NOTHING MORE IMPORTANT

Volume One

Teaching parenthood in schools: Five centuries of heartfelt advocates

Ros Kane

Also available:

NOTHING MORE IMPORTANT

Volume Two

How to prepare children and young people at school to be good parents

Copies of both volumes available from:
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Dedicated to my daughter Olive
and to the memory of Mike Howitt (1952 - 2019) who loved children

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'I sometimes wonder how much immense long-term suffering might have been prevented, had the parent(s) of a future tyrant received, as high school students, some crucial child development science education by way of mandatory curriculum. After all, dysfunctional and/or abusive parents, for example, may not have had the chance to be anything else, due to their lack of such education and their own dysfunctional/abusive rearing as children. If nothing else, such curriculum could offer students an idea/clue as to whether they're emotionally suited for the immense responsibility and strains of parenthood. Countless people will procreate, regardless of their questionable ability to raise their children in a psychologically functional/healthy manner. Being free nations, societies cannot prevent anyone from bearing children; societies can, however, educate all young people for the most important job ever, even those high schoolers who plan to remain childless.'

Reader of article about Putin's childhood, March 2022

Thanks to everyone, too numerous to name, who contributed information and feedback about both volumes of this book, and especially to Noël Janis-Norton for her meticulous comments and frequent encouragement which helped to keep me going.

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Too busy to read this book now? Here are some of the most important things about teaching parenthood. See Volume Two for a longer summary and detailed chapters about what and how to teach. Ideally:

- Make sure headteacher and senior staff are fully committed.
- Have more than one staff member with the right qualities to lead and co-ordinate this work. Include men.
- Make sure that leaders are given enough time and resources to organise the work.
- Make sure that leaders and parenthood teachers have adequate, good quality training, support and supervision.
- Try to make this a mandatory, regular subject for every student aged 3 – 18 every year: males, females, academic, non-academic, those with special needs. Many boys are just as interested as girls, and very good with young children.
- Make this subject a fun and lively topic for INSET days.
- Try to interest all departments in parenthood education, so that they can cover aspects of it as it relates to their subject.
- Make lessons informal: chairs in a circle; relaxed, friendly atmosphere. Retain your sense of humour.
- Use non-didactic, facilitative, interactive, experiential methods, enabling deep, not superficial, understanding.
- Find out about the students' backgrounds. This helps you to deal tactfully with the many sensitive topics. Ensure that there is prompt one-to-one emotional support (by you or other adults) if a student becomes troubled or upset.
- Over the years, teach about both child development ***and*** about the emotional needs of babies, children, teenagers and parents, and how these needs can be met.
- Make sure that all secondary students have ***direct experience*** with babies and young children so they get an idea of ***what childcare is really like:*** e.g. substantial placements in under-fives settings, with students well prepared, well supported, and able regularly to discuss and reflect on their experiences.

- Frequently invite visitors (if good, lively speakers) to talk: e.g. parents from all ethnicities with their babies; teenage parents; single fathers/single mothers; gay & lesbian parents; parents of children with a range of special needs; parents with special needs; foster & adoptive parents; grandparents & other extended family members; health visitors; midwives; children's nurses; childminders; children centre staff; charity staff ……..
- Avoid exams, tests or individual evaluation. Keep substantial written work for older, more academic or willing students.
- Try to be unshockable, non-defensive, non-judgemental. Disclose personal information if appropriate. Challenge students; express, don't impose, your opinions. Listen to and understand students' own experiences and views.
- Use: films; film clips; film-making; flour babies; lifelike baby dolls to take home for the weekend; photos; play materials; true & false statements; quizzes; debates; observations of families in the street; press cuttings; case studies; students' interviews with their parents/grandparents/friend etc; weekly observation in class for 2-to-3 terms of parent & baby; poetry; music; art; dance; literature; role-play; forum/playback theatre; plays by students/visiting troupes; presentations by students.
- Cover how babies and children are raised in other cultures and countries, and have been throughout history. Invite students to write/perform plays about this (e.g. in assemblies.)
- Arrange frequent visits, e.g maternity units, playgrounds, with preparation beforehand and discussion afterwards.
- Non-compulsory homework; lunchtime/after school clubs for older students: show/discuss relevant films e.g. *La Vie en Rose* (Edith Piaf's childhood); *Nowhere Boy* (John Lennon's.)
- Have a box for students' unanswered questions or worries. Ensure they are answered, promptly and appropriately. Invite students to have one-to-one private discussions with you.
- Make lessons fun, enjoyable, stimulating, lively, relevant to students' lives: i.e. ***memorable.*** Ask what they want to learn in addition to your ideas. Add variety and surprises. Laugh together.

Introduction

My grandmother was a suffragette and always said
this was the most important subject to teach at school.
Professor Woody Caan, Editor, Journal of Public Mental Health

You might be as surprised as I was to learn what a huge amount has already been said and written with enormous conviction, year after year, about preparing school students for parenthood. It's absolutely not a new idea. Many widely respected, high-ranking educationalists, academics, mental health professionals, as well as politicians in the UK and US, have passionately advocated this education for every young person in every school. Yet despite that, very little is now done. The subject is hardly on the agenda, with only cursory treatment in the new compulsory 'Relationships' and 'Relationships and Sex' lessons at all English schools. (Scotland and Northern Ireland seem to offer more.) So much time, effort, hope and expense by its campaigners have been wasted. As professor Whitfield wrote in 1980: 'Meanwhile, the social and educational repair bills mount as we continue to oscillate about prevention.' Forty-four years later, it's still the case (though the new Family Hubs in 75 local authorities in England now seek to help.)

This volume lists all I have discovered that has been written and said since Lady Grace Mildmay in the 16th century. What is so interesting is the range of political backgrounds of the protagonists. This is truly an all-party topic. Former Labour MPs Graham Allen and Frank Field put a huge amount of themselves into pressing for early intervention, including the advocacy of parenthood education in schools. Conservative Margaret Thatcher, when secretary of state for education and science, joined Sir Keith Joseph, secretary of state for social services in the early 1970s, to consult many bodies about preparation for parenthood, including lessons about it at school.

Thatcher consulted 17 and Joseph invited a further 15 to gather their knowledge and views: professional and community organisations concerned with social work, crime, marriage, contraception, mental health, children, single parents, medicine, obstetrics, psychotherapy, mainstream schools, special education and adult education.

Less has been written so far in the 21st century. The heydays of public thinking were the 1970s and 1980s. It remains to be seen whether the heartfelt advocacy from 2018 of early intervention by a royal, Kate Middleton, who suggested that teenagers be taught at school about parenting, and public statements by Prince Harry about family relationships and mental health, make any difference.

Advocates disagree about aspects of the teaching. Exams or not? Compulsory lessons, or a student's choice? Integrated with other subjects, or dedicated separate lessons? Starting at nursery school till 18 years, or just for older teenagers? Call it only *Education for Parenthood* - or call it anything, so long as it's taught! But all now appear to believe that boys need (and often enjoy) it as much as girls.

The enormous amount that has been spoken and written has resulted in little that has endured: a question of all words and sparse action. You will find, in what follows, detailed accounts of many programmes which no longer run. But you can use their ideas and experience. Chapter 35 considers why this type of education meets so much resistance, and chapter 36 the evidence that the work which *has* been done in schools produces good outcomes, at least in the short term.

In Volume Two of *Nothing More Important*, you will find a wealth of information and advice about how to teach parenthood well in schools, based on actual courses that are currently being provided for 3-to-18-year-olds, mainly in the UK and US, including several curricula and plentiful resources which will enable you to offer this subject enjoyably and successfully. Good luck!

Part One

This is not a new idea: What has been written and said in the UK

Chapter One
The 16th century to 1969

The 16th century

Grace Mildmay, née Sherrington (c.1552-1620), an English medical practitioner, writes: 'If all fathers and mothers were so provident and careful' as her own, 'so many parents should not be discomforted as they are in theyre age by the wickedness and misfortunes of theyre children which is too ordinary and lamentable to consider.' Although there's no evidence that she advocated parenting education in schools to prevent this wickedness, it wouldn't be surprising if she had.

1792

Mary Wollstonecraft, feminist writer, stresses in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* the importance of a 'well-trained, rational mind' for raising children. 'In public schools, women, to guard against errors of ignorance, should be taught elements of anatomy and medicine, not only to enable them to take proper care of their own health, but to make them rational nurses of their infants, parents and husbands; the bills of mortality are swelled by the blunders of self-willed old women who give nostrums of their own without knowing anything of the human frame. I only mean to insist that unless the understanding of women be enlarged, and her character rendered more firm, by being allowed to govern her own conduct, she will never have sufficient sense or command of temper to manage her children properly.'

1859

Other early references to parenting education at school are by philosopher Herbert Spencer. In his essay, *What Knowledge Is Of Most Worth?,* he lists priorities for schooling, based on a hierarchy of needs:

1 Those that minister directly to self-preservation;

2 Those that secure for one the necessities of life;

3 *Those that help in the rearing and disciplining of offspring* (my emphasis);

4 Those involved in maintaining one's political and social relations;

5 Those that fill up the leisure part of life and gratify tastes and feelings.

1861

Spencer's book *On Education* is published. He has a great deal to say in the strongest terms about our subject. 'If by some strange chance not a vestige of us descended to the remote future save a pile of our school books or some college examination papers, we may imagine how puzzled an antiquary of the period would be on finding in them no sign that the learners would ever be parents. "This must have been the curricula for their celibates in monastic orders," we may fancy him concluding, "I perceive here an elaborate preparation for many things, especially for reading the books of extinct nations but I find no reference whatever to the bringing up of children. They could not have been so absurd as to omit all training for this gravest of responsibilities. Evidently then, this was the school course of one of their monastic orders."

'Seriously, is it not an astonishing fact, that though on the treatment of offspring depend their lives or deaths and their moral welfare or ruin, yet not one word of instruction on the treatment of offspring is ever given to those who will by and by be parents. When a mother is mourning over a first born, when she is prostrate under the pangs of combined grief and remorse, it is but a small consolation that she can read Dante in the original.

'Is it not monstrous that the fate of a new generation should be left to the chance of unreasoning custom, impulse, fancy – joined with the suggestions of ignorant nurses and the prejudiced counsel of grandmothers? If a merchant commenced a business without any knowledge of arithmetic and book-keeping, we should exclaim at his folly and look for disastrous consequences. But that parents should begin the difficult task of rearing children, without ever having given

a thought to the principles – physical, moral or intellectual – which ought to guide them, excites neither surprise at the actors or pity for their victims.

'Consider the young mother. But a few years ago, she was at school where her memory was crammed with words, and names, and dates, and her reflective faculties scarcely in the slightest degree exercised – where not one idea was given her respecting the opening mind of childhood and where her discipline did not in the least fit her for thinking out methods of her own. The intervening years have been passed in practising music, in fancy-work, in novel reading and in party going: no thought having yet been given to the grave responsibilities of maternity. And now see her with an unfolding human character committed to her charge – see her profoundly ignorant of the phenomena with which she has to deal, undertaking to do that which can be done but imperfectly even with the aid of the profoundest knowledge. She knows nothing about the nature of the emotions, their functions, or where use ends and abuse begins.

'Deeds which she thinks it desirable to encourage, she gets performed by threats and bribes or by exciting a desire for applause, considering little what the inward motive may be, so long as the outward conduct conforms; and thus cultivating hypocrisy, and fear and selfishness in place of good feelings. While insisting on truthfulness, she constantly sets an example of untruth by threatening penalties which she does not inflict. While inculcating self-control, she hourly visits on her little ones, angry scoldings for acts undeserving of them.'

In 1916, the American Thomas C. Blaisdell will write: 'Spencer so clearly showed the need for training for parenthood that one would have expected a decade to see such education firmly established. Nearly six decades have seen almost nothing done.'

1868

The Taunton Report argues for education for girls at secondary school about their future domestic and mothering roles.

1873

Philanthropists such as Octavia Hill argue that small family environments are better than regimented institutions, as they can equip girls to become good mothers (as well as good domestic servants.) Jane Senior, Britain's first female civil servant, is appointed to survey conditions of girls in residential poor law schools. She recommends cottage homes in the country with a family structure for up to 30 girls, with older girls looking after the infants for a year or two, like older sisters, so they can develop 'a sense of mothering.'

1880s

The Ladies' National Association for the Diffusion of Sanitary Knowledge, founded in 1857, laments, at the seventh International Congress of Hygiene and Demography: 'Gravely impressed with the necessity of training girls to become good housewives and ambitious to make even a limited number experts in domestic economy', the Society opened a College for technical training in hygiene and household science. 'Alas! candidates would not be persuaded to offer themselves. The time was not ripe. The idea that a girl, because she was a girl and would grow into a woman, needed no special training for womanhood and motherhood was still rampant. There is still too much *laissez-faire* in this matter. Too much trust that girls will gain experience in time, and get knowledge in some mysterious, undefinable fashion. With pain, the Committee have had to realise they do gain knowledge, but too often, at the expense of their first-born, their own crippled health and the extinction of domestic peace.'

1923

The National Birth-Rate Commission publishes its 375-page *Youth and the Race: The Development and Education of Young Citizens for Worthy Parenthood*. Mostly about lessons on sex, it advocates parenthood education too. In infant schools, 'simple lessons on Animal Life enable the teacher to inculcate all unconsciously to the child ideas of parenthood, e.g. the patient sitting of the mother bird, the father's attention to and care for the mother bird.' In upper schools, 'this training in ideas of Parenthood should be continued wherever the opportunity arises in the course of reading or other lessons. In the last year of Elementary School, a course of Personal Hygiene lessons should include special instruction on adolescent changes and parenthood. On the suggestion of the Board of Education, the girls in elementary school are taught about the care of the baby and even a little about the responsibilities of parenthood. Mothercraft is being taught widely in girls' schools today' – unlike fatherhood for boys, they point out. Moreover, 'the Bishop of Peterborough would not exclude the presentation of the Christian ideal of Marriage and Parenthood.' The report states that teaching about human parenthood 'should be as wide and objective as possible to awaken an intellectual interest rather than to stimulate an emotional response. Preparation for parenthood is an intricate, subtle and deeply-delving task lying before the educator. It is concerned with the depths of life rather than the superficialities,' and can result in high moral standards and 'worthy parenthood.'

1925

In its circular *The Teaching of Infant Care and Management to Schoolgirls*, the Board of Education avers, 'If it be granted that the mother does not possess an instinctive knowledge of infant management and may make disastrous blunders if she tries to bring up her baby by the light of nature, it is evident that at some point of her life she must learn the art and practice of motherhood. What is the best time for such teaching? The elements of this knowledge should be acquired while

the girl is still at school. This is the only time we can make sure that she should have some teaching in mothercraft. Once she has left school, she may perhaps attend classes, but she is far more likely to have no encouragement or even opportunity to learn about infant care until after she has a baby of her own.' It's not clear exactly what is meant by 'management.' Explicit mention in official documents of the *emotional* well-being and mental health of babies, children and parents has to wait a few more decades.

1926

This year sees the publication of Florence Horspool's book *Mothercraft for School Girls*. Horspool is inspector of midwives.

1929

The Board of Education and National Association for the Prevention of Infant Mortality devise a 'short course of practical and theoretical instruction in mothercraft for those who were teaching or were about to teach this subject to older girls in public elementary schools.'

1930s (year unknown)

Florence Horspool starts mothercraft instruction at most Swansea elementary girls' schools. Similar work occurs in Islington, London.

1934

The Board of Education becomes more emphatic. Its *Handbook of Suggestions on Health Education* states: 'The training of all schoolgirls from the age of 12-to-14 [14 is the school leaving age] in subjects of a practical nature which will give them some real understanding of the elements of infant and child management would have effects which can scarcely be exaggerated.' However, 'very little practical attention was being paid to this advice,' reports Dr L G Housden OBE whom we shall meet later.

1936

The Association for Education in Citizenship publishes *Education for Citizenship in Secondary Schools* and *Qualities that Go to Make a Good Father*. The Association is a significant lobby for the school curriculum, advocating this education for 'the best kind of life.' Its 'domestic subjects' curriculum includes the care of young children, mostly concerned with the physical aspects. 'Questions of housing and the care of little children appear to be of especial interest to schoolgirls.' It admits this is a complex subject and that bias should be avoided as much as possible. Use 'external activities,' it advises.

1937

The Board of Education's urging in 1934 falls largely on deaf ears. Research by the National Association of Maternity and Child Welfare Centres (NAMCW, founded 1902), shows how little is being done in schools.

1938

There is a growing need for a specialised body in this field. The Mothercraft-Teaching Sub-Committee of the NAMCW Centres holds its first meeting to examine the whole question of mothercraft teaching in schools and elsewhere 'to ensure that no girl should attain motherhood without previous instruction in mothercraft. As it has always been apparent that the education of the parents would be confined to those least in need of it, it has been necessary to ensure that the teaching should begin during the years of compulsory education. The number of schools with mothercraft on their curriculum has increased year by year. Such teaching is now generally accepted as necessary in the schools. Childrearing is a matter for both parents and fathercraft is equal in importance to mothercraft. When a series of lectures drawn up by the committee has been given to youths and young men, the interest shown is most encouraging.' The year also sees the publication of *Mothercraft for Schoolgirls,* by Margaret Jessie Coles.

1939

Replies to a letter from the NAMCW to 138 directors of education show 'plainly with one or two exceptions [Wakefield and Manchester] that there was neither any attempt to teach the subject adequately nor any realisation of its importance to the well-being of the nation.' The Association then mounts a 'vigorous propaganda campaign' which gets the Board of Education and the Ministry of Health going.

1939

The book *Health Education* by the Board of Education repeats its earlier pleas at greater length and with high claims, informing us that 'the suggestion that instruction in Infant Management and Mothercraft should be given to elder girls in Public Elementary Schools was put forward as long ago as 1910.' Even then, there were many wise insights: 'Its successful introduction must be dependent on its careful handling by a teacher who should be not only experienced but interested.' By 1939, the new Infant Welfare Centres have, by training mothers, reduced the rate of infant mortality. 'Thus, the teaching of Mothercraft to schoolgirls is not merely an additional "subject" which must be fitted into a curriculum already full, but it is the beginning of that education in care and management of little children which has achieved so much in the national campaign for the prevention of infant and maternal mortality.

'The object of educating children is to equip them for the duties and responsibilities of life, and if a girl leaves school ignorant of one of the most important duties which may subsequently devolve upon her, our system of education can hardly be said to have fulfilled its aim. It may be thought that girls of the ages of 12 and 14 years are too young to benefit by this teaching and that it could be given more appropriately at a later age. Unfortunately, the opportunity for instruction later in life – before marriage, immediately after marriage, or when the mother is expecting a baby – may not arise. It is difficult to collect girls together when they have left school in the way in

which we can find them in the classrooms in the Elementary and Secondary Schools. The great majority of the mothers in this country pass through the Elementary Schools, and advantage should be taken during school life to teach them a subject which is a vital one for both the individual and the State.'

The messages from 1934 are repeated. 'The training of all schoolgirls from the age of 12-to-14 in subjects of a practical nature which will help them in later life to make their own homes comfortable and healthy, and give them some real understanding of the elements of infant and child management, would have effects which can scarcely be exaggerated.' Mothers might ignore the Infant Welfare Centre and 'shut the door against the Health Visitor. It is mainly in the school or class for older girls, whether in the Senior Girls' School or in the Girls' Secondary School, that the foundation for this instruction can, and should be made.

'This is the only time we can make sure that girls all have some teaching in mothercraft. Once she has left school, she may perhaps attend classes but she is far more likely to have no encouragement or even opportunity to learn about infant care until after she has a baby. At school, the subject can be introduced in a perfectly natural way without arousing self-consciousness or embarrassment. Many girls have to "mother" younger brothers and sisters and are well accustomed to handling babies, so that the practice of mothercraft is a matter of everyday familiarity and needs only to be directed into the right channels. Although the instruction is necessarily limited, the subject is one of living practical interest. The girls are therefore likely to remember enough of what they learn to render them, when they marry, anxious to learn more and ready to welcome assistance from the Maternity and Child Welfare staff of the Local Authority.'

The book goes into specifics of the teaching. 'It is not always easy to obtain just the right teacher – one who has knowledge, enthusiasm

and the necessary experience. Many young teachers of Housecraft do, however, make a brave attempt to do justice to this subject, which figures in their syllabuses under various names such as Mothercraft, Infant Welfare, or Baby Care. Almost every Housecraft Course, in fact, includes one or two lessons on the Care of the Baby, and, where suitable equipment is available, may include as many as six lessons. Attempts are made to acquaint the girls with the sources from which help may be obtained.

'The teaching of the subject of Infant Feeding is rightly receiving less attention today because teachers fear that such instruction is apt to have the undesirable effect of laying stress upon some alternative to natural feeding.

'Since it is the "toddler" rather than the very young baby that is more likely to fall to the care of an older sister, schools are well-advised in devoting lessons to the feeding and clothing, the amusements and occupations and the general welfare of the young child just out of the stage of an infant in arms.

'The teaching should be a normal development of the school programme of Health Education. Lessons should include simple teaching in the general management of infants and little children and the ways in which they should be bathed, clothed and fed.' Personal hygiene, training in 'good habits,' the benefits of warmth, fresh air, sunshine and cleanliness are to be added. 'The teaching should be made as practical as possible. Simple theory should be taught in everyday language, avoiding technical terms which would not be understood, and the girls should make careful notes. But as much as possible of the instruction should be given by means of demonstration followed by practice in which the girls take part. No expensive apparatus or equipment is required.' For instance, girls can make baby clothes and cradles. It should be emphasised that you don't have to spend much money to get everything a baby needs.

'A doll should be used for demonstration purposes. It is now possible to obtain dolls modelled on the size and weight of the real baby.' Girls can practise bathing, dressing and undressing the doll. 'It is true that the doll is a passive instrument and that the attention of the "mother" is not diverted by the fear of injuring her fidgeting or crying charge, but this has its advantages when practising manipulations which are not yet thoroughly familiar.'

Use the outside world, the local community. 'The classroom teaching may with advantage be supplemented by demonstration at a Day Nursery or Infant Welfare Centre where the handling of a living baby can be shown and perhaps practised.' But not many nurseries or centres exist, so 'only a relatively small number of girls can participate.' Take advantage of events such as the Mothercraft propaganda during a local Health Week; or go to see a travelling Infant Welfare Exhibition. 'It is most desirable that the teacher of Mothercraft should be in touch with local schemes. The Medical Officer of Health and health visitor are able and ready to advise on how school instruction can be most suitably linked up with infant welfare work at Centres etc.'

