into our transformatory and revolutionary politics.

This film has clearly stimulated diverse reactions and it is hoped that the debate, in as much as it engages with critical responses to global political reality, could continue through *Concept*. Readers who want to respond to De Roo's provocative piece – or indeed any which have been published in recent issues – are welcome to send articles of 2000 words, or shorter pieces, to the editor. Or continue the discussion on our Facebook page:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/CONCEPT-Journal/183181465070799>.

Finally, the editorial team is delighted to include in this issue a selection of the insightful, funny and provocative poetry by Jo McFarlane, an activist in the mental health service users' movement and the 'Oor Mad History' celebration of the movement's history.