

An Educationalist's Point of View

Hywel Evans

During the 1960s I found myself a Lecturer in Education at the University College of North Wales, Bangor, as it was then, responsible for developing in-service education throughout the six counties of North Wales. This was an enormously wide brief and brought me, a former secondary school teacher with eight years' classroom experience, into contact with the training of part-time youth leaders. Within a matter of months I became responsible for in-service courses for staff in primary schools, following the guidance of the local HMI and the Principal of the Cartrefle College of Education, Wrexham, and later for staff preparing for RoSLA (Raising of the School Leaving Age) and then for those involved with the reorganisation of Training Centres as schools for ENS(S) pupils. I had no direct involvement with the education of pre-school children except that one weekend when I had a small group of teachers working in the University building I realised that a much larger conference was taking place elsewhere in the building – my curiosity led me to explore – and I found a function, the organisation of which merited my professional admiration – it was the Wales PPA and the people responsible were Mrs Ivy Webster and Mrs Marjorie Dykins.

In 1973, following the untimely death of Miss Mary Taylor, Principal of Cartrefle, I was appointed her successor and welcomed the PPA's establishment of their Office for Wales on the College Campus, and encouraged links between the Movement and the training of teachers for infant children. An additional dimension was the fact that Mrs Marjorie Dykins' son and my daughter were in the same infants' class in Wrexham and seemed unusually friendly! The romance did not prove lasting.

By the time I became Head of the secondary school at Conwy I had had the privilege of speaking at some PPA functions and found that my early belief in their professionalism was very soundly based. In consequence, when we found ourselves able to develop a programme of work experience for our pupils we welcomed links with playgroups, and it was this, I presume, that led to my being invited to deliver an address on ‘Teenagers and Playgroups’ at the National Conference in Llandudno in 1983. Looking back at that excellent occasion and what I tried to say I am moved to astonishment, not merely at my attempt to pour a gallon into a pint pot, but at the freedom which I, as a Head, enjoyed then in respect of curriculum and timetables long before the days of National Curriculum and endless testing. I regret nothing of what I did then with that freedom nor of what I tried to do and believe that the link between teenagers and young children can, if well managed, enrich the development and experience of both.

There are other memories which I cannot place in order – a group of our pupils on an outdoor activities weekend at Rhyd-ddu found themselves the saviours of two young ladies whose car had broken down – and they turned out to be PPA leaders who knew the school well! – and a splendid evening of ‘THIS IS YOUR LIFE ...’ at the Guildhall in Wrexham.

I have had the honour of speaking at functions arranged by, and of working with, many distinguished bodies – Universities, the CNAA, the National Curriculum Council, the School Examinations and Assessment Council, the Curriculum Council for Wales, the Health Visitors’ Association, the Welsh Secondary Schools’ Association – but I have not found any with higher organisational and professional standards than PPA Wales, nor any with a warmer and more friendly personal touch. My every good wish for its future prosperity for the sake of our children.