Who should teach? 'The most suitable person to take charge is a teacher on the regular staff, provided she is willing and competent to do so. If the headmistress is able to take the class herself, it is an advantage; otherwise, it should be entrusted to a senior member of the staff, preferably a married woman with children of her own. If none of the teachers has the necessary knowledge and experience, the co-operation of the school nurse, or a health visitor, or a district nurse may be sought, someone who has intimate knowledge of the homes from which the girls come, as well as experience of infant care; but the class teacher should always associate herself with the lesson, and always go on outside visits.' And girls of 16-to-18 could have these lessons linked to other subjects such as science or civics, 'according to the point of view of the mistress in charge.'

1940 and 1941

School inspectors find that bringing in visiting specialists to teach mothercraft is causing disruption, with the lessons divorced from the rest of the curriculum. 'There was also difficulty in arranging for the follow-up, without which everything taught in class was so easily forgotten.' The word mothercraft is changed to parentcraft as people realise the importance of co-operation between parents. The subject gets into the national press. People such as the medical doctor and Conservative MP, Sir Francis Fremantle, bring it up in the House of Commons. Ernest Brown, Minister of Health, 'recognises this to be a matter of national importance and not merely a question of health,' though the only paper which reports that is the Western Daily Press.

1945

First course at Royal College of Nursing in teaching of parentcraft.

1946

The Ministry of Education (formerly the Board) issues a circular *Further Education – Homecraft* to encourage local authorities to provide parentcraft courses in further and adult education schemes. York education committee takes over a hostel to provide daytime classes for women and girls in 'Housecraft and Allied Activities.'

1946

An essay competition is run by NAMCW and the National Baby Welfare Council. Boys and girls aged 14-to-18 are invited to write about *The Home-Life I Want for my Children;* 146 entries (all from girls) are received. In the same year, the Association publishes *Education for Parenthood* by Zoe Benjamin. The war has recently ended; the new society is on people's minds. 'A healthy society depends on good family life,' so education for parenthood 'must be an inherent part of any plans for reconstruction.' As Bishop Burgmann says, 'We cannot make a good society out of damaged children.' The next few years see a lot of advocacy of this education in schools.

1948
An Adviser in Parentcraft is appointed to the Ministry of Health, the first such appointment of its kind in the world.

1948
Every local education authority is required to publish a *Development Scheme for Further Education*. Hampshire LEA states that it 'attaches the greatest importance to training in parentcraft.' We don't know how many other LEAs, if any, have the same view at this time.

1949
Citizens Growing Up, a thoughtful and rather impassioned Ministry of Education publication, recommends that 'the teaching of parentcraft needs to be developed in many more schools than at present. There is, it is true, some difference of opinion as to the best stage at which it should be started. There are many who think that 13 or 14 is too young, since much of what is learnt at that age is forgotten by the time the girl marries, and that this training can best be given in later years. But others hold that girls at this stage are mostly interested in small children, while at the age of 16, or thereabouts, this interest tends to shift to boys and young men. There is urgent need for much more experiment. But although it may be true that practical details of child care, if learnt too young, may be forgotten, an understanding of the right attitude to children should remain. Indeed, from the age of 14 onwards, all girls should understand enough about the rudiments of child development to give them a basis for the best ways of bringing up children. *It is strongly urged that opportunities for homecraft and parentcraft should be made for girls of every age in all types of schools.'* (Original emphasis.)

1951
The Scottish Education Department publishes *Homecraft in Secondary Schools* with no explicit mention of parenting but proposing a three-year course to include money, hygiene, food, punctuality, clothing,

laundry, timetables, home management and 'housewifery.' It does allude to the 'social environment of a baby' and also advises discussion about a plan for 'the schoolgirl's ideal bedroom.'

1951
Luxembourg sets up its Department for Family and Population, attached to the Ministry of Education. The topics of marriage, parenthood and homemaking are part of the school curriculum.

1951
The Teaching of Parentcraft by Dr L G Housden OBE is published. 'Dr Housden puts forward a strong case for starting the teaching of parentcraft in adolescence - and for adding more detailed instruction in early adult life. He emphasises that the purpose of the teaching of parentcraft is to enable parents "to carry out their family responsibilities efficiently, easily and happily, but not to encourage them to transfer these responsibilities to others" and it seems to the reviewer [professor Jack Tizard] that the earlier parentcraft is taught, the more likely is this purpose to be attained.' It should be a 'recognised part of normal education, what we have always wanted.'

Housden's wide-ranging book includes the history of parenthood teaching in Britain, the need for it, the scope of it, where it can be taught, young people's views about it, mothers' views about mothercraft, and what the midwives and health visitors see.

Housden, a medical doctor, is emphatic that 'it is too late to wait until the children are born. Parents are not always willing to be educated, especially if the need for such education is not realised. When invited to come to parentcraft classes, only those likely to be the best parents will attend. It is, therefore, necessary to start during the years of compulsory education. The next generation of the community are the children of today. If we teach them to be good parents, we shall have done much to raise the tone of the whole nation.' Housden covers

the physical, moral and social scope of parentcraft; techniques which teachers can use; syllabuses for the teaching, and, most charmingly, notes for his six talks to youth clubs on *How to be Happy Though Married*: this doctor has a sense of humour. He also suggests a course for boys on citizenship and homemaking.

1952

Alastair Heron, a Scottish Quaker, in an article *Adolescents and Preparation for Parenthood,* in the British Journal of Educational Psychology, reports from his survey of 1,179 young people aged 12-to-18 in Devon and Lancashire that 'many' adolescent boys and girls would welcome 'family life' education. 'A large number of young people seem to approach their parental role either lacking in confidence or completely unaware of its implications. Parental behaviour is in many cases unlikely to further the mental health of either the parents or the child. There is, as a result, abundant reference in the educational and psychological literature of the last 25 years to the need for some form of widespread education for parenthood. In the USA a vast movement exists to this end, but there is nothing comparable in the UK. Sex education should be replaced by a wider-based education for family life.' Yet this is unlikely because of 'the irrational resistance of many adults to the subject' and 'the dearth of suitable people to present the material.'

1955

International Union for Child Welfare convenes a world congress in Yugoslavia, to discuss child welfare and the family. As a result:

1955

UNESCO Institute for Education holds a conference in Hamburg on parent education, leading to Dr H Stern's masterly report of 1960.

1956

The pamphlet *Health Education,* by the Ministry of Education, warns against 'prematurely elaborate teaching' on family life, but still recommends preparing young people at school for parenthood.

1956

A conference is held in Paris to consider the problems of 'raising the standards of parental care throughout the world.'

1959

More from the Scottish Education Department, this time *The Teaching of Homecraft in Secondary Schools*, based on a report by the secretary of state for education. Unlike the 1951 pamphlet, it specifies that 'the importance of happy human relationships in making a home' should be taught. At junior secondary school, as many as eight or nine periods a week are suggested (but for girls only.) At senior secondary school, every girl ideally should learn homecraft for three years, though it is recognised that this is not always possible, depending on the demands of other subjects. Mothercraft is mentioned but only 'for girls interested in nursing as a career.' Right at the end of the school years, a short intensive course could be offered - which can include boys. The authors recognise a salient point: the absence of enough domestic science teachers. 'It is a matter of concern that uncertificated teachers are, and may have to continue to be, fairly extensively employed in a subject so closely linked with the future welfare of homes and families.' For the teaching of the 'four main branches of homecraft: cookery, housewifery, laundry and needlework', the three problems are 'unimaginative teaching, staffing difficulties and poor accommodation.'

1959

In 1947 the school leaving age had been raised from 14 to 15. The Crowther Report, *15 – 18,* states the case for a curriculum to prepare 'less able' girls for marriage and motherhood. And a girl's interest in

dress, personal appearance and in problems of human relations should be given 'a central place in her education.'

1960

It's World Mental Health Year. Dr Hans Heinrich Stern writes *Parent Education: An International Study*. This 163-page *tour de force* describes in great detail the history of developments in this field in Austria, Canada, France, Germany, India, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Switzerland, the UK, the US and Yugoslavia. It has little to report about school-based parenthood education in most countries, though there are odd bits about sex education or homecraft for girls. Stern is wary. 'Parent education is perhaps best conceived as a continuous effort reaching into adult life; parental care need not be anticipated in school in too direct a manner. The teaching may be forgotten by the time the pupils become parents.' Mostly the report deals with education and support for existing parents. There are interesting reflections on cultural differences in attitudes to offering this topic at school.

The US is a different kettle of fish. Stern quotes the vigorous parent movement there, estimating that 60 percent of schools provide courses on family life from an early age, including psychological as well as practical aspects. But in the UK, 'parent education has been approached cautiously. There is no national organisation primarily responsible for it. There are no Schools for Parents [as in France], no Schools for Mothers. The term "parent education" is neither widely used nor widely known. It has not yet been the subject of serious study. Practical measures are not altogether absent; but they have remained half-hearted, sporadic and mostly ineffectual. British experience illustrates an unfocalised, diffuse, informal approach.'

He gives some detailed UK history. 'The work of welfare centres and health visitors frequently led observers to the conclusion that educating parents shortly before their child was born or shortly after,

was too late and not effective enough. Therefore, another reform proposed was the preparation for parenthood in adolescence, especially the introduction of Mothercraft or Parentcraft courses in the schools. The first experiments in this field date back to the 1900's. Later, the Board of Education in circulars and its *Handbook of Suggestions for Health Education*, and also the Ministry of Health, encouraged Mothercraft and Parentcraft teaching. Despite vigorous propaganda by the National Association of Maternity and Child Welfare Centres, courses were slow to develop. However, during the Second World War, public interest in the subject spread. After the war, in 1946, the Ministry of Education, in a circular (117) on *Further Education - Homecraft*, encouraged local authorities to institute courses,' and, as we have seen, in 1948 an Adviser in Parentcraft was appointed to the Ministry of Health.

'The teaching of home management (housecraft, domestic science) only in its practical and artistic aspects is widespread and holds a secure place in the education of girls. These courses involve more than instruction in cookery; they include the care of the home generally. Some schools have demonstration flats, so that girls can learn decorating and furnishing rooms and the daily routine of a household, as well as how to take care of a baby. Sex education is given in some secondary schools as an extension of the biology syllabus. A very small number of schools have carried out experiments in general preparation for marriage, e.g. a series of three sessions as part of the "careers talks" to pupils in their last year at school, arranged by the National Marriage Guidance Council at the invitation of individual headteachers. The history of the attempts to introduce more specific Parentcraft teaching into schools and colleges over the past three-to-four decades was reviewed by Housden (1951.)

'On the whole, however, the approach to sex education in schools has remained cautious. Schools which provide special talks on questions of sex and reproduction normally seek the approval of parents for

their children to attend. Many schools, however, make little or no provision. That adolescent pupils would welcome some form of education for family life has been confirmed in Heron's survey of the opinions of 1,179 boys and girls between the ages of 12 and 18 (1952.) But the author of this study acknowledges the difficulties in finding suitable teachers capable of giving formal instruction in this subject, quite apart from what he describes as "irrational resistance of many adults to the subject."

'On the whole, then, preparation for family life in any organized form through schools has remained tentative beyond the mere practical aspects of housecraft. This caution need not be interpreted as merely due to inability or narrow-mindedness on the part of teachers. The restraint is likely to result from a certain diffidence in attempting to make a school subject of something that may not be amenable to a systematic form of teaching under school conditions. There is a strong reluctance to treat sex as something separate from other aspects of "learning to live".' This important report, which you can read online, has never been updated and there has been no other.

1963

The inspirational Scottish secondary headteacher R F Mackenzie (1910-1987) writes the second of his eight books, *A Question of Living*. 'It would be a great advantage if a nursery school were built next to the school. It would help girls [sic] to learn how to look after and interest young children. Many schools have housewifery flats, a good thing but the homecraft department must now go further. We teach girls to cook but we leave to chance their attitude to children. That is one reason that so often children are well-fed and dissatisfied. Parents are irritable. Bringing up young children is too important to be left to chance. This work in the nursery school will be allocated to a group of senior girls as a full-time job for a month.' Having met Bob Mackenzie, I suspect he would, these days, have included boys.

1963

The Newsom Report about education for 13–to-16-year-olds of average or below-average ability, *Half Our Future,* realises that 'many girls are ready to respond to work relating to the wider aspects of homemaking and family life and the care and upbringing of children.' This education should be 'wide and practical. There is everything to be said for inviting in a few children for the day, perhaps the pupils' own brothers and sisters, perhaps children from a nearby infant school to feed and entertain them, play with them and read to them. A study of young children might include not only their physical nurture but their behaviour and emotional needs.' Married teachers can make a valuable contribution, and classes should be mixed.

1964

The International Federation for Parent Education is set up in Paris by 25 countries (not the UK, which is still not a member.) It now (2024) includes 60 'civil society' organisations with links to UNICEF and UNESCO, and believes that education for parenting is an essential part of lifelong learning which should be included in local, state and national systems of continuing education in every nation. It organises international conferences and knowledge exchanges.

1965

The interesting feminist writer and mother Leonora Pitcairn, zealous education officer for the NAMCW, produces the concise *Suggestions for Parentcraft Education in Schools and Colleges*. She begins: 'Indirectly, schools and colleges can be said to be giving parentcraft education continuously by the fact that good general education will help to produce responsible people, but there is also need for particular guidance.' We will return to this important point in Volume Two when we discuss issues specific to parenthood which are rarely dealt with at length in any curriculum, including the recent Relationships and Sex guidance for English schools.

Pitcairn has a belt-and-braces approach: 'Parentcraft education should be a theme running throughout all general education, but there is a need for particular instruction also.' The existing subjects that she cites where work can be done ('almost every lesson will tie up with the Child Care course') are craftwork, needlework, domestic science, science, arithmetic, history, geography and English. How to get there? 'First and foremost, obtain the interest and help of all members of staff.' Much of the pamphlet refers to the practicalities of childrearing, though she recommends a book by psychoanalyst John Bowlby, and suggests discussion topics such as 'Appreciating children as individuals' and 'How can we *enjoy* children and not be burdened when caring for them?' Despite her feminism, she refers to girls as the targeted students, but appeals in the introduction for teachers to write in about their experiences of teaching boys.

1966

Winifred Hargreaves's book, *Education for Family Living,* says home economics is largely practical, not specifically about parenthood. But 'we must also teach the student how to cope with frustration, monotony and even boredom which the repetitive details of running a home can, at times, produce.' CSEs have just been introduced. 'Even the best syllabus, the best schemes of work are well-nigh valueless in the hands of a poor teacher. Unless relations between teacher and taught are right, there will be little real learning. There is a back history of authoritarianism to live down.' Teachers succeed 'by making students feel better than they are, by laughing with them. People do not learn less if they laugh while they are learning.' Be more than your humdrum selves, give out emotionally. Use charm, be on top form. 'A good teacher is always a bit of an actor.'

1966

Hannah Gavron reports in her book *The Captive Wife* that 63 percent of her sample of working-class mothers of young children and 81 percent of middle-class mothers had no experience of any kind with

babies when they had their first child. 'I felt such a failure as a mother,' said one, 'not knowing whether the baby was warm enough, or fed enough, or why it was crying.'

1968

The London borough of Croydon produces a curriculum for students aged 14-plus, *Your Life in Your Hands*. Topics cover families, including the unwanted child. It is also suggested to invite parents from abroad to come in and talk about parenthood in their country.

1969

In his article, *Education for Motherhood*, for *Trends in Education* journal, Michael Stanton, who lectures in developmental psychology, wants to close the gap between social classes. 'We must recognise that, unless there is some enrichment in "disadvantaged" homes, the education gap cannot be minimised to any great extent. It would seem desirable to educate for positive approaches to child-rearing while mothers-to-be are still at school. Unless there is some modification of outlook and attitude before the first child arrives, the young mother is more than likely to adopt child-rearing procedures familiar to her.' He's cautious, though. 'Preparation for parenthood at school has obvious limitations. Several years may elapse before girls marry and have children and much that is learned will have diminished value. At school level it is likely that little more will be achieved than establishing attitudes, in being aware that child-rearing practices reviewed have some merit, and so laying the basis for being more receptive to later guidance.'

1969

Tunisia hosts a five-day conference of the International Planned Parenthood Federation (founded in 1952, 64 national associations worldwide) 'in the interests of family welfare, community well-being and international goodwill.' A working group considers ways to 'develop policy and programmes in the area of family life education.'

There's a need to limit families; also, an urgent need to educate young people 'in the nature of human reproduction and in the ways in which people can develop responsible and satisfying relationships with one another' and make good choices: a complex but neglected field. 'Sex education is based on the psychological development of the child, about which most doctors, paediatricians and psychiatrists agree.'

Its 1970 report, *Responsible Parenthood and Sex Education,* states the 'need to understand the implications of planning family size, with the aim of enhancing the quality of life.' Young people deserve more than just facts; teachers should have a suitable personality and an ability to develop new programmes, materials and methods. There's a real problem of unqualified or badly selected teachers, with a need for more careful selection criteria. Teaching should include physical, psychological and social aspects; choice of, and relationship with, a partner; family size and the spacing of children, to be taught not only in schools but at youth venues and to parents.

The huge differences of views and practices between countries make fascinating reading, from Sweden's reminder that children are not asexual to the Korean tradition whereby at least one son has to be born to a couple because it is his job to ensure his parents are happy after their deaths. (Korean boys and girls are segregated after the age of six.) Catholic Colombia has no opposition to sex and family life education because the Pope supports it 'in a religious context'; nearly 100 percent of students and parents want it, and an unbelievable 98 percent of teachers say they want to teach it and are very well trained. Left-wing groups advocate it.

India supports family planning, rather than sex, education. The United Arab Republic has to accept the need for this education due to its large population: there's no opposition. Tunisia sees it as a delicate topic surrounded by ignorance, not taught in schools; progressives think it should be provided from the age of six, 'essential for their

future role,' adding that 'children can influence their parents. And some countries object: family life education could lead to promiscuity, venereal disease, illegitimacy. Sex education is blamed for social problems. Extreme right-wingers and religious zealots are the most vociferous. Some on the left are also opposed, seeing family life education as an attempt to control by the ruling class.

The child goes by what he sees and feels, not by what he is told.
New Education Fellowship 1965

Chapter Two
The 1970s

DES: Dept for Education & Science DHSS: Dept of Health & Social Security
DfEE: Dept for Education & Employment
ILEA: Inner London Education Authority NCB: National Children's Bureau
NAMCW: National Association for Maternal & Child Welfare

1970s

The NAMCW is vigorously committed to our cause. Its education department could not wish to be more helpful to 'teachers, tutors, health educators, groups and individuals' by offering an advisory service, publications, syllabuses, teaching aids and exams. Its aims:

- To contribute towards the education of young people for family life, parenthood, citizenship and personal relationships in these difficult times;
- To increase awareness of the emotional, intellectual, social, spiritual and physical needs of the child, and all individuals;
- To implement and clarify knowledge already absorbed at home, at school and in the community;
- To help the rising generation to think seriously about the many facets of life with which they will have to deal in the future.

'A great deal of self-knowledge and understanding can be achieved through the study of child care and human development. In discussing standards of behaviour and culture as they concern young children, students may consciously or unconsciously apply those to themselves. In discussing any need for disciplining children, the benefit of self-discipline may be considered. There may arise some insight into other people's points of view – parents, relatives, the elderly, teachers, those in authority generally. Boy/girl relationships may be seen in a fresh light. Preparation for family and community life, as well as parenthood, should begin.'

The NAMCW offers courses in childcare and human development for use in schools and other youth venues. There's an exam, 'but only those parts of the courses which lend themselves to it are included.' Awareness of the needs of children and how to assess and meet them; clarifying ideas absorbed at home; self-discipline; how to look after other people's children well; how to cope in an emergency: these are just some of the topics. 'Teachers have said that in the process of guiding their classes, they discover much about their own personalities, problems, beliefs and behaviour. This new acquaintance with themselves increases their ability to help young people.' A minimum of 50 hours over one year is recommended for the basic course, with more advanced courses available. In 1970 their exams are taken by 3,483 candidates; by 1975, 6,200. 'MANY more follow courses suggested by NAMCW, and use their publications, without taking an exam.' In 2001 the NAMCW will merge with CACHE (Council for Awards in Care, Health and Education.)

1970

Headmaster P J North brings in a social science course at Crown Woods school, Eltham: one year for non-academic sixth formers to do voluntary service. In 1973 it'll also cover family and parenthood.

1970

Sir Alec Clegg, distinguished educator, and Barbara Megson recommend in their book *Children in Distress* that girls in their last year at school should become helpers in deprived areas, 'one or two days a week at the nursery and infant schools. Here they will see how a poor home works against the child, and how young children can be trained and helped. (This is being done to the mutual benefit of school and the girl.)' They also celebrate T.O.R.C.H (Teenagers Organisation for Residential Children's Holidays) in the West Riding of Yorkshire, whereby 25 teenage girls and young adults are selected to help run a scheme for deprived eight-to-ten-year-olds, learning a lot about children and their care in the process.

1970

A conference*, A Hundred Years After,* hears speaker Mrs Campbell proposing to help staff the increasing number of nursery schools by recruiting school leavers (better than volunteers) as nursery assistants. Prepare them at school. 'I have known many girls whose academic achievement was not '0' level, but sensible, understanding, affectionate girls who, given the right training, could enrich the lives of many children, besides preparing themselves to become wise parents. A training in pre-school education is a training for motherhood. We should be giving valuable education to future mothers as well as to generations of small children.'

1970

Dr William Wall, psychologist, dean of the Institute of Education in London, tells the annual conference of the Pre-School Playgroups Association, 'It isn't enough to wait until a mother has her first baby: We ought to be giving the experience of playgroups, particularly, and of nursery schools and nurseries to girls and boys in their teens.'

1970s

Various courses are created by LEAs, such as *Childcare and the Family*: the effects of promiscuity; marriage, now and in primitive societies; psychological needs of parents; tone of voice when talking to a baby; guilt; frustrations; amusing a sick child; preparing to visit the dentist; strangers; the danger of leaving a baby outside a shop; who can help?; organisations about special needs.

1970s

Camberley Childcare and Development Project realises that 'the pupils of today are within a few years of becoming parents themselves,' so schools in Frimley and the Mytchett area, Surrey, get together to develop courses, along with outside agencies. They are inclusive: pupils finding the CSE written work too hard can take the Basic NAMCW course instead: an oral exam and a folder of work.

1971
Gloucestershire LEA produces guidelines on health education, including education for parenthood.

1971
Lancashire is amongst the first of all LEAs to appoint a county adviser with responsibility for personal relationships education.

1971
The Schools Council publishes *Home Economics Teaching* containing a substantial number of reflections from many schools about the teaching of parenthood. You can read about their experiences and what they advocate in Volume Two of *Nothing More Important*. Early school leavers 'want to be able to see the work's relevance to their future as they visualise it. Adolescents are increasingly aware of their future, and appreciate work relevant to childcare.' Some already are in the know. 'Some girls have a lot of responsibility at home. In childcare and development courses, their experience is drawn upon and used in discussion wherever possible. Girls are asked to consult and discuss with parents, friends, grandparents etc on various subjects to enlarge experience and knowledge.'

1971
Community Service Volunteers promotes placements in nursery schools and special schools for fourth-year school leavers, with their parents' consent. 'It is pointless to spend less than an afternoon per week on practical community service, and equally pointless to have no classroom preparation and follow-up of work. Students should choose where to go - and with whom.'

1971
Dr Kellmer Pringle tells a conference: 'Boys and girls tend to be absorbed in themselves and their feelings; learning about child development enables them to gain insight into their own childhood,

from which they are in the process of emancipating themselves, as well as into their future roles as parents. The teacher holds the key to change, since he educates the chief educator of the very young baby to produce men and women who in turn are capable of educating their children and who go on educating themselves throughout their lives. This should be society's investment in the future.'

1971

York university runs an experimental summer school for the English language development of immigrant children. Older girls from a secondary modern school at Denaby near Doncaster provide one-to-one interaction: children can't progress just by talking to other children. And this is not an opportunity only for working-class girls. The remarkable innovator, professor Eric Hawkins. hopes that 'every fortunate student who enjoys the privilege of further education will accept the obligation to pause for a time in his own upward climb to spend time with the disadvantaged, giving children, by mere presence, dialogue, play, encouragement, what at present they are denied.'

1972

Mia Kellmer Pringle, in her article *The Pre-School Comprehensive*, (*Where* magazine) paints a useful picture of how she believes this work should be done. 'An effective programme of preparation, rather than education, for parenthood would have to adopt a wide and comprehensive base. "Education" is too narrow a connotation in this context, suggesting as it does classes and instruction, on the model of sex education. Also, it conveys too formal a framework and too intellectual a conception, suggesting that "knowing" is enough. What is required is neither a narrow course, seen as a branch of biology or home economics, nor a very wide and general one in citizenship. Equally it should not be confined, as it tends to be, to girls and the less intelligent ones at that.

'Instead, all schools should run a course in human relations and child development, with particular emphasis on what is now known about the importance of the earliest years of life for optimal physical, emotional and social growth. Some first-hand experience of very young children should form an integral part of such a course.'

1972

Sir Keith Joseph, secretary of state for health and social security, 'an intellectual giant and very proactive,' speculates, in his controversial but influential speech at the PPA (Pre-School Playgroup Association) annual conference for local authorities, whether preparation for parenthood at school could help break the 'cycle of deprivation. Children of school age are intensely interested in themselves, in their relationships with other people and with the outside world. Much work relevant to all this has long been going on in schools, and this is already, I understand, a trend towards education about marriage and about parental roles and children's needs. I should welcome any further developments in these directions.' Encouraged by the response, he gets together with Margaret Thatcher, secretary for education and science, leading to two reports in 1974 which explore and confirm his view. 'There is a marked contrast between the medical care given to a mother on the one hand, and the lack of effort on the other hand to prepare her and the father for the role they will want to play to give their child a good chance to mature fully.'

1972

ATV produces a 50-minute film *A Completely Different Way of Life.* It shows a group of young people who for several years have volunteered in the St Ann's area of Nottingham, running playgroups and supporting deprived children and families.

1972

UNESCO publishes the *World Survey of Home and Family Education within Formal Education,* written by the International Federation of Health Education. Governments must finance resources for health education. There's conclusive evidence of its future importance as part of general education for living.

1972

A lot is being written about teenagers and playgroups, much of it in the PPA's magazine *Contact*. Secondary pupils help meet the needs of playgroup children for one-to-one attention; in the process, they get support and guidance from playgroup personnel 'and meet ideas and attitudes in the parent-child relationship which are new to them – and at what better time to meet them?' 1972 sees the school-leaving age raised to 16, giving students more opportunities for placements, preferably for them all. 'Is it too much to hope that we are on the verge of a breakthrough in Common Sense? The odds are that requests for playgroup courses will come in a torrent.' And there's much to be borne in mind:

- Organising placements takes lots of time of playgroup staff, e.g. writing reports to the school on each student. Think twice before agreeing to accept students.;
- Place students in groups near their home so they are punctual.;
- Don't give them dogsbody jobs;
- Place those from difficult backgrounds in small family-like groups. Understand why they steal, if they do;
- Prepare students very well with film clips and discussion;
- Find out about each one from their teachers;
- Ensure they get lunch;
- Have only two at once;
- Retain mother volunteers;
- Minimum attendance is a weekly visit for half a term;
- Allow enough time for follow-up sessions at school;

- Maybe run a permanent playgroup at a secondary school for three-to-five-year-olds, run by an experienced adult, or enable older students to run one themselves with supervision. Where these operate, 'interest in the playgroup is felt throughout the school.'

The many benefits:

- Prioritise placements for students who fail at school. 'There is nothing so good for a bruised ego than the respect and affection of small children. These girls are particularly gifted in getting reticent pre-schoolers to communicate. Not yet adults themselves, they are still on the same wavelength as the children';
- Boy students 'go a long way to compensate for the fathers who disappear at 7.30 and don't return till 6.30';
- 'For some girls, playgroup is the first-ever interest outside their home and school lives. For example, girls who help in the hospital playgroup worry about children who are seldom visited. They are considering forming a school branch of Hospital Friends to provide lonely children with a flow of friends.'

ILEA, within their childcare courses in Educational Priority Areas (EPAs), places students in playgroups with an emphasis on language development through storytelling, nursery rhymes, songs and tape recordings to help make up for the low literacy levels in EPAs.

1973

Crown Woods school's *Community Studies* course in Eltham, SE London, teaches family topics to sixth formers within the department of social and religious studies. It brings in social services workers. Elsewhere, someone produces *Suggestions about an Approach to Programming a Course in Childcare:* the approach depends on the teacher: scientific types deal with growth and development; social types focus on relationships. The course must be practically-based and pupil-centred. Pupils learn that the child uses its whole body to

communicate; and about the value of talking at mealtimes. Write an imaginary conversation between an adult and child. Plan and run a children's party. Other courses mention 'home remedies versus the doctor'; how to describe shyness; the stages of childbirth; factors of modern living which can complicate domestic life with small children; effects of stress on the fetus; making a game or activity to keep a small child occupied while other jobs are being done. Some advocate calling these courses Child Development rather than Child Care.

1973

Evidence to government consultation on preparation for parenthood suggests, as Gillian Pugh from the NCB relates, that 'there is still a surprising amount of ignorance amongst parents of all social classes about what can be expected of children of various ages, and what their real needs are. Many parents don't understand how to play with and communicate with their children.'

1973

A seminar, *Dimensions of Parenthood*, is held by the DHSS at All Souls College, Oxford, on 10–13 April. Joan Cooper, the chair, lists nine major practical and emotional functions or roles of a healthy family:

- Adequate shelter, space, food, income, physical care, safety, health and basic amenities;
- Socialisation: development, abilities, behaviour, interests, attitudes;
- Warm loving intimacy, consistently dependable relationships;
- Support and understanding for the mother by a male role model/partner through to adolescence;
- Group life experience for two-to-six-year-olds, relationships, awareness of others, intellectual development;
- Responding to children's curiosity with affection and reasoned explanations, respecting them through their developmental stages as persons in their own right;

- Co-operation with school, valuing education, encouraging, exploring and having experience;
- Support of adolescents while they become independent;
- A fall-back supporting system for young married children during their child-bearing period.

Professor Sir Michael Rutter, who has been called 'the father of child psychology,' is clear: we still know little but that's no excuse for little action; we need to act now. 'Society's failure to take seriously the need to prepare people for parenthood is remarkable, in view of the fact that for most of us, bringing up children is our most important contribution to future generations. There are widespread facilities available to learn about all manner of subjects and to acquire all manner of skills – except parenting. The one thing we do not learn about is bringing up children.' Parents need interpersonal skills in order to do good parenting and need the best possible opportunities to develop these skills. 'It is not enough to tell parents what to do. This takes the programme well beyond the limits of courses in parenthood, however they are given.' We need to help parents understand the many causes of, for example, temper tantrums, and how to respond; that children differ from each other and should be treated accordingly; and that children influence their parents.

Rutter argues: 'The skills of parenting require experience as well as knowledge; factual knowledge is, at the most, only a contributory factor towards good parenting.' He cites seven myths:

- Development is largely fixed;
- Heredity leads to familial cycles of deprivation;
- The first five years are critical and not irreversible;
- Bad parenting is due to ignorance. He argues that knowledge is not key, but rather opportunities, attitudes, mental health models, discipline, a secure base, and comfort. Does knowledge change behaviour? Not much, he asserts;

- We know how to bring up children. Advice changes (for instance, Rutter challenges Bowlby's writings about separation.) We should make clear the limitations of our knowledge;
- Parenting means mothering. Lack of studies on fathers/ fathering;
- Intergenerational transition is familial. But effects of school / local area are important; Rutter cites the Chicago studies of big cities.

There are seven distinguished speakers, including Rutter, Bronfenbrenner and 25 of the most eminent participants from the worlds of social work, health, education, anthropology, criminology, health visiting, social science research, economics and psychiatry. Parents' problems are discussed (some parents make their children over-dependent on them; or they try to control their kids; or they give up.) Class aspects are cited: the middle-class language of much parenting education, with working-class language not addressed. The important subject of maternal rejection is debated: the mother is filled with resentment, fear and hatred, is detached, withdrawn and craves affection for herself, with little insight or imagination. She is hard to help. The father might be concerned but unable to prevent harm to the baby. The baby becomes a child with a 'deep, long-standing, emotionally wounding condition,' vulnerable and needing long-term follow-up so that it doesn't repeat the pattern.

Sir Keith Joseph, Margaret Thatcher and Lord Aberdare attend part of the proceedings. A report is prepared, published by HMSO in 1974. This is unfamiliar, unorthodox territory for a government.

1973

An attempt to set up a British Association for Parent Education fails, largely through the refusal of financial support by the DHSS and the DES. There seem to be no records of it.

1973

'In the early 1970s there is concern at government level over the cycle of deprivation and the need to educate the next generation of parents' (*Papers of Miss Cynthia Reynolds*.) Cynthia (1928 – 2008) is a veritably tireless champion of our cause. As an ILEA advisory teacher at the Home Economics Teachers Centre, Essendine Road, London W9, she produces A R*eport on the Development of Courses in 'Child Care and the Family' in North London Secondary Schools, January 1971- February 1973*. 'Hardly a week passes without a national newspaper or magazine running an article or item concerned with educating "parents to-be" in their future roles.' These courses for 14–to-18-year-olds are 'IN and no doubt the relatively small band of pioneers will be joined by others. It is a relatively new idea to help young people prepare for the most important, and, possibly, the most difficult task they will have to do – namely, bring up children. Learning how to meet children's needs should enable our young people to enjoy them more, and having children should be something they should look forward to.' Honor Mason takes a similar role in east London.

Cynthia throws herself into the development of child care courses, as part of the home economics curriculum, which later become CSE courses; liaises with schools, which can be hard going ('sixth formers were constantly withdrawn from the course…'); enjoys helping to teach the course; visits numerous playgroups ('I found this an extraordinarily time consuming – and sometimes frustrating - task!'); involves under-fives experts (health visitors, children's librarians) and psychotherapists, and runs in-service trainings: evening, day and residential. 'It has become obvious to me that to make in-service training effective, we need to get teachers together for longer, and away from school pressures. By the evening they are often too tired to get the maximum from a session. I foresee a series of three-day courses; a six-week course would be better still.'

She ensures that schools can contact the Teachers Centre to check current details of playgroup or nursery placements: these pupils have 'at least one session with paint, junk and clay, enabling them to work out their own feelings on the materials and understand how much a small child gets from the same situation.' She supports a pilot course, with modifications, at a school for the 'physically handicapped.' 'We felt that these youngsters would be in contact with children in their own families, even if marriage and parenthood didn't come their way, that it would be of help to them as people.' Boys are a concern. Sixth formers at a boys' school 'respond with great interest to the course. I try to persuade people to involve more boys; they need it too.'

Some housecraft departments send students to 'observe' under-fives at play but they find books about play too heavy going; it's decided that young-people-centred resources should be created. ILEA Media Resources Centre produces, in collaboration with a group of teachers attending a breathless series of weekly meetings and a two-day workshop, colourful packs about play and communication, with teachers' notes, for schools' use: photos of play; slides and audio tapes; stories and rhymes about play. Packs are sold for just the cost of materials. And one college of further education joins the ten secondary schools, widening its general studies options to include *Working with Children*. 'This will obviously give the youngsters some preparation for parenthood.' Cynthia's conclusions after intensive, comprehensive ILEA experience are worth taking very much to heart:

a) 'For courses to run with a reasonable hope of success, they must have the backing of the head;
b) The timetabling must be generous (at least a whole morning or afternoon) to allow for the visits and practical experience with the under-fives. No course of two split 35-minute periods can hope to be a success: it is crippled from the start;
c) Staff who really believe in the need for such courses are the people to do the job. Not only does their enthusiasm affect their colleagues

who then want to join in, but it spreads to the pupils who also become enthusiastic;

d) Staff have to be willing to give up many extra hours to preparation and in-service training;

e) More than one staff member should be involved. Too much is at stake if the whole thing depends on one person who may become ill or has to move;

f) More men must teach. Their contribution is virtually essential;

g) Teachers concerned must have come to terms with their own lives. These courses are not for those who have not resolved their own inner conflicts. Studying child development will bring these to the surface and could lead to stress. This would not be of help to the youngsters on the course;

h) I hope schools will use the talents of different staff members from many disciplines. Most of our courses are organised by the home economics, social studies or community education departments;

i) We hope to introduce one or two student psychotherapists as team members in schools to add more strength to the course;

j) I provide as much help and support as I can to each school. Essential personal contact is very valuable and leads teachers to in-service training. I act as a link in bringing the teachers together to discuss their problems, exchange information and make new plans. They find this very helpful;

k) Evaluation: not been tackled yet, but I am doubtful if we can prove anything until the young people start to rear their children;

l) We must aim for *quality*. The course is about human beings and how they live, feel and react. Very careful preparation should be made and good teachers involved. The courses must be good. Otherwise, it is better not to run them at all. We don't want fear and anxiety regarding their future roles aroused in the minds of our young people – or excessive criticism of their own parents and homes. Positive attitudes must be provided so they can look forward to parenthood with pleasure and confidence;

m) The key to successful learning will be enjoyment. If the courses are run in an interesting way with plenty of variety by teachers who really care about what they are doing, there is a reasonable chance that learning will be transferred to the home situation;
n) More teachers must be involved and additional training in greater depth be given to enable them to cope with this absolutely vital area of curriculum development.'

1973

Another invaluable document by Cynthia, *Suggestions for a Project Concerned with Some Aspects of an Education for Parenthood Course for Secondary Pupils,* deals in detail with the creative aspects of placing teenagers in early years settings. It is so useful that it features in Volume Two of *Nothing More Important,* on how to teach parenting. She quotes Eric Midwinter, director of priority, Liverpool, who, no doubt tongue in cheek, imagines that 'the pupil of the future should be able, proudly, to record that he has an 'A' level in Leisure & Marriage, 'O' level in Home Management and a Grade 2 CSE in Child Welfare.'

1973

The Schools Council is unequivocal, now that the recent school-leaving age of 16 creates new problems and opportunities. Miss R Piper, a senior educational psychologist in Basildon, asks in her paper *Child Development and ROSLA* (Raising of School Leaving Age), 'How many parents are ever taught anything about the development of children, other than in terms of physical growth? Child rearing, in terms of happiness and adequacy of the next generation, is perhaps one of the most important tasks facing our school leavers, yet it is something for which they are singularly unprepared. Involving parents in the educational process surely should begin at the beginning by teaching parents before they are parents, that in its broadest and most exciting terms, the educational process is in their

hands from the moment of birth. Perhaps the ideal time to learn about child development is just before the baby is born.

'But there are two very real problems to this. First, although many parents would attend courses in child development at this stage, or read relevant books, or watch relevant films, there are many more who would not. That large group of the population from which disadvantaged children come is also the group that tends to opt out of optional courses. Their school experience was not good. This is the group most in need of help, the group caught in the cycle of disadvantage. Second, the proportion of would-be fathers opting to attend courses in child development would probably be low. The last time that the next generation of parents will be a captive audience is in the final years of school, and in many cases, they will be parents within three years of this. Is it not therefore the stage at which to introduce a course in child development? Is it not both a vital part of our task of preparing our school-leavers for adult life, and a step towards reducing disadvantage in the next generation of pre-school children? Amongst parents, teachers and pupils, there is a great deal of interest in the development of such courses, yet child development has scarcely begun to emerge as a part of the curriculum. A few schools now have a GCSE syllabus but most have not.' The Home Economics Committee of the Schools Council will discuss this.

1973 – 74

Shelburne secondary school in Islington, north London, offers an *Education for Urban Living* course. Year 2 study *Me and the Family*, covering grandparents living with the family, and caring for younger siblings. Year 4 get *The Family and the Individual.*

1973

'It is generally considered that most secondary schools fail to prepare adolescents adequately, if at all, for their future roles as parents."

What is probably a one-off initiative by educational psychologists rears its head, those in Derbyshire producing a paper *A School-based Preventative Programme.* Proposing a 'cycle of prevention,' they insist on a complete cycle of five preventive measures - all essential – 'a total and comprehensive community scheme based on all the educational establishments in that community.' They have tried to educate existing parents, but 'this is invariably a lengthy and difficult, if not impossible, job, and there are rarely any dramatic and lasting changes noted.' Educational psychologists have a traditionally remedial role, but 'they ought to be far more closely involved in preventative work. Prevention is better than cure. We believe that the long-term gains involved in taking preventative action in the field of mental health far outweigh the short-term and doubtful benefits of taking "remedial" action.' Educational psychologists have relevant skills and knowledge.

The first measure? 'All children would receive appropriate education for parenthood in the secondary schools. We consider parenthood courses should become an integral part of the secondary school curriculum, a unique opportunity to reach everyone.' They begin with a pilot at Anthony Gell school, adamant about seven points:

1. Include every pupil, 'otherwise some who are in need will escape the preventive net';
2. Slow learners need courses designed for their needs;
3. There must be no exam. With exams, 'there is a clear implication that some pupils will be failures. For them to see themselves and be seen as unfit to be parents is quite unacceptable';
4. A large component is direct experience with young children;
5. Integrate the subject with other subjects where possible;
6. Call it a 'Parenthood' course. 'Parentcraft' has low academic connotations. 'Child Development' or 'Child Care' emphasise study and care. 'Parenthood' stresses positively the future role of most children;

7 A basic minimum core of relevant subject matter is for all. Each school can expand it according to need and resources.

Recommendations 2-to-5 include parenthood work in adult education, ante-and-post-natal classes, nurseries and infant schools. Schools should 'become the natural source of information on child-rearing for the community.'

1974

The Home Economics Committee of the Schools Council considers a proposal written by none other than Cynthia Reynolds for a national conference on preparation for parenthood in secondary and further education. She clarifies the status of this education: courses in child development or child care often lead to a CSE. 'Courses using Parentcraft or Education for Parenthood as their title are not usually connected with any examination, as the originators deem them unsuitable for this kind of work.' This topic is popular. 'At the time of writing, London courses have been heavily over-subscribed for next year and countless would-be students have been turned away, as timetabling and staffing have not permitted expansion. It does seem that students see the courses as relevant, worthwhile and interesting.' It is unknown if the conference takes place, but Cynthia's suggested programme would be useful, were such a conference to be organised in the 21st century:

- Aims: To consider ways of implementing positive approaches to preparation for parenthood as part of the secondary and further education curriculum, with particular reference to courses already existing, including child development, child care, parentcraft, education for parenthood, or as part of health or community education. To have beneficial effects on future generations;
- A central core of lectures by distinguished speakers should form a framework, and a conference of this kind would be able to recruit them, if planned at least a year in advance;

- A symposium of various approaches to courses throughout the country would be of great value;
- Tutorial and discussion groups under the guidance of skilled tutors could work on topics where further knowledge and consideration of teaching methods and the design of learning experiences would be particularly helpful;
- It would be advisable to include participants from school, inspectors and advisers (particularly nursery education), colleges of education, and the educational psychology service.

1974

Two reports, based on wide professional consultation, are published by the DHSS about parenting preparation, including that in schools and other youth venues. *The Family in Society: Preparation for Parenthood,* a 77-page document, has a substantial foreword by Sir Keith Joseph in which he stresses the importance of secondary schools teaching the young about parenting. He emphasises, relevant to the theme of this book, the need to prepare parents to understand the 'emotional and psychological dimensions of parenthood and not merely those more practical areas - family budgeting, domestic economy, health and care of infants and so on - where a great deal is done already through the educational system, domiciliary health services and other means.'

And he understands that parenting problems are not suffered only by the poor, even if adverse socio-economic conditions make them worse. 'The problems of personal and emotional deprivation are not confined to poor families or large families or families in bad housing: and I do not accept that it is a distraction from "real issues" to focus attention on them.' (I find it of interest that Joseph, from a wealthy family, went to Harrow public school and Oxford university and had four children before his divorce and second marriage. Not everyone with this class background is half so clued up.)

In his foreword he doesn't refer to parenthood education in schools, but the body of the report, drawn up by civil servants, is a detailed and impressively comprehensive discussion of the views and evidence presented by 62 professional associations from the worlds of education, community action, social work, religion, criminology, family planning, probation, psychiatry, psychotherapy and early years. It devotes many paragraphs to preparing school students. 'There was a widespread tendency for the various professions and services to see their own opportunities for intervention as coming too late, after the damage was done. Intervention at school was crucial. Much stress was laid on the importance of the school. One view expressed was that preparation for parenthood would be too unreal for school children; but this was not widely shared. Most regarded work with adolescents as essential and considered that much more could and should be done in schools, taking advantage of the extra compulsory year at school (from 15-16.) It was a common belief that existing teaching too often neglected boys, who could benefit from preparation for fatherhood. For many people, intervention at the time of marriage and the first baby was not soon enough. What was done after people left school would not be effective unless a basis had been laid during school years, making people more receptive to help later on.' The report is so thorough that no more needs to be written to state the case.

In October 1974, Joseph's speech to Conservatives in Birmingham about traditional values and their undermining by the 'permissiveness' of the Left contains, towards the end, these sentences which cause outrage, scuppering his chance to rival Edward Heath as leader of the Conservative Party: 'The balance of our population, our human stock, is threatened. A recent article in *Poverty*, published by the Child Poverty Action Group [headed by Frank Field at that time], showed that a high and rising proportion of children are being born to mothers least fitted to bring children into the world and bring them up. They are born to mothers who were first pregnant in adolescence in social classes four and five.

'Many are unmarried, deserted or divorced or soon will be. Some are of low intelligence, most of low educational attainment. They are unlikely to be able to give children the stable emotional background, the consistent combination of love and firmness which are more important than riches. They are producing problem children, the future unmarried mothers, delinquents, denizens of our borstals, sub-normal educational establishments, prisons, hostels for drifters. Yet these mothers are now producing a third of all births. A high proportion of these births are a tragedy for the mother, the child and for us.' He does not mention school-based (or any) preparation for parenthood, but emphasises his belief in self-discipline, moral standards, and lack of dependence on the state.

1974

Dimensions of Parenthood, by the DHSS, (119-pages), is the second report this year of the Oxford seminar. Joseph writes that the seminar was initiated 'to expose to the rigour of searching academic scrutiny, ideas which we had been assembling about the role of parents, the quality of parenting and the scope for helping people in their parental role.' This much maligned politician nevertheless advises against 'over-simple and under-sensitive reactions to the problems we perceive in families struggling to cope with multiple deprivation,' acknowledging that obstacles are met by families at all levels of society. We need a better understanding of children's needs, but require a much more broadly based strategy, with implications for all sectors of social policy. 'Damage is not irreversible.'

The seven learned speeches are presented in full. They comprise a scholarly discussion from several disciplines about families. Of most interest to us are the comments of professor Urie Bronfenbrenner, here specially from the US. He finds from his research into early intervention programmes that courses for adults are 'generally ineffective,' based as they are on lectures, discussion and printed materials. He calls for 'parent apprentice programs in the schools.

Although many severely deprived families are not accessible to parenting intervention programs, all future parents can be reached while they are still at school.

'Programs should be instituted as early as elementary school in which students of both sexes are given extended opportunities, under supervision, to participate in work with young children, including their own brothers and sisters. Such experiences could be facilitated by locating daycare centers, pre-schools and Head Start programs in or near schools, so that they could be utilised as an integral part of the curriculum on a regular basis. In addition, they would escort the little ones to and from schools or centers, and spend some time with them out of school. Visiting the younger children in their own homes and observing and helping parents in their activities with their child would not only contribute to training for parenthood but also give recognition to the parent as a person of status and expertise.'

It's not only Bronfenbrenner who's keen on using school time. Concluding remarks by the distinguished social worker and academic, Olive Stevenson, states: 'Considerable time was devoted to a consideration of the role of the school in preparing for parenthood. Indeed, it seems to me that at times the role of the school was emphasised at the expense of the many other institutions which play a part in shaping child and parent attitudes. However, the teacher in his daily relationship with children and teenagers does have a unique opportunity to influence and it is obviously important to consider how this could be turned to best advantage.

'Some doubt was expressed as to whether school was the appropriate vehicle for direct teaching, whether by instruction or through practical experience about parenthood. It was felt by at least one participant that the primary task of the school was to transmit certain knowledge and culture and that an understanding of such processes was best conveyed indirectly, e.g. through the study of literature. However,

this was not generally agreed. Others pursued with enthusiasm the notion of the school in a much closer relationship to the community and with individual parents. There was also enthusiasm for experiments in a variety of ways in which children and adolescents could be, as it were, "joined up" to their mutual benefit.' But any preparation for parenthood using 'advice and instruction as the primary educational method' is to be 'disfavoured.'

Joan Cooper of the DHSS describes how humans, compared with animals, mature slowly. Skills have to be taught. Our complex brains must learn the complicated processes of family behaviour to bring up our kids well. But the family is no longer the main 'school' for parenting these days. 'The parenting of human beings is highly complex and demands a high degree of skill.'

The seminar is aware that this education is going on already. 'Enthusiasm should be informed by a detailed knowledge and examination of current practice. Experiments up and down the country are taking place in and outside of school.'

Are these conferences merely talking shops which lead nowhere? Do the reports produce more action? About this time, political momentum declines (just as the White House conferences do in the US.) The topic's popularity goes up and down during 1974 as government attitudes change: family life is seen not as the concern of government but as a private matter.

1974

Tunbridge Wells grammar school for girls adopts this subject with vigour. Its 'value to the future wife and mother is obvious.' The county education officer asks Miss Hazell to devise a two-year curriculum for the school. Mrs Sandbach (infant school head) runs it: 'The greater the freedom and the more sophisticated our pattern of living, the more important to teachers becomes the social and

emotional development of our children.' She takes a 'new look at what makes a person able to be a good parent, neighbour and citizen.' Each class has a two-hour period weekly with desks arranged in a circle. There are visits, and a room for a library and films. Girls write a long essay termly. 'At school we educate for what they will need, not for what they will become. Pre-parental education should concern itself with helping students to realise the value of making wise decisions and of using choice effectively.' Girls ask to study physical growth till adolescence, not just age five. These academic girls *do* want to learn about good child raising. They are very bright, in danger of 'absorbing information without realising its emotional significance.' The course covers the complexity of human problems, and of values apart from the commercial world. They needn't take notes: they're given a written synopsis of each topic. Every week they discuss a TV or media item. There's no exam pressure, which gives the course a special interest. The girls say they begin to understand themselves better, and to see the importance of the early years. The project ends after two years, but the work is due to continue by other teachers.

1975

More about teens and early years settings: the influential 599-page Bullock Report, *A Language for Life,* recommends involving young people in them, especially in the cause of language. 'Several witnesses urged on us that young people should be made aware of children's language development long before they become parents, that they should encounter it while still at school. Some placed the emphasis on actual preparation for parenthood; others preferred to think in less personal terms. In both cases it was suggested that pupils from secondary schools should visit nursery and infant schools, where they could learn how to talk with young children in the context of constructive play, perhaps using toys they had themselves made; or the young children might come to them in the secondary school. With careful preparation many schools have developed excellent courses in parenthood, involving both boys and girls. Some have

been evolved by the Home Economics department; others have become part of the curriculum for early leavers. A number have been shaped into CSE courses, open to all fourth and fifth-year pupils, often including child development, healthy diet, physical growth and emotional needs. They usually have a vigorous practical element and involve the pupils in visits to playgroups and nursery classes.

'The most interesting are those which are broadly-based' with an emphasis away from mothercraft and towards child growth. A controversial word of caution: 'It has to be recognised that many adolescent pupils are simply not ready to cast themselves in the role of future parents. This is not to suggest they are not interested in young children. Indeed, there is plenty of evidence that they are. This interest could be extended to children's language without laying an overt emphasis on personal preparation for parenthood. Young people are deeply interested in human beings in all their variety: jobs, environmental pressures, lifestyles, things people do. They can learn the value of discussion and explanation in controlling a child's behaviour, as against simple prohibition.'

Bullock understands the importance of practical experience. 'This implies close co-operation between the teachers. We see clearly the problems of organisation which it sets. So far, only a relatively small number of secondary schools have developed contact with nursery and infant schools. The teachers of young children could be forgiven for viewing the prospect with alarm. We do not see this in terms of large numbers of pupils invading the schools. It should be possible for a pattern of visiting to be derived to give a large number of pupils valuable experience over time.'

There's bound to be some disappointment. But 'with proper planning, the presence of these pupils will confer as much advantage as they themselves derive.' Two examples are given: little kids visited a secondary school whose pupils had 'assembled a mixture of objects

likely to arouse their interest' about which teenagers and little ones talked one-to-one. At another school, pupils wrote stories for five-to-seven-year-olds, 'going to great lengths to match the language to the needs of the children and in the process learning a good deal about them. Such courses must be properly planned and equipped and one cannot repeat too often that they imply a high degree of goodwill and co-operation between the schools.' Up-to-date knowledge and in-service training are also essential. But we have no idea whether any of this, like other recommendations in these official reports, is then implemented anywhere as a result.

1975

Cynthia Reynolds's book *Teaching Child Development* is published. You will find its main points in Volume Two of *Nothing More Important.*

Mid-1970s

The Schools Council funds a health education project for 13-to-18-year-olds. One area, *Education for Parenthood,* covers the growth of young children, family roles and structures, and helping youngsters to cope with loss and separation. The Schools Council (1964-84) is the national body for curriculum development and the co-ordination of secondary school exams in England and Wales. You can see its huge output of varied publications in the British Library.

1975

The Needs of Children: A Personal Perspective by Dr Mia Kellmer Pringle, tireless director of the NCB, is published. 'Parenthood is too demanding and complex a task to be performed well merely because we all have once been children ourselves.' Pringle is all for telling young people how it really is. 'A more realistic and perhaps even daunting awareness needs to be created of the arduous demands which childrearing makes on the emotions, energy, time and finances, as well as the inevitable restraints on personal independence, freedom of movement and indeed one's whole way of life. Babies should be

presented "truthfully," warts and all - sometimes fretful and demanding, often wet and smelly, crying at night and "unreasonable" - rather than with a permanent angelic, dimply smile and sunny temper. If we de-glamourise parenthood, this will not deter those who want to care for children but it may act as a brake on those with unrealistic expectations.'

She has practical suggestions, outlining a programme of preparation for parenthood at school dealing with the whole area of human relationships and child development. She covers essential first-hand practical experience with babies and young children, and an understanding of inevitable changes in a couple's relationship after a baby's birth. 'To be effective, a programme for preparation for parenthood would have to adopt a wide base. "Education" is too narrow a connotation, suggesting classes and instruction on the model of sex education. Also, it conveys too formal a framework and too intellectual a conception, suggesting that "knowing" is enough. What is required is neither a narrow course, seen as a branch of biology or home economics, nor a very wide, general one in citizenship. Equally, it should not be confined, as it tends to be at present, to girls and the less able ones at that.'

She's not promoting mere skills and techniques, referring instead to the 'art of child-rearing. The core of a course of preparation for parenthood should be an understanding of human psychology. The focus and starting point would be the adolescents themselves. Their interest and involvement would readily be enlisted, since at this stage of growth, intense but confused feelings and doubts about personal relationships are a normal preoccupation of young people. This knowledge would be designed to complement and supplement what children would have already learnt in their own families.' She promotes the study of fatherhood and the responsibilities of both parents.

Pringle argues for compulsory core parenting education for every young person. 'A strong case could be made for including three new areas of knowledge in the curriculum of all secondary schools,' including psychology and preparation for parenthood. She passionately states the connection between parenting, childcare and mental health. 'If even half of what we know were accepted with feeling and applied with understanding by all who have the care of children, then the revolution brought about in children's physical health in the past forty years might well be matched by a similar change in their psychological well-being.'

Her heartfelt book ends with twelve unanswered questions. Number five reads (these were the days before the national curriculum.) 'Is it sensible for religious education to remain the only subject which schools must provide? Is there not a stronger case for making preparation for parenthood a required subject at least in all secondary schools since the majority of pupils are likely to become parents? Presenting a balanced, honest picture of parenthood could contribute to their making a more informed, responsible choice of lifestyle later on. Also, might its status be raised if a more general understanding were brought about of why it is among the world's most important, creative and difficult jobs, if done well?'

1975

Professor A M Wilkinson, dean, Faculty of Education, Exeter university, produces a *Proposed research and development project: Curriculum on child development for older secondary school pupils* in 12 schools in the south-west of England. He distinguishes various approaches: child care course about health and comfort; home economics about domestic topics; child development – psychological, sociological and intellectual, e.g. family and kinship. He wants to 'investigate the best ways for furthering the work and the language involved.' Placements would be organised in nursery, infant and junior schools with 'guided observation.' There would be two years of planning, implementation

and assessment at a total cost of £40,752. He wants it to begin in January 1976. It's unknown if the scheme gets off the ground.

1975

The Select Committee on Violence's report, *Violence in Marriage*, believes that 'much more serious attention should be given within our schools (and further education) system to the problems of domestic conflict.' It wonders, 'It may be that traditional domestic science could now further develop to include study of the roles of the partners in marriage and their relationships with their children.'

1975

'Courses in secondary schools involving young children have grown considerably in number over the past few years,' says the DES which organises a five-day 'short course' for 40 participants at a Bournemouth hotel, *Courses for Secondary Pupils Involving Young Children*. Speakers include Cynthia Reynolds and Leonora Pitcairn. It's a chance for teachers and advisors to share information and experience.

1975 – 76

Birmingham LEA holds two conferences about parenthood education. Sadly, there are no records in their current archives. 'We only saved the information we had a statutory duty to retain,' I was told by the council. Obviously no statutory duty to retain parenthood. However, a report on the 1976 *Conference on Child Development Courses* exists in the Institute of Education archives. The conference brings together secondary and nursery teachers and social services. The report states: 'The sharing of a common interest fosters a relaxed attitude and leads to a closer relationship between teacher and pupils.' Not all nursery placements for teenagers are in 'deprived' areas. A nursery teacher from a middle-class one says: 'Many children are so pressurised at home by intellectual parents that *play* at nursery school is essential to compensate.' And 'difficult' teenagers can shine. 'Most of us had experience of such pupils who were really

outstanding in the nursery. A child often likes and gives affection to a pupil who is unsatisfactory in school; this can have a very salutary effect.' Like so many reports, it insists on support from the head and on enough time for the team of teachers to prepare placements and to discuss students' experiences at them regularly.

1976

Professor Richard Whitfield, Aston university, proposes a three-year project at £164,000 a year: create Education for Parenthood materials for teachers to use for 13-to-16-olds and 16-to-19-year-olds, and identify and clarify the best ways to use them, whilst admitting that 'the home is more influential than the school. An important investment should be in assisting the present generation of youngsters to become more effective parents and home makers when they reach that stage of their lives which of course in most cases is only a few years after leaving school. Present attempts to educate in school for parenthood are spasmodic, and opportunities in this direction are often confined to less able girls.' He wants to 'encourage and strengthen present work by support materials – a catalyst effect in making education for parenthood more widely available to adolescents while at school.'

1976

A Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE) in Parentcraft by the Southern Regional Examination Board aims to 'prepare students of both sexes for aspects of family life; to encourage them to be aware of and be sympathetic to the responsibilities which come with marriage, the birth of children and the establishment of a family unit; to realise the value of a happy, healthy and stable family background in the physical, mental and moral development of the individual.' Its objectives include psychological development; understanding the causes of and solutions to behavioural problems; the social effects of drug taking and delinquency; prevention of accidents; choice of partner; family size; and moral issues such as population explosion.

An especially interesting objective is 'knowledge of the tensions created by the interaction of personalities within a family, the possible consequences, and the contribution which the supportive services can make.' There is a comprehensive curriculum, and practical work is far from ignored. 'Visits and work experience in clinics, nursery schools, day nurseries, pre-school playgroups and local infant schools should be explored to the full.' Four periods a week for two years is the suggested length. The course doubles in popularity by 1979. CSEs are to be abolished in 1984.

1976

Sir Keith Joseph's interest in the cycle of poverty and deprivation leads to *Fit for the Future*: *The Court Report on Child Health*. This prioritises prevention. 'Future improvements in the health of children will depend as much on the beliefs and behaviour of parents as on the services provided.' It states that prevention is as important as treatment. 'Attention to improving an individual's general ability to cope with life should be a primary objective of schools. To the extent that it is achieved, it will help pupils to cope better in the future as parents. The programme within the school curriculum cannot just be a "course." It must be concerned with the whole development of the pupils' personality at appropriate stages.' The report promotes this education also for couples expecting a baby.

Professor Court, an influential, distinguished paediatrician, chair of the Committee on Child Health Services, has no doubt that schools should be involved in preparing children for personal life. He's thought about how parenthood needs to be taught. 'Emphasis should be placed on skills in interpersonal relationships, communication and helping children to understand themselves and the world around them. Even if there were an agreed body of knowledge about parenting (and there is not) and one could work on the assumption that knowledge always changed behaviour (which one cannot), it would still be necessary to bear in mind how much the interpersonal

relationships and integrity of the parents affect their ability to be successful. So many previous well-meaning programmes aimed at changing behaviour for the benefit of health have fallen short of their objectives that we urge that any programme of education for parenthood should be based on principles rather than prescription.'

Court sees the potential in preparing kids for parenthood but, as feminist academic Lesley Smith later is to point out, 'he stresses the need to remove social differences before any real change would be possible. Children still die, in our time, of 19th century reasons, not because of inadequate mothering but because of the unequal distribution of social resources. This is a partnership model of responsibility, assuming that abusing parents are on the one hand victims of social and economic circumstances, especially poor housing, and on the other, victims of their own abusing parents.'

1976

The Schools Council produces *Health Education in Secondary Schools: An Account of Current Practice*, a thoughtful, detailed tome, a third devoted to our areas of concern. Twenty-five people make up the Working Party, plus 18 more on the Teachers' Study Group, supported by the Health Education Council. The book reports and reflects upon the work in 12 non-selective schools in England including rural, urban, suburban, girls only, boys only, multiracial inner city, and new town. Some schools have specific lessons on the timetable. Others use an integrated approach across the curriculum without timetable slots. In others, health education is handled within the pastoral system. In most schools, this topic is for every student.

It's essential to have a senior member of staff as the co-ordinator for this work. There's a charming mention of the local vicar who's a part-time teacher at the school with this role. He knows the families – a great advantage. Other considerations are given to the use of role-play ('felt to be a difficult and possibly dangerous technique but to have its

place in health education when employed by teachers experienced in its use') and drama. Outside speakers can be a good thing (though 'some doubts were expressed as to the way in which they were often used.)' It's vital for teachers to know about group dynamics, to be trained in sensitivity, and to relate well to their pupils.

Team teaching is 'especially recommended as a means of supporting inexperienced staff and maintaining continuity.' Audio visual aids and films have their place. It's preferable to keep parents fully informed. Subjects offered by some schools are childrearing; parenthood; childcare; a detailed study of physical and mental child development; conception; fatherhood (for boys); and family life. The new town school, having done a survey of students' health education needs, starts with mother and new-born baby, then unmarried mother, marriage, and family planning. Students go out on visits. The report mentions the 'importance of very young children's education, as attitudes are formed in the early years.'

1976

The Preparation for Parenthood Group is set up by the interesting father-of-four, Sir Richard Acland (a former Liberal MP, then socialist co-founder/chair of the Common Wealth party, then Labour MP), after failing to persuade the Schools Council to support this work in schools. It comprises eight distinguished members from the world of education and psychology, aiming to 'exert some pressure upon central government departments and other relevant bodies' and keep the idea alive in the minds of civil servants. Its members are Sir Richard Acland, Dorothy Baldwin (teacher and writer on child development), Ronald Davie (professor of educational psychology), Dr Mia Kellmer Pringle (director, NCB), Margaret Maden (headteacher), John Nisbet (professor of education), professor Jack Tizard (director, Thomas Coram Research Unit), Lady Ethel Venables (Aston university, educational psychologist; vice-president, National Marriage Guidance Council) and Richard C Whitfield (professor of

education.) I could find no records of the progress of this informal, august group or whether, to any degree, it achieved its aims.

1976

A report from the NCB, *Britain's Sixteen-Year-Olds* by Ken Fogelman, shows that 57 percent of adolescents want to know more about the practical problems of family life; 50 percent about the care of babies; and 38 percent how children develop. Even pupils who've been to parenthood classes don't think everything was covered. Some child care courses are mainly concerned with physical care, rather than an understanding of babies and young children. And the physiology of reproduction is included at school, rather than the psychological and sociological aspects of raising a family.

1976

NAMCW holds a conference on educational aims for young people.

1977

The *Select Committee on Violence* goes further than Court. The White Paper *Violence to Children* is produced in conjunction with seven government departments. It's about injury and neglect at the hands of caregivers and can hardly express its case more strongly. 'We believe, as our predecessors did, that much more should be done in the school curriculum to ensure that all pupils receive some education in the skills of parenthood. By this we do not simply mean abstract instruction in the physiological mechanics of conception and childbirth but learning about what children are really like. We recommend that the government, whether through the DHSS or the DES, should ensure that education for parenthood is available for boys and girls of all levels of intellectual ability.

'One practical method of bringing this about is through using school premises, where the space is available, for mothers' and toddlers' clubs and involving teenage children in the groups. But that children

themselves about to leave school ought to learn something about the unglamorous side of childrearing, we are convinced. Too often it seems to us that the only model of parenting that young people see is that presented in television advertisements where idealised homes and idealised children are shown, ignoring totally the realities of looking after a small child.'

Many people can help. 'Health visitors, doctors, nurses and allied professions can make valuable contributions to the design and content of courses concerned with preparation for parenthood. Advice need not, however, be confined to schools but can sometimes be usefully provided outside them, for example in community homes, borstals, health centres, youth clubs etc.' There's no compulsory national curriculum, religious education alone has to be provided; it's up to LEAs and individual schools to decide what to teach. These official reports only recommend, they don't require.

1977

Education in Schools, a Green Paper from the DES, believes that children of both sexes should be prepared for adult life, 'should learn how to cope with domestic tasks and parenthood. Attitudes towards sex, parenthood, smoking, drink and exercise will be set in these years. Schools should co-operate with parents in preparing young people for adult human relationships.' But it recognises that school timetables have become overcrowded; 'essentials' (by which they seem to mean subjects like preparation for parenthood) are at risk.

1977

The Munn Report in Scotland states that 'pupils must acquire knowledge and skills which relate to [inter alia] family life.'

1977

Fathers, Mothers and Others: Towards New Alliances by the Rapoports and Ziona Strelitz, stresses that we should not teach children about

parenting based on a traditional model of father at work, mother at home within a private, isolated family, because society has changed.

1977

Pearson and Lambert, for the NCB Child Development Study, in *Sex Education, Preparation for Parenthood and the Adolescent,* report the views of 15,000 sixteen-year-olds. Two-thirds are satisfied with information at school on reproduction and conception; less than half with the growth of children; less than one-third on the care of babies; and less than a quarter on family problems.

1977

Health Education in Schools: Sex Education and Preparation for Parenthood by the DES is published, with thoughtful, sympathetic, child-centred advice. 'Courses called Education in Personal Relationships, or Social Education or even Education for Life are appearing in many secondary schools and include aspects of health education, especially sex. Such titles may prompt the cynical question: what is the function of the rest of the work of the school if not for these very purposes? But these developments are a reaction of many experienced teachers, stimulated, no doubt, by some LEA working parties, to a growing belief that something more than haphazard pastoral care is needed and that scholarship, which includes the sum of human self-knowledge, human experience and human skills is not always seen by boys and girls to provide the answers to problems which may beset them, now or in the future.

'The danger of superficiality is obvious. Education for parenthood is concerned with the total development of the personality, not merely skills of infant care; an important practical need of young parents is to know when, where and from whom to seek advice. Being a good parent, a more difficult notion to define than to recognise, implies an ability to cope with life and the sensitivity to realise that children educate and influence their parents.' They dismiss the value of 'a

collection of barren facts which do not germinate and so produce nothing in a boy or girl's mind,' and advocate courses which 'capture the attention of boys and girls and develop their self-knowledge, self-confidence and awareness of others.'

1977

The government's White Paper, *Prevention and Health,* stresses the benefits for the individual, for health services and for the economy, of education at school about sex and parenting.

1978

Joyce Butler, Labour MP for Wood Green, states during the House of Commons debate that education for parenthood 'is necessary for all young people, boys and girls, before they leave school. Many young parents are completely unprepared for the unglamorous side of child rearing. Some just have no idea how to handle children who make messes, break things, refuse food or demonstrate wills of their own. They can often see no alternative between either allowing the child to do what it likes or resorting to blows which may cause injury.'

1978

TACADE (1969-2012) holds a parentcraft symposium at Ruskin College, Oxford.

1978

S C Docherty, in *Do Pupils Want Health and Social Education? A re-analysis*, reports for the Scottish Health Education Unit, a survey of 4,000 school leavers in Scotland. Nearly half the girls put childcare or social education at the top of the list of subjects they would like to have studied at school.

1978

William Rice, in *Health Education in Schools,* argues for preparing school students for their later life experiences including parenthood, quoting

the large number of teachers surveyed by S McGuffin (Institute of Health Education 1978) who have no wish to teach contraception, mental health, venereal diseases or parenting, although 90 percent are willing to deal with issues of smoking, alcohol and hygiene.

1978
Devon and Wiltshire LEAs produce guidelines on health education, including education for parenthood.

1978
'Health education is a part of the work of teachers which they share with parents to a greater degree than perhaps is apparent. Parents welcome discussion on this.'

Curriculum 11–16: Health Education in Secondary Schools is published by HM Inspectorate and the DES. 'Society is justified,' it claims, 'in expecting schools to make some contribution to the socialisation of the young, their induction into adulthood and their preparation as citizens, *parents,* wage earners and voters of the future.' (My emphasis.) It recognises that 'there is a growing interest in the schools' in parenthood education, 'including the importance of the home in providing basic health education,' asserting: 'The government, whether through the DHSS or DES, should ensure that education for parenthood is available for boys and girls of all levels of intellectual ability.' The 'essential content should include knowledge and consideration' of nine aspects. Two are 'the growth and development, physical and mental, through childhood into adult life,' and 'the needs of children and the role of parents.' These are 'sensitive and contentious issues.' Inspectors cite the 'hidden agenda' of a school, and its attitudes: e.g. does it take personal relationships seriously? Does it make all pupils feel they matter?'

1978
The National Commission for the International Year of the Child recognises that 'today's pupils will be tomorrow's parents' and that

'many pupils might otherwise never get a chance to learn how to educate their children' if there's nothing about it at school.

1978

ILEA has a working party about a proposed 'O' level in child development, with a document from Starcross girls secondary in Islington, and other schools. It would cover development between 0-11 years; the complexity of human growth and development; interaction between parents and children and its possible effects; patterns of child rearing; child health; and the prenatal period.

1978

There is an increase in the size of Child Care CSE classes. Boys are joining in greater numbers, at any rate in Bristol and Birmingham.

1978

Birmingham LEA's paper *Child Development Courses in Secondary Schools* lists 13 reasons for this work. The last is: 'To bring an element of realism into young people's thinking about the responsibilities, the joys and the satisfaction of bringing up children; to refute the facile image so often portrayed in glossy magazines and other media, giving the impression that it is just like "playing with dolls".'

1979

Yet another conference, this time organised by the DES, DHSS and the NCB. Forty people meet to discuss preparation for parenthood and 'what action can and should be taken by public authorities, voluntary organisations and others to help raise the standards of parenting in this country.' The report prepared about this conference, together with papers given and a summary of the discussion, will be published by the NCB in 1980.

1979

A report, *Preparation for Parenthood* edited by Colin Rees, is published in South Glamorgan, Wales. An earnest collection of health and welfare professionals at a day conference at TyMaeth, Cardiff, all have 'a strong feeling that the inclusion of parentcraft in the school curriculum is worthwhile.' Discussion group six has more to say. 'Many schools in this area include health teaching within the syllabus. However, many future parents appear to have little knowledge of the responsibilities involved in parenthood despite these efforts. General parentcraft classes are now available in some of our schools, mainly for lower ability groups which we feel is a shame. We realise it is very difficult to find time in the curriculum for these sorts of classes, with children directed towards 'O' level.

'Concentrating on the lower ability groups, we felt that it was a good idea to give them some practical training for life. We heard about one school's parentcraft classes which include human relationships; marriage in different cultures; relationships between two people including contraception; and development of fetus and child. As part of this, the domestic science teacher was also involved in teaching cookery and dressmaking for children. We felt that this was the right sort of course but felt very strongly that there should be some practical involvement. This could be done in several ways, of which we explored two:

a) The teenagers could go into nursery schools or mother and toddler groups and help. Hopefully they would learn the skills of playing and dealing with children. Also, if they have been involved in these groups as teenagers, perhaps they will be more inclined to attend, or send their toddlers, when they become parents;

b) A good idea is to invite mothers to schools to talk to small groups about problems involved in parenthood. It was felt that

> the children would be more likely to ask questions which are causing them anxiety to a stranger they may never see again.

'We agreed that in order to provide these children with some motivation for attending, perhaps a Mode 3 CSE in Mothercraft could be instigated.

'It would be a good idea if pupils of higher ability could be educated about parentcraft. We felt that the best approach here would be to gain the support and enthusiasm of the headteacher and hope that he/she would motivate their staff to include health education, if other time could not be found on the timetable.

'We thought that it might be possible to reach other groups of teenagers by speaking to youth clubs or Girl Guide-type groups. Perhaps general evening meetings at a village hall where all groups of people are invited; to organise evening classes which may attract the more able youngsters who would not be reached in school. We also explored the possibility of training courses for unemployed teenagers.' It's gratifying to learn that the conference results in an in-depth review of ante-natal services which then improve. Whether the recommendations for schools get anywhere is anyone's guess.

1979
The International Year of the Child provides the impetus for several initiatives, including the establishment of a working group in England and Wales on preparation for parenthood.

1979
As part of its contribution to the International Year of the Child, the British Federation of University Women makes a study of preparation for parenthood available in secondary schools through courses such as Child Development, Parentcraft and Family Studies. Its report, *CSE Education for Parenthood Syllabuses* by Vivyenne Rubenstein

concludes: 'This subject is of such fundamental importance to future family welfare that non-examined courses should be available to every secondary school pupil, and should be compulsory.'

1979

The National Council for One-Parent Families' well-researched report, *Pregnant at School*, is categorical. 'Girls and boys, including those over sixteen at all levels of ability,' should receive not only sex education but education in personal development and relationships, social responsibility, and preparation for parenthood and family life 'throughout their primary and secondary schooling.' Parents should be involved in delivering the lessons and 'Local Education Authorities should set up multi-disciplinary working parties to consider action to extend and improve' this education. There need to be inter-professional training and agreed prevention strategies for teachers, doctors, nurses, social workers, health and youth workers.

1979

Her Majesty's Inspectorate, no less, states that 'the personal and social development of the pupils is one way of describing the central purpose of education.' It advocates 'general preparation for adult living.' Its report, *Aspects of Secondary Education in England*, describes its 3-year survey of education for 14-to-16-year-olds in roughly 10 percent of schools. Preparation for parenthood as such isn't mentioned but 'community service' is. About half the schools provide opportunities for at least some of their pupils to engage in it, e.g. assisting in playgroups or nurseries. 'These sometimes successfully combine community service with opportunities for observation and relevant practical experience for pupils taking childcare or child development courses. The opportunities for older pupils to give practical help in the local community can be of great educational value. It can help pupils to understand more about the communities in which they live and the needs of their members, and also give opportunities for relationships to develop across differences

of age, background and experience. Some pupils appear to have gained much self-confidence.'

It's a familiar story: it's usually just girls, and the less able ones, who get this education about early years. But the inspectors are cautiously on the ball. 'Schools might wish to consider how this sort of experience can be provided for more pupils from a wider range of ability.' And they could have added that the experiences can contribute to the formation of good parents.

1979

Another call for a weekend residential conference on education for parenthood from the working party on the subject within the Home Economics Committee of the Schools Council. It plans a document.

1979

The Joint Working Party on Pregnant Schoolgirls and Schoolgirl Mothers sees the need. 'Girls and boys, including those over 16 of all levels of ability, should receive education in personal development and relationships, social responsibility and preparation for family life *throughout their primary and secondary schooling.'* (My emphasis.)

1979

Eminent child development expert Dr Penelope Leach, in *Who Cares? A New Deal for Mothers and their Small Children,* argues the case at length. Many first-time parents have no idea what difference a baby will make; sex education deals only with biology. 'In a few schools, and all honour to them, some girls (perhaps even a few boys as well) will have studied "mothercraft": bathed a baby doll, visited a day nursery and perhaps helped at a playgroup. But while teaching of this kind heads in the right direction, it does not go nearly far enough. When we give career advice to teenagers, we try to show them what life as an electronic engineer, a nurse, a salesperson or an apprentice

carpenter will actually be *like*. We need to do the same kind of thing for motherhood or, better still, for parenthood as a whole.'

And she elaborates. 'What young people, especially girls, need to know is everything they can grasp about the development - physical, mental, social and emotional - of normal children. It is out of their necessary development that children's particular needs, at any given age/stage, spring. It is those needs, sequence after sequence, phase after phase, that responsible parents must strive to meet, both for their child's sake and their own. Few pupils escape The Romans in history lessons. How strange that it is not thought equally desirable for children to grow up with some picture of their own development, as human beings. It is an easy option for teachers, too. I have yet to meet a group of children of any age and either sex who were not deeply fascinated by the subject. Try, "How do you think children learn to talk?" on any ten-year-old you may have available.

'If all mothers, potential and actual, are to be given the chance to be deeply interested in the development of their own children, we are going to have to teach child development to all. The development of human beings younger than themselves is something which deeply interests almost everyone. Children, from the age of four or five, love to discuss why they are as they are. As for adolescents, the study of infancy enables them to both look at their own past, as children to their parents, and at their future, as parents of children-to-be. They are equally riveted by both. A few secondary schools recognise this. Those girls and boys no longer study "mothercraft" but something called "children." There is even talk of making child development a widely available option for '0' level students. If this is a trend it is better than nothing. But there is a danger in formalisation. Ought people really to take examinations in "becoming human"?

'Like sex education. such courses will be only as good as the people who teach them. Diagrammatic representations of the sex act are

little help to adolescents trying to cope with first surges of lust. Lists of "developmental milestones" will feel irrelevant to people trying to cope with one possible result of that. The people who ought to "teach" child development are the same people who are coping with developing children; they, and only they, are the ones who know how children actually do it': in other words, parents. This seems to be a call for parents to become involved in child development lessons in schools.

1979

Parenthood Education in Schools by Vivienne Evans, William Rice and James Cowley is published by TACADE (The Advisory Council on Alcohol and Drug Education, now defunct) in Manchester. It seems that the Lions Clubs inherited all of TACADE's materials.

1979

There's been little attempt to find out how teenagers really see and understand parenthood. Kellmer Pringle reckons that society - and some forms of parenthood education - glamorise, idealise and romanticise parenthood, giving false ideas. There is little public recognition of the intense, exhausting, overwhelming reality, and how many women in particular suffer. In his article *Teenagers and Motherhood: Are We Being Naïve?,* professor Alan Prout reports on his interviews with 15-year-olds, both male and female. He enquires about their knowledge and beliefs about motherhood; their effect on a mother; implications for mothers of young children of having a paid job; and mothers' mental health problems, especially depression.

These interviews allow much more scope for expression than a questionnaire. Although one says, 'It's a good life for a mother at home with a young child,' their *immediate* responses are nearly all negative: boring, exhausting, awful, depressing, demanding, with few opportunities. Only four percent paint a stereotyped, positive picture. But when pressed, 61 percent agree that motherhood could be

worthwhile, pleasurable and bring long-term rewards. Most can see both positive and negative aspects; a quarter give fuller descriptions with examples: a different social life; being tied to home; interrupted careers. They draw on their experience and observations of others: next-door neighbours, mothers, people in the street. 'Childcare goes on all around them.'

They have suggestions: fathers could share the work; women could join a mothers' group; and they speak of the material and psychological benefits to a mother of having a job and income. Half acknowledge the frustration of being at home and the possibility of serious long-term depression; a parent's wish to give up, shouting at the child amid the noise. Prout concludes that we should deepen and extend their knowledge to help them with parenthood and 'also, should they consider it necessary, create anew the social conditions under which it takes place.'

1979

The Scottish HMIs' report, *Health Education in Primary, Secondary and Special Schools in Scotland,* has considered some practicalities. 'Open co-operation between subject departments and guidance teams will certainly be necessary in planning courses and deployment of staff for themes such as parenthood.' The Scottish secretary of state 'places considerable emphasis on the need for courses which will encourage an understanding of the world outside school and act as a preparation for the challenges and obligations of adulthood.'

1979

Marriage Matters, a paper by the Working Party on Marriage Guidance, cites the 'piecemeal and uncoordinated approaches to education. There's still insufficient awareness that it's as important to educate boys as it is girls in personal relationships, childcare and parenthood.'

1979

John Balding of St Luke's college of education studies views about health topics by 14-year-old girls in Exeter. They consider sex education to be the most important, but childcare the most interesting!

1979

Education for Parenthood: A Report of Advisors' Study Group is published by Hampshire LEA. The advisors look at the provision of parenthood education in secondary schools and colleges of further education, identifying three major strands:

a) 'Those which are 'lived through' within the very ethos of the school, which is a society itself;
b) Those which are part of the work of the various subject departments e.g. humanities, PE, biology, home economics;
c) Those overtly planned as a distinct course: e.g. Parentcraft, Human Development or Preparation for Life.'

1979

The DES gives a three-year grant to Aston university's project in Birmingham: *Preparation for Parenthood in the Secondary School Curriculum*. The team examines programmes within five local authorities, including innovation and the constraints preventing the wider provision of pre-parent education. It recommends parenthood-related experience for all pupils. Teresa Grafton leads the team of six, including the great enthusiast for this cause, Richard Whitfield, as well as Sam Comber, Lesley Smith, Martin Vegoda and Carol Wheelwright. A Main Report and Supplement, *The Pilot School Case Study of One Co-educational Comprehensive School,* will be published in 1982-83 outlining the historical development of preparation for parenthood at schools in the area; the curriculum and general life of schools as they affect education for parenthood; school subjects

which contribute to it as a primary or subsidiary aim; teachers' backgrounds and objectives; and an exploration of pupils' attitudes.

1979

A well-argued article, *Child Care Courses in the Curriculum* by Patricia J Waring of Sheffield city polytechnic, appears in the *Journal of Consumer Studies and Home Economics*. Like many others, she refers to the 'impetus' given by Keith Joseph's 1973 speech; then counters some objections to school-based parenthood education, concluding that child rearing courses, 'far from being a tiresome outmoded irrelevant burden on an already overcrowded curriculum, for the majority of pupils irrespective of their ability, could be regarded as the most important form of learning the school can provide.'

The objections?

- The secondary curriculum is already overcrowded. 'But sheer mechanics of timetabling is a poor reason for excluding any subject for which there can be shown to be a genuine educational need';

- Courses are boring, of little interest to pupils who look after younger siblings or babysit. Yet one can observe the 'expressions of satisfaction and enthusiastic concentration in pupils involved in working with young children. This type of work seems to satisfy some deep psychological need by adolescents, in some way making up for needs and experiences not satisfied when young' such as playing with sand and water and evidence shows that most want to learn about babies and children (see above, Fogelman 1976);

- Courses are a form of social engineering to reduce the number of problem families, or encourage mothers to stay at home and not join the labour market. But families have severe problems - housing, poverty and so on, real issues - which no school course

can prevent. 'All that is being claimed is that such courses may produce a growing understanding and increased awareness of the child as an interesting, interacting, developing individual personality. The care of children does not come naturally, even if the biological drive to become a parent does';

- Courses militate against encouraging girls to fulfil themselves outside of the home. But as Mia Kellmer Pringle told the *Daily Telegraph* (1979), 'Parenting has been undervalued and I must lay some blame at the door of women's liberation. Whilst liberating women is obviously extremely essential, I don't think that doing it at the cost of the children is a very wise thing.' Adolescents need not be told to become stay-at-home mothers but to bear in mind the needs of small children;

- Courses lack academic content. But the work of Bowlby and many others provides rigorous scientific evidence of what is needed for optimal development, providing a body of knowledge from a recognised academic discipline.

Boys need this education, especially now that more women go to work and both parents have to share child rearing 'which cannot be left to the unskilled. Society, acting through its education system, has prime responsibility for ensuring that children have adequate care in the pre-school years, through the proper provision of child care courses for future parents and other family members of the new generation.'

Stop Press: 1970

The Order of Christian Unity publishes a 39-page pamphlet by Margaret White: *Sound Sex Education - Preparation for Marriage and Parenthood: A Handbook for Parents, Teachers and Education Authorities,* which gets a mention in the House of Lords.

Chapter Three
The 1980s

1980
'Ideally a school would have a core curriculum of education for parenthood with elements running throughout the school years,' write Lee Adams and Mary Tidyman of Waltham Forest and Redbridge Health Education Service which publishes their *Education for Parenthood in Schools*. In 1983 Adams and Tidyman will expand on it. Both Somerset and Waltham Forest LEAs produce guidelines on health education, including education for parenthood.

1980
Education for Family Life: Some New Policies for Child Care by professor Richard Whitfield is published. The stimulus comes from the National Children's Home's invitation to address its 1979 conference during the International Year of the Child where he speaks as a Christian, chair of the National Campaign for the Family, teacher and father, about preparation for parenthood. His book begins with eight little vignettes of 'today's reality' in the upbringing of children. 'Gary, a toddler of three, is dragged along by the hand in the supermarket, falls over a piece of produce and begins to cry. His distraught mother yanks him to his feet, shouts at him and slaps him, causing the child to cry even more.' Whitfield doesn't fight shy of telling it like it (sometimes) is, but also shows a sympathetic understanding of why parents do what they do.

He discusses in detail the many documents promoting parenthood education in all settings and the lack of progress in achieving it. 'No UK government has developed any clear avenues of implementation. Concern is widespread, yet diffuse, while exhortation is one of the main features of the political discussions. The fact that we do not know very much about the most effective techniques should not delay

us from committing ourselves experimentally to it.' He concludes: 'Education for Parenthood could lead to the transformation of our social structure and the unleashing of our innate capacities to love and care for each other more effectively.'

1980

A Framework for the Secondary School Curriculum (DES) simply states: 'Preparation for parenthood should find a place in the education of every pupil.'

1980

There's a weekend course for child development teachers at Dartford short course centre. And in October, Cynthia Reynolds organises a three-day course for teachers. It covers the history of abuse in parents' childhood; when the child is seen as unlovable and disappointing; low stress tolerance in parents; trigger factors; and when there are no lifelines in existence to help.

1980s

Alison Orton, an experienced teacher, writes in her article *Parentcraft: A Teacher's View:* 'If we consider and believe that the structure of our society is changing, that attitudes, morals and beliefs are declining, then how can we endeavour to support and guide the new generation? I would suggest that although the parent has the first, the strongest and the longest influence on any child, the school is the only institution to have contact with every child in this country, and therefore has potential influence.' She goes on to record the enjoyment and enlightenment shown by her pupils in parentcraft lessons. 'It is certainly a chance to teach a subject which the pupils see as relevant to life, and provides us with an opportunity to experiment with unconventional teaching methods.'

1980

Preparation for Parenthood: Some Current Initiatives and Thinking, edited by Gillian Pugh, is published by the NCB. This masterly work includes an eight-page chapter, *Work in Schools*, which states, 'If we are to help young people make informed choices about marriage and a family, then preparation must undoubtedly start during the school years.' Part One, *Some Current Initiatives*, brings together contributions by 85 organisations and individuals, and covers, as well as what is happening in schools, work in further education, youth services, ante-natal services, and support for families with young children.

Part Two, *Some Current Thinking,* a report of the Preparation for Parenthood 1979 conference with its 48 distinguished participants, includes talks by Dr Mia Kellmer Pringle; John Stacpoole, under secretary, Children's Division, DHSS; and Frank Verdon, principal, DES. Pringle states: 'Preparation for parenthood would raise both the status and level of parenting if the whole population were to receive some preparation for the task. Schools provide the only opportunity to do so.'

The summary of the discussions tells us that 'the conference looked in particular at the contribution schools could make to preparation for parenthood.' Verdon reflects: 'Education in this country has been traditionally concerned with the whole person. Understanding what is involved in preparing for, having, and looking after children is an important aspect of emotional development and personal responsibility; school is the only place where all future parents can be reached with certainty; parenthood is a topic which can offer educational material which pupils of all abilities find relevant and motivating, and can contribute to the development of skills in several important areas.'

Despite some reservations, 'it was agreed that nevertheless it was desirable that all children should receive education relating to

parenthood at some stage in their school career. There would have to be a drastic change in the value that society as a whole placed on subjects like preparation for parenthood which did not necessarily lead to examinations, if they were to be generally accepted as an important part of the curriculum for academically bright pupils as well as for those with more limited attainments.' And delegates seemed to predict the success of future programmes such as Teens and Toddlers when they 'emphasised that the placement of young people in nursery schools and playgroups was a crucial component of any credible preparation for parenthood course.' The report recommends that a national clearing house be set up to co-ordinate information about all parenthood education being done, and to enable discussion.

1980

The DHSS funds a three-year project at the NCB, led by Gillian Pugh, to establish a national clearing house on preparation for parenthood and support for parents with young children. The remit, amongst other things, is 'to include the role of schools in preparing young people for family life.'

1980

'Preparation for parenthood is a topic which arouses great interest among teenagers and is thought by teachers and parents to be a worthwhile subject for education,' declares the School Health Education Project for 13-to-18-year-olds.

1981

ILEA's child development bulletin reports that most girls' and mixed schools in ILEA now offer a CSE in child development and the family as an option in fourth and fifth years. Expansion has levelled out. How can the subject appeal more to boys?

1981

The year of riots in Brixton, Toxteth and Southall. A letter from a reader called Watson in *The Times* suggests that preparation for parenthood at school might help prevent these in future.

1981

Nottingham LEA produces health education guidelines, including education for parenthood. Later, Graham Allen, Labour MP for Nottingham North, develops similar work there; government education cuts by the Conservative/LibDem coalition (2010) will lead to its reduction. He helps develop a *Life Skills* package for all Nottingham secondary schools, to include the skills of parenting. In 2013 he will initiate the UK-wide Early Intervention Foundation.

1981

A DES publication, *The School Curriculum,* states, 'There are some essential constituents of the school curriculum which are often identified as subjects but which are likely to feature in a variety of courses and programmes and may be more effectively covered if they are distributed across the curriculum. These concern personal and social development and can be conveniently grouped under headings of moral education, health and sex education, and preparation for parenthood and family life. Preparation for parenthood and family life should help pupils to recognise the importance of those human relationships which sustain, and are sustained by, family life, and the demands and duties that fall on parents.'

1981

Camden and Westminster teachers centre hosts a three-day course for child development teachers, run by Cynthia Reynolds.

1981

Twenty-five sixth formers attend a sixth-form July summer school on human development at the Cockpit Theatre in Camden. Teachers include Cynthia Reynolds and Honor Mason.

1981

The Practical Curriculum by the Schools Council is clear. 'The heart of the matter is what each child takes away from school.' It talks of the 'irreducible minimum to which each child should have a right of access,' such an ability to be sensitive to the needs of others in order to develop satisfactory relationships.' All good parenting stuff.

1981

Progress on the Parenting Project by Gillian Pugh is published, as well as *Parenting Education and Support: Policies and Practice* by Pugh and De'Ath.

1981

In England and Wales in 1971, 51 pupils took a CSE in Child Development and Family Life. By 1980 this had risen to nearly 50,000. Liz Heron in the *Times Educational Supplement* (*Where Have All the Fathers Gone?)* discusses how, despite this sharp rise and the new '0' level exam, boys are put off. For example, one CSE question begins, 'You have recently given birth to a premature baby…' And she cites people who take universal parenthood education seriously. Michael Marland, head of North Westminster Community School, is against child development as a separate subject. 'It has to be part of the main curriculum for all pupils from Year 3 onwards, and should not be an option.' In Scotland, the Strathclyde Project, *Understanding Children*, aims to reach every 4th year student in Renfrewshire schools – 'short blocks of teaching which can be included in the core social and personal curriculum. Its central focus is children's psychological development within the family.'

1981
The NCB's *Parenting Papers No. 1,* edited by Pugh, reports on its study day. Speakers included Peter Moss, Lin Poulton and Cynthia Reynolds. *No. 2* appears, *Parenting in the 80s*, in 1982 with Kellmer Pringle.

1981
Also in the *Times Educational Supplement* is Anne Jones' article, *Soft Option for the Gentler Sex?* 'Child development should be part of any common core of subjects.' As head of Cranford community school in Hounslow, London, she makes her point so eloquently that we reproduce most of the piece in full.

'It is possible to argue the case for almost any subject in the common curriculum. There are several acid tests. What does the subject offer in areas of experience, basic skills; preparation for adult and working life, social and life skills? Is it practical to include it in the light of claims from other subjects or of economic considerations – what it costs to put on, what the economic 'pay-off' is for the nation, whether there are any suitably qualified teachers available?

'Where does all this put courses in child development? Very high on the list. It clearly offers opportunities for the creative and aesthetic, the ethical, the linguistic, the mathematical, the physical, the scientific, the social and political, and the spiritual. For those who are still subject-minded, it can be argued that child development., like home economics, transcends many subject barriers: all the sciences, technology, psychology, sociology, economics, art and design, and philosophy. The opportunities for literacy, numeracy and oracy are endless, opportunities, moreover, set in realistic contexts which make putting theory into practice more rewarding and meaningful.

'As for preparation for adult and working life, we find mercifully more to help adult life than working life. So many school courses

concentrate on qualifications (rather than skills for working life), and neglect the adult at home, at leisure, retired or out of work. For social and life skills, child development includes study of the individual, the group, the community, and society at large. It has potential for teaching people to manage their own lives, their own resources, to make choices, to take responsibility for themselves and others, to use and to contribute to the resources of the community. It offers opportunities for putting theory into practice. In short, it links learning with life.

'In the present economic, social and moral climate, child development would appear to offer considerable practical help. Not to teach it would appear to be a false economy, if what we want is greater family stability, better nurtured children, more participative dads, fewer battered or unwanted babies, and greater happiness for the greatest number.

'If as a nation we really believe in the importance of marriage, the family, the home, the early years of childhood, then perhaps we should make sure we all understand what this is all about.

'The question is whether teaching pupils about anything at school really improves the quality of their adult life. It can be argued that the way the subject is taught is more important than the content alone; that child-bearing/parenthood come naturally, are caught and taught in the pupils' homes, and are better learnt at the moment of need - most of us after all managed without it; that precious school time should therefore be kept for subjects you cannot learn from experience, women's magazines, do-it-yourself manuals and adult education classes.

'There is a further argument put forward by some cynics, namely that teaching a subject in school actually puts pupils off. Take Hyacinth, for example, who, pregnant at school, was asked by her social worker

why this had happened when surely she'd been taught about contraception by her teacher. Hyacinth replied succinctly, "When I'm making love, I don't think about them school things."

'Economics apart, have we the supply of teachers to teach child development to all? Bodies we have, that is for sure, but have we the 'right' kind of teacher, both in their own attitudes to the sensitive matters in the syllabus, and also in the way that they teach. Even child development can become, in the wrong hands, a package of inert knowledge to be learnt and regurgitated. In skilful hands it has enormous potential for combining rigorous knowledge, practical skills and deep insights. But as with most subjects, the method transcends the message: the method *is* the message.

'But why just child development? Why not human development? Why this concentration from womb to cradle? Apart from birth to age 5, scant attention is paid from the cradle to adolescence, let alone the cradle to the grave. It may well help adolescents to feel adult to be able to look back on their early years; in some cases, it gives an excuse and an opportunity for them to make up for some experiences they missed first time round. But more emphasis on other phases in family life, including how to handle menopausal parents or aging grandparents, would not come amiss.

'As it is, child development appears to be a kind of convenience option, slotted cunningly into the cafeteria in such a way as to allow the 'second-rate' and the 'second-class' to stream themselves off. An option for less able girls who are not so stupid as not to know their place and who are, initially, starry-eyed about babies and bootees.

'It is not generally regarded as a 'real' academic subject. 'High fliers' cannot possibly fit it in if they are to do the requisite number of sciences and languages. It is a soft option – full of soft toys, soft furnishings, soft soap, soft skin – for the gentler, softer sex.

'It is also in its assumptions often extraordinarily English, when in fact, possibilities for a multicultural approach are both endless and challenging to the 'official' white nuclear family gospel. Anti-sexism may well be on the syllabus, but more time is spent on combating sex than sexism. And what's the point of any of this if, despite equal opportunities, the boys are not there?

'If a subject is worth teaching at all, then all pupils should have access to it, whatever their sex, race or ability. Somewhere across and within the five-year curriculum, there needs to be a programme for all pupils to learn about family life, childbirth, childrearing, homemaking, the management of people and resources, and interpersonal relationships.

'Some pupils will choose to study in depth and take an exam; all pupils, including male pupils and intelligent pupils, need a 'common core.' Call this subject what we will: home economics, social studies, moral education, health education, parentcraft, community studies - no matter. The point is that the components should be there and the methods used active not passive, experiential as well as intellectual, involving feelings as well as reason.'

1982

A Job for Life: Education and Support for Parents by Gillian Pugh, Jean Kidd and Kate Torkington is published by the NCB, the National Marriage Guidance Council and the National Children's Home. This is used by many agencies, including schools and colleges, to plan a curriculum on parenthood education. 'Parenthood education is a continuous process starting with birth and early childhood and going through schooldays, adolescence and committed relationships, pregnancy and parenthood itself. During this cycle, different elements of preparation are appropriate at different times.' Up to age 16, provide education about parenthood, or preparation for good personal relationships, rather than preparation for parenthood or parentcraft. This increases self-confidence and self-knowledge.

Students can consider if they want to be parents, their values and attitudes to parenting; and gain insight into child development and first-hand experience of young children. Preparation for parenthood for young adults is of practical, immediate importance. During the 80s, Pugh and De'Ath organise or speak at about 70 conferences in the UK and abroad on school-based parenting education and support.

1982

John Tomlinson, former Schools Council chair, now Cheshire's child-and-parent-centred chief education officer, in his conference speech, *The Contribution of the Education Service,* reports a move from a didactic approach. 'I remember my horror meeting health professionals who thought that telling people what to do had some effect. As an educator I had grown out of that. Practice must take an emotional root before it becomes a rational behaviour.' He emphasises the role of a school's ethos and atmosphere in helping to produce good parents for the future. 'Any education for parenthood should start with the belief that parenting is a valuable activity and parents' own abilities are the key. The idea that experts somehow have more wisdom is harmful, even if in some specific cases it is true.' Improve in-service training in teaching parenthood, get schools to work with parents and outside agencies. 'The academic is only one dimension of human development. The revolution which will effect the chances of the next generation actually becoming better parents through their school experience has only just begun.' And he says: include those in further education, 'an interesting and neglected phase.' (From 2008 the educational /training / leaving age will rise to 17 or 18.) Make sure the learning is experiential, not didactic.

Rachel Lockwood, a school inspector at the DES, speaks at the same conference on *Parenthood Education*, and considers the difference between 'education for family responsibility', 'preparation for parenthood' and 'parenthood education,' quoting UNESCO's definition of parenthood education as 'those experiences and training

of young people which are relevant to the aim of helping them to become self-aware and to form stable relationships so that in due course they may consider responsibly the possibilities of marriage, skilled parenthood and fulfilled family life.' She applauds what the Scottish Inspectorate say about it: 'Aims and styles must not be such as to implicitly suggest that those who do not become or do not wish to become parents are somehow odd or inadequate.' Even though school represents only about 17 percent of a child's life between birth and 16, its lived ethos can play a part in preparing students to care for any family member. 'For many pupils the most significant factor in a school may not be from lessons or class work at all but from that which is 'caught' from the 'hidden curriculum.' How does one set about teaching love, caring, trust, honesty, respect, except through the experience and feelings associated with being loved, cared for, trusted and respected?'

1982

Professor Klaus Shleicher of Hamburg university writes *Preparation for Family Life*, published by the Council of Europe. He considers the necessity for the subject and how it is taught at schools in Europe, specifically in Austria, West Germany, England and Finland (which also teaches education for family life in the military forces.)

New attitudes and approaches towards education for family life, he tells us, have been promoted in schools since the mid-1920s, as it was increasingly recognised that:

1 The school has a special task in this because the more that potential parents need preparation, the less they join adult education programmes later on, and the lower their educational level, the earlier they become sexually involved;
2 Schools have a unique opportunity. Compulsory education lasts till after students have established 'intimate friendships with the other

sex' and they need to dissociate themselves from home experiences and guidance after puberty;

3 Schools are in a good position to encourage reflection and understanding.

In the early 1970s, 'only a few people claimed that all schools should run a course on human relations and child development. However, there have been increasing demands since then.' Indeed, in the 1970s, 'it was strongly recommended by the Council of Europe, the European ministers responsible for Family Affairs, and 21 member states that schools should engage in this field.' They cared as much for social as for intellectual learning, understood that the subject couldn't be taught the same way as traditional subjects, that it needed a multi-disciplinary approach, and that about half of youngsters have had sex by the age of 18.

Most European countries want 'education for parenthood' rather than 'preparation for family life' – though, if it's given only in the last years at school, students' attitudes have already been established. Other doubts have been expressed. Do advocates of this education really understand social behaviour? If single parents use what they learn at school, it might be in conflict with their mothers who are supporting them. Can we really teach an alternative type of childrearing in a few lessons in a typical classroom situation with only occasional visits and little co-operation between home and school? This subject is mainly taken by girls on low income but is needed by all social groups. To be effective, it should be taught in 'realistic surroundings.' Schleicher laments that there is almost nothing about this subject in teacher training - only a bit during in-service training.

1982

Thelma Bomford gives her address, *Learning to be a Parent at School,* at the 11th International Conference on Health Education in Tasmania. Thelma (1924 – 2011) is a leading light in that world. Her long years

as a midwife, health visitor and health education officer have convinced her of the necessity of preparing young people at school, not just in parentcraft but to be caring people generally, caring for others around them and for their local community.

Some parents, she says, are disturbed by the idea of parent education at school. But parenting, 'probably the most important work any human undertakes,' needs to be taught – it's not intuitive. 'It seems extraordinary to me now that this most vital work was never thought of as a subject to learn – something that could be taught at school.'

Her findings are moving. 'Several doctors, seeing young mothers at child health centres, have commented on how well the mothers cared for their children and have been told, "We learnt this at school." But she's disappointed about boys. A few choose the CSE course 'but they feel threatened and are teased by their peers, thus, although they are interested and willing, they opt out.' On the positive side, mothers are invited into Lambeth primary schools with their baby (and paid to come.) 'Both boys and girls are always fascinated by babies.' Many have no chance to see or hold one. (This was years before Roots of Empathy or B.A.S.E.®Babywatching came to British schools. See Volume Two of *Nothing More Important.* Thelma's a real pioneer.) Some mothers attend regularly for two years. And secondary students who visit a playgroup and form in-depth relationships with a child sometimes stay in contact for years.

1983

Personal and Social Education in Secondary Schools by Kenneth David is published, a report by a Schools Council Working Party. Like many other experts, David, and those he quotes, believe that above-average students should also have such education, including preparation for parenthood. There are interesting angles. Don't play safe or be bland, they urge teachers. Let all alternative views be aired. Don't allow peer pressure to silence what the kids say. Be aware of the wide

differences between the backgrounds of teachers and students, their values, beliefs and experience. Avoid indoctrination with your political, religious or ethical views. Never allow intrusion into the privacy of students or adults. Agree the ground rules together. Be supportive, not threatening. Consider what message is given by the behaviour of staff: does it model what you want to teach? Everything a school does affects its students. And how does this education imbed itself? It might need the initial enthusiasm of one person but mustn't over-depend: the person might leave. Commitment is needed by senior staff and, crucially, governors. This work takes time. Regular reviews are needed to constantly adapt and improve it.

It will be taken seriously if evaluations (rather than formal 'evidence') show its significance. 'The teacher's gut reaction is very often a professional judgement based on objective observation.' Ken Robinson does a report on the importance of the arts: he argues for music, dance, drama, visual and literary arts, by which schools can 'translate personal and social development into daily practice.' The arts, 'necessities, not options,' give depth, are the best way to express feelings, develop imagination, sensitivity and inner resources, just as important as academic success. And a telling word of disappointment from the experts. 'We regret that many schools are slow to review their work in the field of personal and social education.' This and pastoral care 'appear sometimes to have been devised merely to contain a difficult age group and to enforce discipline and social control. We regret that national rhetoric of documents has not always led to supportive action. Ideals and aims can be nominal if they don't lead to positive action by schools, as well as better encouragement and support by local and national education authorities.'

1983

Records of Achievement at 16: Some Examples of Current Practice is published by the DES. Giving all students, when they leave school, a written record of their academic and personal achievements can

motivate them, especially the less able ones. Achievements can be for involvement in school or out, such as community service. These records draw attention to 'the need to consider how educational requirements of all pupils, including the acquisition and development of skills, attitudes and personal qualities, can be met by schools.' Pupils have to have experiences to 'develop and demonstrate their capabilities.' The paper recognises 'the limitations of the public examination system' which provides only 'a single terminal external assessment' instead of a more rounded picture over time which includes positive comments about, for example, pupils' empathy, kindness, and understanding of children and parents. For some pupils, the record would be 'the only tangible statement of their performance.' The records lead to changes in the curriculum towards more practical lessons with greater pupil participation. It is easy to see how experiential parenthood education can fit in. Alas, employees and universities aren't interested in the records. By the late 1990s, they have more or less died out.

1983

The NSPCC makes its case. *The Guardian* runs Aileen Ballantyne's article *Parentcraft Lessons Needed to Stop Cruelty* (28 July.) 'Parentcraft should be taught in schools to prevent the large amount of child abuse by young parents, NSPCC director, Dr Alan Gilmour, said yesterday. He said that 30 percent of the cases of child abuse that the Society dealt with last year involved parents under the age of 24, and there was a strong need for children to learn about the stresses and restrictions of parenthood to counterbalance the image of the TV commercials. Adolescent children were taught the mechanics of sex as if it was something apart from the rest of life but they were not taught relationships and coping with crying babies.

'Launching the Society's annual report yesterday, Mr Rae Castle, its national child abuse officer, said that parents now tended to contact the NSPCC themselves after they had injured their child or if they felt

in danger of doing so. In one case, a 26-year-old mother had spent six months screaming at her seven-year-old daughter Julie and eventually slapped her across the face. Unfortunately, the mother was wearing a ring and this cut the girl's face. Absolutely horrified at what she had done, she telephoned the NSPCC. The girl needed stitches. It became clear after six months of counselling that she had been the "scapegoat" for financial and marital problems and the case was resolved without Julie being taken into care, he said.

'In one of the most extreme cases of neglect last year, two young children were reported to be alone in the house late one evening. An NSPCC inspector was let in by one of the children, who lit a candle as there was no other source of light. The inspector reported, "My feet were sticking to the carpet as I made my way through the litter of derelict furniture. I realised that the floor was covered with dog and cat excreta. The kitchen floor was strewn with dirty smelling clothing and empty tins. There was no food in the house. The bathroom was unusable, everywhere the smell was overpowering." The Society found that the family had a 13-year history of neglect. The children were taken into care and their mother prosecuted. The number of cases of abuse has increased by 23 percent on last year, but the number involving serious instances of abuse has dropped.'

1983

Hazel Sumner, BBC teacher education officer, has heart-warming news in her article *Education for Family Life* in the *Home Economics* journal. The BBC is responding to the 'burgeoning' of child care and allied subjects in schools (there is now even an 'A' level on offer), contributing to this 'buzz of activity' with two new series for 14-to-16-year-olds: one on radio (five programmes), one on telly (five programmes), focussing on the emotional and social aspects of parenthood - what teachers say they need help with. 'Broadcasts can be a particularly valuable resource in an emotive subject area such as this. Honest discussion can be a threat to the privacy of teacher and

pupils alike.' Discussion of broadcast real-life examples helps avoid personal disclosures. 'Radio is a suitable medium for the communication of intimate ideas and feelings.'

The radio series comes with *Teachers' Notes*: how to handle classroom discussion; suggested activities linked to the series, e.g. role-play, visiting playgroups. Teachers are advised to prepare classes to listen to the broadcasts; to listen to the programmes themselves beforehand; and to follow them up.

The radio series, *Child Care,* (15 minutes per programme), deals with:

1 Ante-natal period; emotional adaptation to pregnancy by both parents;
2 Father's importance; single parents;
3 Early bonding; breastfeeding; new roles for both parents; play;
4 Helpful links in the community;
5 Child care and home problems, as featured in letters invited by the BBC from pupils.

The TV series, provisionally called *Child Care and Parenthood*, (20 minutes per programme), deals with:

1 Children at nursery; young parents interviewed;
2 Planned/unplanned pregnancy; why people have children; adoption;
3 First vital months; a health visitor contacts new parents;
4 Divorced father with three children; working mothers; parents of 'handicapped' child; young unmarried mother;
5 Parental concerns about school, hospital, law court, neighbourhood.

1983

The Mass Communication Research Centre at Leicester university examines influences on the attitudes of teenagers towards family life, doing surveys to explore what young people's attitudes actually are.

1983

The *Health Education Journal* publishes Lee Adams and Mary Tidyman's article, *An Investigation into Education for Parenthood in Schools*. 'Education for parenthood is not simply to do with the practical skills involved but much more with the social and psychological dimensions. For many people, school is the only place they will receive any education for parenthood.' They recommend that 'there should be a broader base [than home economics] for it, with teachers, male and female from a variety of disciplines, contributing to a course and one of the team having overall responsibility for co-ordination.

'An alternative title to 'childcare' ought to be used for courses. The subject should be part of the core curriculum for all students, both boys and girls of all abilities, at least for the first three years of the secondary school. After that, a variety of related options should be available, preferably courses that are not formally examined. More opportunities for students to have experience with young children in a family setting should be explored.' And they tell us that 'many authorities are setting up working panels to look into the provision made by their schools.'

1983

Ken Fogelman, in *Sex Education and Preparation for Parenthood,* cites the 'major change [since the 1950s] in a matter which was previously left to parents, friends or chance.' There's cause for concern about health and welfare, with increases in schoolgirl pregnancy, early marriage and divorce. 'Aspects of health education taught in both primary and secondary schools and supported by knowledgeable parents should be able to provide the maturing individuals with both the knowledge and understanding that they can apply as the parents of the next generation.'

1983

The East Anglian Examinations Board writes of its CSE in Childcare and Development: 'It is believed that these aims are of vital importance to all young people who, before many years have elapsed, may have children of their own.' The aims include 'fostering an interest in family life; promoting the development of the understanding of young people by adolescents; encouraging positive attitudes towards responsible parenthood; and imparting awareness of the importance of the stable family unit in society.'

1984

The Needs of Parents: Practice and Policy in Parent Education by Pugh and De'Ath of the NCB states: 'If parent education is to be a lifelong process it must begin in one form or another during childhood. School is the only place where all future parents can be reached with certainty.' It summarises the three-year DHSS project and provides a rationale for parenting education throughout the life cycle, including a chapter on the role of schools. It describes parent education as a 'continuous process, starting with birth and early childhood and going through school days, adolescence and committed relationships, pregnancy and parenthood itself. Compulsory courses should come with no examinations, but with an optional exam in child development for those who choose.'

1984

In *Project Chronicles: Child Related Studies Curriculum*, Lesley Smith writes about teaching parenthood to 16-to-19-year-olds. With this age group in sixth form or further education colleges, you can combine group work with investigations by individual students, who can then explain and share their new knowledge and carry out joint evaluations. There can be deep, detailed learning and critical examination of views and practices: see 1988 below.

1985

Family Lifestyles and *Childhood* by Dorit Braun and Naomi Eisenstadt are published by the Open University, as part of its Education for Family Life project, funded by the Health Education Council. These are thoroughly researched loose-leaf resources for teachers. *Family Lifestyles'* three sections cover: What is a family?; Relationships in the Family; and Social Roles. *Childhood* addresses Identity; Practical Experiences with Young Children; and The Child, The School and The Community. The packs are developed with the input of teachers in Avon and ILEA. There is a steering committee, a consultation group and a support group. Over 40 individuals and LEAs are involved. The work is tested by schools in Birmingham, Bolton, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Devon, Hertfordshire, ILEA, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Nottingham, Sheffield, Stockport and Warwickshire.

The role of parents, 'a valuable and often neglected resource,' is vital for this project and an inter-agency approach is encouraged. Included should be special schools, residential homes, intermediate treatment schemes and youth centres. Teachers had attended a two-day training to work through the lively, attractive packs which contain a treasure trove of suggested activities: ice-breakers, fun activities, evocative photos, cartoons, adverts to discuss, and poems, to name a few. They encourage boys to play with dolls and domestic toys. Fears and daydreaming in childhood are covered. There's a list of resources and some interesting articles: students aged 15 and over should visit playgroups and nurseries, observe in pairs to learn about attachment and could write *A Day in the Life of a Small Child.* It's good for teachers to make these visits too. Students can carry out neighbourhood surveys, with preparation and debriefing, asking parents about their experiences. They can explore local streets in small groups to evaluate how useful the facilities are for young families, and report back to the class through substantial

presentations. They can produce leaflets and make a documentary film for the local community.

How might teachers and parents feel about this type of project? Possible reactions from parents could include:

- The teacher isn't married and has no children!
- You're being nosy;
- Teach my daughter practical childcare instead;
- There's no exam, so how can you measure success?
- A waste of time to do things out of school during school time;
- Who gets the information about my home life, as revealed in the lessons?
- You're undermining my responsibility: it's the parents' job;
- Why wasn't I informed?
- What will you do if I refuse to give personal information for the homework?
- Why should my bright son spend time on this instead of on exam subjects?
- I withdraw my child from these lessons!

With these in mind, teachers in training could reflect on their relationships with parents.

To evaluate the work, every participant can list '*Things I Gave and Things I Got,*' and note ten things they learned about themselves, their needs, colleagues, other pupils; what was unpleasant, difficult or useless; how it relates to their own family life or families in general; and how teachers feel about working in multidisciplinary ways. Sadly, the only places where you can see the packs for yourself are probably the British Library or the Open University archives department.

1985

'PSE is central to the work of schools' is the simple statement in the White Paper by the DES, *Better Schools*.

1985

The Pre-school Playgroups Association and Community Service Volunteers jointly bring out a comprehensive pack, *Teenagers in Playgroups*. 'While mothers-to-be are made aware of all the physical details of pregnancy and childbirth, they are still not warned sufficiently of the difficulties and sheer drudgery which much childcare can seem. The new mother abruptly cut off from friends often finds the baby not a dear docile little dressed-up doll but a yelling restless monster. It seems logical to try to find a way to help people acquire an understanding of family relationships and responsibilities as early as possible. Many secondary schools are developing childcare courses in the hope that students will gain lasting benefits from them when their turn comes to be parents. It seems highly desirable for all boys and girls to have a chance to choose this topic. Sixth formers in particular would gain much from it since they may be more highly motivated, being more mature.' The PPA's working party on education for parenthood brings out a 24-page document: *Learning About Parenthood: What Happens in PPA Groups?*

1986

Health Education from 5 to 16, published by HM Inspectorate, stresses the need for schools to make due provision for education about parenthood and family values. Infant students should get 'some awareness of reproduction, birth and death, and their responsibilities in the family and elsewhere for the welfare of others.' At secondary level, 'work in home economics can make an important contribution to pupils' knowledge and understanding of child development and of family life.' Sex education 'is a crucial part of preparing children for their lives now and in the future as adults and parents,' especially 'a consideration of the qualities of relationships in family life.' Children

want to know what their teachers think, and teachers should point out that others have different views. But, 'so that health education can make a contribution to the preparation of pupils for healthy adult life, including parenthood and family life,' these are necessary:

- One member of staff must be the co-ordinator;
- Regular reviews and revision of the work scheme;
- In-service training of staff; a way to share knowledge and expertise;
- Effective links with external agencies and resources including youth workers;
- Encouragement of parental co-operation which 'can dispel concerns and suspicions.'

Three years later, inspectors repeat their plea for education about parenthood and families. And the 1986 Education Act says sex education in schools should have regard to 'the values of family life.'

1987

Hampshire LEA produces guidelines and a detailed programme of work for parenthood education in infant, junior and secondary schools. The work is recorded by Gillian Pugh and Lin Poulton, development officers at the NCB, in *Parenting as a Job for Life: A Local Development Project in Hampshire.* This three-year joint project (1983-86) by the NCB, Hampshire County Council and Winchester Health Authority involves a case study in the small town of Highcliffe, involving both school students and parents. There is no money to appoint someone to do a full-scale evaluation, so Pugh monitors the programme herself. See chapter 22.

1987

Louise O'Connor writes *Education for Parenthood: Provision and Status within the School Curricula* at Roehampton Institute. It has not proved possible to find a copy.

1987

Cambridge university Child Care and Development Group (now, it seems, defunct) produces a report, *Knowing and Learning about Parenthood: A Study of Parent Education in Secondary Schools* by Prendergast and Prout. There is a full report in chapter 21.

1988

The Education Reform Act requires governors and teachers to provide a 'broad and balanced curriculum that prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.' The National Curriculum Council issues guidelines on various cross-curricular themes, two of which, health education and citizenship, include family life at all stages. Yet the new national curriculum reduces time for PSHE, childcare education in particular. There are fewer childcare courses. Parenthood isn't a compulsory topic within health education. Personal, social, health and economic education is often provided only in tutorial time, or it's optional. Teachers' energy goes into coming to terms with the national curriculum.

1988

Psychiatrist and psychotherapist Jane Price gives a grim warning in her book *Motherhood: What It Does to Your Mind.* Social education 'has begun to ease its way into the classroom in the face of opposition from many adults who see it as a way of brainwashing children and pulling them away from the 'ideals' of family life. It is precisely that family life as non-ideal but real to which the teaching should be addressed. Instead, the ignorance continues, and today, as 30 years ago, intelligent girls in their last year at school look to marriage and maternity to provide their fulfilment and security while boys look to careers, money and status as a means of personal fulfilment. For as long as the split exists, so will the disappointment and disillusionment of young new mothers overwhelmed by the rude reality, and the sad breakdown of men in their late 30s and 40s who awake from their external successes to find that personal fulfilment has escaped them.

Strange that we should argue in Parliament to preserve Latin in our schools and yet have such ambivalent thoughts on preparing children for much that is central in adult life.'

1988

Lesley Smith from the Institute of Education in London writes *Dimensions of Childhood: A Handbook for Social Education at 16-plus,* funded by UNICEF UK and the Health Education Authority. It's a resource for varied educational settings and INSET sessions. The focus of this beautifully laid out, detailed, helpful document is childhood in all its complex multicultural and global aspects. It challenges stereotypes, such as children being mainly the concern of females. Most courses don't reflect, as this one does, ethnic diversity and European cultures within British society. The course helps students to realise that ideas of right, wrong, good or bad, depend on the experiences, beliefs and values of each person. Ideas change over time, as reflected in textbooks and childcare manuals.

Students choose their own topic (e.g. childcare, or moving home); there are no set facts provided, or course contents. They take their own personal and cultural experience, or an aspect of special interest, as a starting point, and decide on their own tailor-made study area. 'Many textbooks present childhood from the point of view of a Western, middle-class white "ideal" in which few students of childhood see a reflection of their own experiences.' Students look at their topic from six perspectives, or dimensions, which blend into each other:

- Worldwide;
- Multicultural;
- Social and economic;
- Gender;
- Historical: childhood is a recent phenomenon (from the end of the Middle Ages) as a distinct phase of life;

- The hidden dimensions of marginalised groups who are seen as different, such as the disabled and battered children: we can learn from them what society is like.

The course aims to:

- Promote the understanding of childhood as important to society;
- Promote acceptance of a multicultural society as positive and enriching;
- Explore the effects on children of ethnicity, gender and class;
- Consider the effects on children of political and economic factors such as housing, healthcare and childcare, and how these influence the quality of parenting;
- Affirm a wide range of possible contexts for growing up in relation to physical surroundings and relationships. There are very few 'typical' children.

The course has three phases:

1 *Preparation.* There are six students with different experiences in each group. With the course organiser, together they discover, listen, argue, articulate, see pictures and international statistics, and critically examine evidence. They're experts about one type of childhood: their own;
2 *Enquiry.* Project work: consult friends/relatives, use libraries, museums;
3 *Presentation, discussion and evaluation* in their groups. Students evaluate their own and each others' work.

The course has been trialled in sixth forms, further education colleges, NNEB courses, and as a social science option in college. Courses which have been organised in three settings are described. The handbook is in the British Library and the Institute of Education in London.

1989

In her dissertation, *The Politics of Preparation for Parenthood,* Lesley Smith is critical of aspects of the way that preparation for parenthood has been taught in the 1970s in secondary schools, as it tends to blame mothers for social and economic problems, and supports a stereotyped model of Western families. It might contribute to creating or maintaining the deprivation that it sets out to oppose, and teachers' personal views might have undue influence. Many girls know a lot about parenting anyway.

Late 1980s

Things quieten down. The government's view again: family life is private. People should get on with it without state interference.

There has been a veritable deluge of reports commissioned by governments of different political persuasions and from different departments which have included advice to schools on the need for preparation for parenthood and family life.

Gillian Pugh and Erica De'Ath 1984

Chapter Four
The 1990s

1990

Louise O'Connor's paper, *Education for Parenthood and the National Curriculum. Progression or Regression?* points out the illogic and the irony. 'Education for parenthood has for many years been a neglected, low-status area of school curricula, despite a professed belief in the family as a stabilising influence on society. This is a mammoth responsibility which has been devolved into schools. Unfortunately, the very nature of the national curriculum, with its emphasis on the traditional academic subjects, plus technology and its assessment schedule, will work against a holistic view.'

After completing a survey of secondary school teachers regarding the status and priority of parenthood education in their schools, O'Connor concludes: 'It was unhelpful to be prescriptive about the content and context of courses. For example, they can and do occur in a number of forms and places. These include Personal and Social Education, Moral Education, GCSE examined courses within Home Economics, and a variety of topic work in primary schools.' Parenthood is a sensitive subject. Students need the time and space to explore different ways of parenting and to build on knowledge they already have.

'However, whilst it is sensible to avoid being prescriptive about where they occur, or how they are labelled, there are certain principles which should inform the rationale and method of such courses. Any such courses should aim to explore the students' own perceptions and attitudes about parenting and childcare.' Students need to talk about family members and their own experiences as children. Through these courses, they can learn ways of being with other people in a variety of relationships.

1991

There is national concern about children's behaviour. Lord Keith Joseph understands about 'good-enough' parenting, and delivers his paper, *The Importance of Parenting,* at the National Children's Home's annual public meeting. "My topic - the quality of parenting - is an emotional minefield. It seems to me that adolescents, boys as well as girls, at a time when sexuality is widely articulated, should be made aware of the emotional, physical and social implications of pregnancy and the responsibilities of parenthood. At school, attention to parenting is apt to be in classes for less academic girls; boys are unlikely to attend; the emphasis will probably be on practical details such as nappy-changing.

'As for sex itself, the emphasis tends to be on protection from disease and from pregnancy rather than the larger issues of relationships and responsibilities. And surely adolescents should be warned of the difficulties where a child is brought up by a lone parent and of the importance of parents sharing the responsibilities and acting as role-models for the child.' As a Conservative, he rejects government involvement, wanting, instead, voluntary bodies to 'explore ways that home management and child upbringing might feature more effectively in the curriculum.'

Some practical ideas: voluntary bodies could 'commission short films to convey the reality of caring for a new-born baby; the emotional and socialising needs of a young child as it grows; and the natural demands made on parents by all children and their exhausting as well as their delighting effects. With PTA agreement such films might be shown to teenage classes with an appropriate adult to discuss questions. Adolescents will perhaps become better parents if they have experienced the outcome of parenting by others. If schools encourage community service, adolescents, academic as well as non–academic, boys as well as girls, could become supervised helpers in, for instance, infant schools or playgroups.' And he suggests

organising 'talks to teenagers in schools to advise them that individuals do have control, even if the choices are limited, over their own lives. They can make their lives better or they can make them much worse. Planning, particularly family planning, is about larger issues than the mechanics of sex and contraception.'

1992

Sir Keith Joseph leads a major debate, *Parents' Responsibilities*, in the House of Lords, discussing, amongst much else, whether parenting preparation would lead to a decrease in several social ills such as the behaviour of young men, teenage pregnancy, the long-term health and welfare problems of children, family breakdown, behaviour in the classroom, and low educational attainment. 'Could not adolescents be made more generally aware, preferably by parents, but if not, by their agreement with others, of the implications of pregnancy and the responsibilities of parenthood? Perhaps voluntary bodies could seek to train, and offer to school governors, mature, understanding volunteers to discuss responsibilities [of parenthood] with adolescents. There is interest among voluntary services; the YWCA, for instance, offers lone parent speakers to schools to urge teenagers not to embark upon parenthood as they did.'

Others in the House agree. Baroness Tessa Blackstone has 'always been somewhat sceptical about trying to provide much practical education for parenthood of a detailed kind for pupils at school. Young people seem likely to be more receptive when actually faced with parenthood themselves. However, what adolescents can benefit from is well-led discussions with other adults – whether teachers or youth leaders – about the huge demands of parenthood and the difficulties parents face. For example, getting them to understand both sides in conflicts with their own parents can be productive.'

Baroness Carnegy of Lour advocates the best chances for every child. 'Surely part of the [government's] strategy must be to provide an

opportunity for parents and for young people who will in future be parents to learn about and understand their role, particularly during the first four years of a child's life when so much of a person's personality and potential is determined.' She later returns to this. 'I wonder whether colleges and the upper end of schools should not be doing far more about teaching young people and existing parents about the skills of parenthood. Young people need to know just what they are taking on when they decide to have children.'

Baroness Blatch, minister of state for education, referring to 'the increasing numbers of children for whom school is the only anchor in their lives,' says government policy is 'to ensure that young people are adequately prepared to fully understand that the responsibilities of parenthood are not to be taken lightly,' pointing out that the national curriculum promotes the importance of family life.

1992

The Gulbenkian Foundation has support for preparation for parenthood as 'one of its priorities.' It wants a report to 'provide information and guidance on what kind of preparation for parenthood it is feasible, realistic and desirable to carry out with young people,' so it funds the Community Education Development Centre to find out. The CEDC collects the views of 83 young people aged 14-to-20 in different settings about the parenting education they get at school. Its report by Dorit Braun and Naomi Eisenstadt, *Preparation for Parenthood: Myth or Reality?* shows that for many, this brings up 'painful and sensitive issues' and that males have mixed feelings about its relevance. It's an 'important but confusing topic.' Young people say they learn from their own families. 'A key issue in teaching them about parenthood must be to work with their parents.'

What are the aims of this education? Five are specified. It will:

- Lead to better parenting with less child abuse;

- Reduce unwanted pregnancy;
- Improve knowledge of children's needs and how to meet them;
- Improve knowledge of preconception care;
- Improve personal development of young people, opportunities to learn about themselves, their relationships and choices in future.

The report has many important angles, such as these:

- There are various ways to meet the basic needs of children, with little agreement between adults;
- It is good to bring in ordinary people to talk, but also experts to explain matters;
- Acknowledge that social conditions - income, housing, unemployment - have huge impacts on parenting;
- 'Family life education' might be a preferable name, as some students are not going to be parents;
- During the 1960s and 1970s, the emphasis changed from information to experimental, engaging at an affective rather than cognitive level. But 'exploring feelings is not enough';
- Parenthood and sex education should be inextricably linked;
- Parenthood education can be so blurred and unfocussed that students don't realise they are supposed to be getting it!

It concludes: 'Schools do and should have a role,' though there are 'limits to how realistic or desirable' that is. 'What is needed is a wider conception of preparation for parenthood which recognises much of the good work in education about relationships that already takes place within schools, colleges and the youth service. At the same time, we need to promote increased public awareness of the needs of children and their carers. The most we can do in direct work is to give young people opportunities to see family life and parenting in a wider context and to equip them with the skills and confidence to make decisions and choices about their own lives now and in future.' Some agencies and individuals are 'concerned about whether and how

schools will make the time for preparation for parenthood' because of:

- Education reforms of governance and the funding of schools;
- Local Authority funding and the diminished role of LEAs;
- School inspection changes: 'a reduced advisory and nurturing role, with less scope for influencing and monitoring what happens in schools' [Ofsted was born and HM Inspectorate abolished in 1992.]

The CEDC and the Gulbenkian Foundation consider ways to take forward the ideas in the report which they hope 'inspires and supports practitioners. Let us know of your work.' And they add that 'it is important to view preparation for parenthood as part of a wider support for parenting, not a substitute.'

1993

The Parenting Deficit by Amitai Etzioni states that 'schools should offer more courses on human relations and better ways of resolving differences, primarily through role-playing rather than through lectures.' That will help to improve parenting later on. This pamphlet by Demos (a cross-party think tank) argues that society should make it possible for parents to be around more for their kids. 'Child care centres are a poor substitute.' Parents pursue careers and consumption to the detriment of children who 'require a commitment of time, energy and, above all, *of self*.'

1994

Sir Ron Dearing's review for the government, *The National Curriculum and its Assessment,* makes no mention of family life education. He recommends that the curriculum be 'slimmed down', especially for 14-to-16-year-olds. Parenthood education is one casualty.

1994

The NCB surveys people's views, reporting 'considerable support for the view that family life education should have an official place in the core curriculum.' It publishes *Confident Parents, Confident Children: Policies and Practice in Parent Education* by Pugh, De'Ath and Smith, (a rewritten and updated version of *The Needs of Parents*) on parent education and support, with a chapter on the role of schools and including an agenda for action. This provides the impetus for the establishment of the Parenting Education and Support Forum.

1994

Education for Parenthood: A Resource Pack for Young People by Philip Hope is published by the Children's Society and reissued in 1998. It has a wealth of resources for teachers to use: activities, debates, questions, project work, role-play, case studies, photos, newspaper cuttings, historical accounts, and statistical data. There are detailed teachers' notes and useful sources of further information and advice.

1994

Teachers' Guide to Delivering Parenthood Education by Penny Sharland with Philip Hope (68 pages) is published to accompany the *Education for Parenthood* pack. It shows how the pack's material fits into the national curriculum. Libby Purves' foreword declares, 'The case for preparation for parenthood becomes even more pressing when you consider the erosion of the close-knit extended family. Schools clearly have a key role to play in filling this gap.' And Penny concludes, 'We must ensure that the policies and priorities of education authorities, teacher training colleges, professional networks and curriculum bodies understand and make their contribution to developing parenthood as an area of study within the national curriculum. We must aim for a "parenthood entitlement" for all students from Year 7 to Year 12.' The guide will be revised in 1998.

1994

The Scottish Education Department's idealistic publication about personal and social development, *The Heart of the Matter: A Paper for Discussion and Development,* talks of 'rounded human beings' and the importance of good relationships between staff and students. It calls for the teaching of respect and caring for self and others; a sense of social responsibility; personal and interpersonal skills; communication; and family relationships and responsibilities. How to achieve this? Nearly every subject can contribute. And special focus programmes are also needed for topics which are covered nowhere else. The whole-school climate and ethos must provide a secure emotional base, including staff development and the involvement of parents.

1995

The Parenting Education and Support Forum is founded (later to be renamed Parenting UK), initially based at the NCB, to bring together organisations and individuals working in the parenting field. It has four aims: to raise awareness of parenting and its critical impact on all aspects of children's development; to help change the climate to one where support for parents is seen as normal; to create a professional network for those working with children and families; and to share information and expertise, and press for coherent policies. Hetty Einzig is appointed to run the Forum, chaired first by the crossbench peer Lord Northborne and, from 1999, Gillian Pugh. Mary Crowley becomes the first chief executive. Dame Jane Roberts, Labour local politician and child psychiatrist, takes over the chair in 2006.

1996

This year's Education Act requires schools to provide a 'balanced and broadly-based curriculum that prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.' Yet the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA)'s *Guide to the National Curriculum* doesn't mention family or parenthood education.

1996

National scandals, such as the murder of two-year-old James Bulger, lead to a report by the National Commission of Inquiry into the Prevention of Child Abuse. The Commission recognises the role of schools, suggesting that LEAs and voluntary organisations submit plans for parenting education which can then be co-ordinated by SCAA and the Department of Health.

1996

Conservative education secretary Gillian Shephard expresses her full support for parenthood education in schools, as the family forms the 'bulwark of society.' She speaks at the launch of a discussion paper, *Values in Education and the Community*, which promotes, amongst other things, respect for children, and support for marriage and family life.

1996

The NSPCC couldn't be clearer. It believes that 'young people have the right to expect some preparation for the challenge of forming successful adult relationships, and carrying out the important task of parenting. *The NSPCC is committed to the provision of education for parenthood for every child in school, recognising the potential this offers for the prevention of abuse.'* (Original emphasis.) As part of its public education campaign, *A Cry for Children*, it links up with GSCE/GCE Welsh exam boards/Joint Education Committee to develop a three-month teaching programme or syllabus, based on the campaign, which can be used by secondary school teachers. It produces a loose-leaf teaching pack, *Education for Parenthood,* aimed at students aged 14-to-16, based on trial programmes in several English and Welsh schools. The programmes were evaluated with help from teachers at St Joseph's high school, Newport; Pontarddulais comprehensive, Swansea; Copleston high school, Ipswich; Wolfreton school, Kingston-upon-Hull; and Alderman Callow school, Coventry. The course can be taught as stand-alone; or, with careful whole-school planning, teachers can relate their subject to the material in the

syllabus within GCSE and other exam lessons. 'The ultimate aim, however, is to reach the students and her/his parents,' as well as governors. It comes as no surprise that the NSPCC finds school timetables to be full, replete with the national curriculum.

The themes include the impact of parenting on parents, the costs of children, and parenting skills. 'Most of the material features in the daily life of young people – from local and national newspapers, on TV, on street hoardings, therefore relevant and interesting to them. By studying the themes, teachers not only come to terms with education for parenthood in a coherent and logical way, but also gain knowledge, understanding and skills which can be used in a range of appropriate exams.' The pack includes Louise Osborn's paper on the importance of using drama. 'Many aspects can best be dealt with through role-play.' It advises the use of humour and cartoons and the discussion of case studies.

Some of the parenting tips?
It takes time for love for your baby to grow / Impossible to spoil a baby / Don't compare your baby to others / How babies like to be held and what they dislike / Listen to your baby to see its needs / Trust your instincts / Don't say 'naughty' / Distract, don't punish / Be positive to the child.

NSPCC's many publications for parents which can be brought into school include *Happy Child Sad Child: All about Children's Feelings.*

1996
When interviewed, Neil Hopkins, head of child protection, Welsh NSPCC, recognises that many people show concern that so many young people become parents with no idea of its complexities and demands.

1997

Dr Arthur Geen's article, *Education for Parenthood and Family Values,* appears in *MODUS*, the journal of the National Association of Teachers of Home Economics and Technology.

1997

Tomorrow's Parents: Developing Parenthood Education in Schools by Philip Hope and Penny Sharland is published by the Gulbenkian Foundation about work at five secondary schools in Greater Manchester, funded by Gulbenkian in conjunction with the Children's Society. See chapter 24.

1997

Tim Kahn writes the 78-page *Family Life Education,* published by the Community Education Development Centre. He opposes the idea of a GCSE in parenting, or teaching parenting skills on their own; these are narrow, as they focus on specific situational skills and one gender. Instead, he wants broader, more general aims: self-awareness; self-esteem; exploring and understanding relationships with students' own families, friends and wider community through a study of the family and its changing nature; choosing whether or not to have children; preparing for parenthood; and development of the skills and qualities which have significance for the whole-school curriculum.

Kahn suggests how to cover these in other subjects, also in a family-life curriculum, including up-to-date sex education. He gives teaching strategies and case studies from both primary and secondary levels. Teachers need a facilitative, not didactic style, and to be inclusive and sensitive to differing social and ethnic backgrounds with an approach that acknowledges and explores differences. Homosexuality, contraception, abortion, divorce and child abuse should all be covered, with parents involved formally and informally. There's a long list of organisations, and background and teaching materials.

1997

'There has been a renewed clamour for parenting education to be taught in schools' because it fits the priorities of SMSC (spiritual, moral, social and cultural development), say the authors of *Parenting Perspectives: A Guide to Teaching Parenting Skills* - Elizabeth Howell, Olivia Montuschi and Tim Kahn - in their Courseware publication. There are 128 pages of detailed discussion about many aspects of parenthood, linked to 30 activities, some with worksheets, which you can photocopy if you buy the book.

1997

Excellence in Schools, a White Paper published by the DfEE, boldly states, 'The third factor which needs *urgent* attention is parenting. (My emphasis.) Few factors have a more profound effect on individuals and the nature of society than the contribution of parents to their children's development. But young people often leave school without ever having given any serious thought to whether they will have children, or how they would cope if they did. We want all secondary schools to help teach young people the skills of good parenting, both formally and through contact with good adult role models. We also intend to encourage schools, building on their experience in teaching pupils, to develop educational programmes in partnerships with LEAs, further education colleges, adult education institutions, voluntary and community groups.' The Department could want and intend, but it is unlikely that their assertive plea delivers the goods.

1998

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation's study shows that five-to-eight-year-olds have an appreciation of what is involved in parenting. And its book *Children's Perspectives on Families* by Virginia Morrow, a survey of 183 children aged 8-to-14, is further evidence that 'children can be constructive and reflective commentators on family life.'

1998

The Parenting Education and Support Forum is committed to parenthood education in schools. This should include family life education, both for the future and the present: young people reflecting on their current families can generate useful insights. This differs from parentcraft (bathing/feeding babies etc.) The Forum's paper, *Two Steps Ahead: Fitting Parents for the Future* by the parenting writer Elizabeth Hartley-Brewer, says that because parenting in modern life is more difficult than ever before, 'the case is even stronger for giving all children access to parenthood education in schools.' If the school's 'culture and ethos model the principles and skills advocated,' this education as a strand of PSHE can help to:

- Raise educational attainment in the short term – less disaffection and truancy, more contribution by the academically less able;
- Reduce criminal behaviour – learning to live within family rules and society's laws;
- Improve young people's mental health and create healthy schools – parents will know more about children's emotional needs and how to meet them;
- Reduce family conflict and violence – pupils learn to listen, empathise and resolve conflict;
- Encourage schools to collaborate with parents and show respect for the work that parents do.

The paper distinguishes between *implicit* and *explicit* parenthood education. *Implicit* means developing skills necessary for parenting but not only for that. A sense of self is one example. Such skills can be nurtured in primary schools without mention of parenthood. *Explicit* means developing at secondary schools the skills and understanding specific to parenting. At this age, students can reflect on their futures. Parenthood is not necessarily dealt with in PSHE and needs its own curriculum within it. 'It is too important to be subsumed under, woven into or otherwise diluted by, any other single PSHE

programme such as 'life skills or health or 'relationships' education. It should have its own clearly identified, rigorous syllabus within a time-specific module as part of a coherent PSHE programme.

'It will not be sufficient, in our experience, to rely on a cross-curricular theme approach. This can lead not only to dilution but also to time-consuming collaboration, heavy administration and teacher resentment.' Instead, parenthood education should cover the skills, knowledge and understanding needed, and stimulate reflection and discussion, such as how 'good-enough' parenting becomes 'not good-enough.' Aspects include:

- *Growing up in a family:* What is family? How family life has changed. Influences on decision to have a child;
- *What it means to be a parent:* What changes? Patterns of parenting. Aspects of 'good-enough' parenting;
- *What parents and children need:* Support and appreciation. How important is money? Emotional security;
- *Parent-child relationships:* Emotional bonds and commitment. Getting along together – time for family fun. Motherhood, fatherhood and the role of marriage;
- *Rights and responsibilities: parent/child:* Parental responsibility. Children's rights, child abuse, babysitting;
- *Health and development:* Child development, self-esteem. Importance of play and suitability of toys. Happy, safe, healthy children.

Schools need to 'walk the talk': teachers must ensure a respectful ethos, form 'quality partnerships' with parents and have time to 'respond to family problems that children inevitably bring to school.' Lessons should be non-judgmental, open and participative, never didactic but able to challenge 'ill-informed views.' Use language which is familiar, especially to boys. Include placements, written work, observation, self-assessment, leaflets, worksheets, videos and visits from professional and non-professional adults.

Training for teachers in this specialism is essential; it pays off. 'Experience shows that training in the relevant skills enhances professional development and helps to make people better subject teachers, respond more sensitively to individuals' distress, and become more confident in group situations with other adults.' The paper echoes what other experts consider vital: backing by senior management; lessons located in PSHE; staff well supported; and 'active, respectful relationships with parents. In Britain today, there may be developing an insidious social divide between the relationship-rich and the relationship-poor. It is essential we take stock, look two steps ahead and ensure that tomorrow's parents are fit for the future.'

1999

David Blunkett, as secretary of state for education in the Labour government, introduces the citizenship curriculum that would include personal, social and health education 'and which in turn,' Philip Hope (a Labour MP at that time) remembers, 'would include a focus on preparing young people for parenthood. Blunkett's personal enthusiasm for this stimulated many organisations to contribute ideas about what that citizenship curriculum should cover and how it should be taught, including what might be included on parenthood education.' There is a 'growing call' for parenting education by educationalists, informal groups and all the main political parties.

1999

Preparing Young People for Adult Life, a report by the National Advisory Group, is published by the DfEE. David Blunkett commissions it: 'Good PSHE in schools helps young people to learn about the value of family life, including marriage, good parenting and stable relationships,' and invites Labour MPs Estelle Morris and Tessa Jowell to assemble a group to 'build on the best PSHE practice in our most successful schools.' The group is asked to consider, amongst other things, 'what aspects of parenthood education, not least those arising from the consultation on the White Paper *Excellence in Schools*

(1997), should be taught in schools and how they can be addressed within PSHE.' Blunkett is serious: they are later asked to further consider, and make recommendations on (inter alia) 'the provision of parenthood education in secondary schools.'

Schools can help pupils to understand the roles and feelings of parents and carers. Parents and schools should be in a partnership to prepare pupils for adult life, including parenthood. School governors 'can have a powerful influence on the school's commitment and approach to PSHE.' What's more, colleges of further education and other post-16 education should build on the secondary school's PSHE. There are implications for teacher training.

'The DfEE should work closely with other government departments and agencies to develop policies to enhance personal and social development' – for example, parenthood.

1999

The charity Barnardo's book *Parenting Matters: What Works in Parenting Education?* defines three possible aims of this education. The first is 'preparation for parenthood and family life for school-aged children.'

1999

The Labour government's consultation document, *Supporting Families,* has quite a lot to say:

'*Support for future parents:* How to be a parent is one of the most important skills a child can learn, and we cannot rely on children picking up this skill from their parents or from other sources such as friends or television. Schools also have a role to play. Education on parenthood not only promotes good parenting, but also ensures that children understand the implications of becoming pregnant or fathering a child. This should contribute to discouraging under-age and ill-prepared pregnancies.

"Developing parenthood education: Education about parental and personal responsibility can help prepare children for adult relationships. It works best as part of wider personal, social and health education to give pupils the knowledge, skills and attitudes to become confident, caring and responsible citizens, prepared for the opportunities and responsibilities of adult life. Our White Paper, *Excellence in Schools*, proposed that all secondary schools should teach pupils about the responsibilities of parenthood. Responses to the consultation have confirmed support from schools and parents for these proposals. Many schools give education about parenthood, although provision is far from universal. We undertook not to change the national curriculum until the year 2000 to give teachers some essential stability after a long period of change. But we will place greater emphasis in the curriculum on the responsibilities of parenthood at the first opportunity.'

1999

'As part of the development of the new national curriculum, the DES published frameworks for PSHE and citizenship that repeated the government's wish to include parenthood education at all key stages,' reports the Parenting Education and Support Forum.

1999

The National Healthy School Standard is established by the DfEE and concerns itself with sex and relationships education as part of one of its four themes.

1999

The Labour government launches its ten-year *Teenage Pregnancy Strategy* which recognises the importance of children at primary school learning about the responsibilities involved in parenthood and other kinds of relationships. It aims to halve the rate of under-18 conception rates within ten years, and also to help teenage parents. Every local authority in England is required to have measures in place to reduce teenage pregnancies. By 2010, the under-18s' conception

rate will be 13 percent lower than in 1998, the lowest level for 20 years. However, the strategy does not halve the rate, as planned.

Most mothers report themselves as having had no experience of babies before having their own.
Dr Burton Jones

Chapter Five
The 21st century

Being a parent's always been hard work but is particularly difficult in today's complex world. The agenda for the C21st is different & demanding. Giving all children parenthood education in schools will help prepare them for the challenges that lie ahead. The new technologies & greater understanding of family relationships mean parents are enjoying parenthood more. Education for parenthood needs to encompass the joys & fulfilment parenthood can bring. Anon

2000

The revised national curriculum has 'two broad aims.' Aim two states, 'The school curriculum should aim to prepare all pupils for the opportunities and responsibilities of life,' though the guidance doesn't actually mention parenthood! It's more concerned with preventing teenage pregnancy.

2000

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) publishes guidance about the delivery of PSHE and citizenship, much of which gives information and advice about parenthood education as one aspect of PSHE. Based on direct research with students and teachers, it explains the importance of this topic at school, how to include it in PSHE and citizenship, and how to deliver it successfully, with resources and reading lists, and advice on how teachers can get in touch with those running local courses for parents. There is guidance for Key Stages (KS) 1 – 4:

8 At KS1 (ages five-to-seven), children draw on their own experiences of family; various types of families; health and safety at home; how behaviour impacts on family members;

9 KS2 (ages seven-to-eleven) concentrates on how the students' family relationships are changing; how local organisations can

support families; risk assessment; physical contact; various types of relationships;

10 KS3 (ages 11 – 14) builds on the above, and includes the lives of children in other parts of the world; conception and contraception; the important role of parents;

11 At KS4 (ages 14 – 16), students use their knowledge and skills to consider choices about their future; legal and human rights; safe lifestyles; how the quality of parenting influences well-being.

2002

The Social Exclusion Unit's teenage pregnancy document (1999) had recommended that Ofsted should write a *Sex and Relationships Education* report. The Ofsted report states that students want to learn more about being a parent - this is not being addressed in enough depth at school - and quotes a boy aged 16. 'Most of what we do is for the girls. It's all about what happens to them. No one tells the boys what responsibilities they have.' Ofsted and the Schools Health Education Unit research 140 schools, primary, secondary and special, and discuss the subject with 650 young people. There is a postal survey of another 1,000 schools, plus some meetings. One finding: 'Education about parenthood does not feature in all secondary schools' programmes, even though most schools recognise its importance.' There are 'issues for attention':

- Further guidance is to be given on teaching about sexuality and parenthood;
- Most poor teaching is by form tutors. The most effective is by specialist teachers, those with a particular interest or background in PSHE and RSE and who can plan lessons, devote sufficient time to them and evaluate them;
- Form tutors have very little training, expertise and confidence. Short lessons (less than half an hour) with worksheets have a negative effect. There is no time for reflection;

- Schools should be familiar with the media, and help students treat the media critically;
- Support must be offered to boys and to school-aged fathers;
- More advice should be given to parents, especially fathers, to help them talk more fully about sex/relationships with their children.

The right climate is vital: the teacher should encourage students to participate and express their views. This needs a lot of 'confidence, a high level of empathy and very good skills in drawing pupils into discussion which, while it needs to be serious, should not be without warmth and need not be without humour.'

Inspectors are impressed at a primary school with the flour babies lesson followed by a visit by a mother and baby: 'simple and effective.' In a Year 11 class, looking at positive and negative aspects of being a young parent, with video clips, there is 'excellent participation.' The class discuss why people get pregnant. The topic is linked to subsequent lessons. Ofsted reckons that most primary and secondary schools teach 'conscientiously and mostly effectively' but should do more about 'values, attitudes and personal skills.'

Ten schools are cited for their good practice:

Beckhampton centre pupil referral unit, Nottingham
Brindishe primary, Lewisham
Good Shepherd Catholic primary, Lewisham
Hardley school, Hampshire
Highfields school, Derbyshire
Painton community college, Torbay
Stoke Damerel school, Plymouth
Sutton special school, Dudley
Torquay girls' grammar school
Worle school, Weston-super-Mare.

The report recommends that 'more attention should be given in secondary schools to education about HIV/AIDS and about parenthood.' The aim: at the end of Key Stage 1 (eight-year-olds), 'pupils will know and understand the needs of babies and young people.' By the end of Key Stage 4 (16-year-olds), they will know and understand 'the qualities of good parenting and its value to family life, the benefits of marriage or a stable partnership in bringing up children, and will have considered the consequences of close relationships, including having children, and how this will create family ties which impact on their lives and those of others.'

2002

A *National Debate on Education* begins in Scotland with a Curriculum Review Group set up to identify 'the purposes of education for 3-to-18-year-olds,' leading to the production of the *Curriculum for Excellence* which stresses health and well-being as part of the entire curriculum. It includes dealing with 'relationships, sexual health and parenthood.'

2002

By supplementing PSHE with classes in other curriculum subjects that have a parenthood theme, schools can strengthen their commitment to parenthood education and broaden teacher skills. PES Forum

The Parenting Education and Support (PES) Forum (later to be called Parenting UK, now defunct), whose aim is to 'raise awareness of the importance of parenting and its impact on the personal, emotional, mental, social, intellectual and physical development of children,' produces *Parenthood Teaching Guidance for Secondary Schools,* based on a draft by Dorit Braun, Hetty Einzig, Gill Frances, Philip Hope and Penny Sharland. 'Schools are required to prepare students for adult life, and the government is now asking schools to consider parenthood education as an important element in this preparation. The task of bringing up children to be contented, confident and

contributing human beings will be an adult's greatest responsibility and often their greatest personal and social achievement.

'Yet young people often leave school without having thought through whether they will have children and if so, when. They will not have planned how they will cope with being a parent - mother or father - and will often not realise who they can turn to for help. Parenthood education in schools offers the valuable chance to help children think about the role before they become parents.' It refers to the emphasis by the Social Exclusion Unit on ensuring that teenagers are aware of the responsibilities of being a parent. And this topic can be taught successfully to those with special needs, with 'carefully chosen resources and approach.'

Though this education shouldn't tell students what to think or how to live, it enables them, for example, to:

- Learn the skills of relationships, communication, and nurturing self-esteem;
- Learn about children's development, needs, play and conversation;
- Understand the reasons for good and bad behaviour;
- Reflect on what is meant by 'good-enough' parenting and how it differs from not good-enough or abusive parenting.

As the authors claim, 'Young people who grow up with an understanding of the importance of the parenting role' know about positive parenting; can meet a child's need for love, safety and security; have thought about choices, responsibilities and issues involving parenthood; and 'are likely to make more effective parents,' with children who flourish. Other possible benefits include raising educational attainment (less disaffection and truancy, as school feels more approachable); improved mental health of future children; involving the students' parents and showing respect for their work; reducing family conflict (more empathy and listening); reducing

teenage pregnancy as students understand how important parenting is; and helping to reduce criminal behaviour.

Like the Forum's 1998 document, this one also distinguishes between explicit and implicit ways to include parenthood education. *Implicit* elements include skills, such as decision-making, not exclusive to parenting. *Explicit* elements cover information, skills and situations particular to parenting. 'Explicit parenthood education at secondary school requires its own clearly identified syllabus' within PSHE. The authors then suggest a six-week course (better than nothing) for Year 10 students, covering:

- *Thinking Ahead:* a questionnaire asks students to think about their future as parents. They can notice the differences between each others' thoughts;
- *What it Means to be a Parent:* use magazine images etc. What images do students see daily? Priorities and the needs of children;
- *Dealing with Challenging Behaviour:* various types of punishment. What is abusive and why? 'A difficult topic that requires sensitive handling and examines the value of peaceful means of responding';
- *Getting Along Together:* role-play temper tantrums and how to handle them. Communication. Positive parental authority;
- *Resources at Home*: use catalogues. How much does it all cost? Child development. The relative value of material things versus love and security;
- *Enjoying your Children:* use childhood memories. Poetry writing to capture the joys and satisfactions of parenthood. End the course on a positive note.

The document refers to Philip Hope and Penny Sharland's *Pack*. This education should be part of the whole-school ethos (possibly through the National Healthy School Standard), with pastoral support for students, parents and carers as needed.

2003

Frank Field is MP for Birkenhead (1979-2019) when his book *Neighbours from Hell: The Politics of Behaviour* is published. He has done more than most to discover teenagers' wishes, and believes that good parenting, not just higher income, is a vital step out of poverty. One recommendation for improving public behaviour is compulsory parenthood education for every student. 'Schools present a key opportunity to begin to develop the skills of successful parenthood. Pupils were pretty unanimous that one of the topics they should *seriously* study at school should be parenting. The strength of feeling on this topic surprised me on a number of counts.' (My emphasis.)

'There were no noticeable differences in the response to questions about parenting classes amongst the older pupils, whether male or female. Nor was there any difference between what I might call the rugby team members and the others. If anything, the former group were the most confident in emphasising their wish for such a course. Many live with only one parent and for some, that parent had such big problems with drugs or drink that these pupils were on their own. Yet there was no embarrassment at my raising the issue of parenting classes. Nor was there any way in which I could tell which pupils might have happy homes and those for whom this was still an ideal. Indeed, the wish to build a happy family was so resolutely expressed that this aspect of my discussion knocked me sideways.'

He has views about the ideal course as a subject within citizenship. 'The re-emphasis on social virtues - how to regard other people - needs to form the key plank of a parenting course and to cover two other major themes. A better understanding of what the major needs of all children are, should be central, and the building up of a checklist of how best to promote healthy and happy children. What are the most profitable acts that potential parents can perform to give the best start in life to each of their children?'

He has a novel idea. 'An important part of this course should be the study of what is expected of parents who adopt, so that this becomes a framework for all parents. The careful preparation for success here is in stark contrast to the total absence of help and training for one of the most important acts parents undertake.' And interestingly, he values drama. 'The classes, which will go through the stages of becoming parents by adoption, will allow much role-playing of what is required for forming a natural family.'

His belief in the value of a formal exam is controversial but clearly argued. 'At the moment a citizenship course rates as only half a GCSE. Consequently, few pupils wish to take it. It is not a subject which rates as highly as some teachers wish to teach. If citizenship is to be valued as the most important group of attitudes and skills a school will help to give to pupils, three reforms suggest themselves:'

1 A pass in citizenship counts as two GCSEs;
2 It has to be a compulsory course;
3 The status of teaching it has to be raised.

He laments the number of increasingly dysfunctional families and the 'new barbarianism that more and more of us are experiencing.' Schools must 'fill the breach,' as it's 'ever more important and urgent for both knowledge and values about parenthood and citizenship to become a cornerstone of a revamped curriculum. Parenting is too vital to society's well-being to be left to parents unaided. Nurturing can be taught. Imparting the skills of good parenthood should become a major part of the national curriculum, and other disciplines, such as biological sciences, will also become a central part of it.'

2004

The Tomlinson Report on educational reform for 14-to-19-year-olds recommends that all students be 'strongly encouraged' to undertake 'wider activities' including 'family responsibilities.'

2006

These lessons might motivate low-ability students to read because of interest in the subject. PSHE Association: evidence about parenthood education

The Personal Social Health and Education Subject Association is founded by Jan Campbell OBE. PSHE has been a non-statutory part of the UK national curriculum since 2000. Although the national curriculum says that schools 'should' teach PSHE education, even schools bound by the national curriculum don't have to. PSHE education in its entirety is compulsory only at independent schools. It is not compulsory in free schools, and the growing number of academies don't have to follow it.

The fight for compulsory PSHE is long and painful, headed by the heroic efforts of the Association with its mission: 'To raise the status quality and impact of PSHE education and enable high-quality PSHE for all children and young people.' It organises conferences for its members and produces guidelines. The need for improvement is underlined by Ofsted's finding: PSHE is not taught well enough in a 'substantial' number of schools. But it's a huge struggle to persuade governments to commit to provide full PSHE for every student.

2008

Two new non-statutory programmes of study for 11-to-14-year-olds are introduced: Personal Well-being, and Economic Well-being and Financial Capability. The whole programme is renamed Personal Social Health and Economic Education (PSHE.)

2008

Gordon Brown's Labour government plans compulsory PSHE, commissioning Sir Alasdair Macdonald CBE, a former teacher, to produce the *Independent Review of the Proposal to Make PSHE Education Statutory*, to see how to do it. This excellent document proposes equipping all primary and secondary students through the national

curriculum with the 'knowledge, understanding, attitudes and practical skills for their future and as members of families.' The 2010 election returns a Conservative/LibDem government. The plan falls through - PSHE is low on its agenda, motivating the PSHE Association to campaign vigorously, researching and publicising PSHE's high popularity with parents, teachers and students.

2008

Later intervention is massively expensive and only ever partially successful. Early intervention is cheap and effective. Graham Allen and Iain Duncan Smith

Early Intervention: Good Parents, Great Kids, Better Citizens by Graham Allen (then Labour MP for Nottingham North) and Iain Duncan Smith (Conservative MP for Chingford and Woodford Green) is published by Duncan Smith's Centre for Social Justice and the Smith Institute (set up in memory of John Smith, leader of the Labour Party 1992-94), with the help of the WAVE Trust. This 132-page document boldly states that future parents 'must be prepared properly between ages 0-18. We respectfully confront those of all political persuasions with a choice: either we go on trying to patch up the consequences of social breakdown or we tackle the roots and the transmission of underachievement.'

It lists 'secondary schools pre-parenting (i.e. pre-conception) skilling' as sixth in the six 'foundational programmes' which it suggests. 'Arguably every child should leave school trained in non-violent parenting and attunement with babies, and with the ability to nurture babies who will grow up with empathy. The SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) whole-school programme now developing in secondary schools is also intended to make a significant contribution to pre-parenting skills, in this case for teenagers. In order to become the good parents of the future, young people need to develop a set of skills that include how to make and sustain

relationships, tolerate frustration, communicate effectively, manage conflict and demonstrate empathy.'

The section ends with a clear call. 'The time is right for national government to set the framework in which local councils, who want to tackle this long-term, can *bring together these teenage personal development programmes*. The existing secondary SEAL programme and the existing PSHE and Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) curricula need to be unified and consolidated in order to create a coherent pre-parenting offer, *as part of the national curriculum.'* (Original emphasis.)

However, not only does SEAL no longer loom large in later years, but the new Relationships and Sex programme, to be compulsory from 2022 in every English secondary school of all types, does not include much specific, or long enough or deep enough, parenting education.

2009

Professor Richard Whitfield, critically reviewing the *New Zealand Families Commission Research Report* for being too politically correct, writes, 'Arguably, a little over one-half of Westernised youngsters are not deep-down sure that anybody loves them. Such feelings of insecurity may be remote from parental intent, yet are very relevant in soft, then later hard-wired, neural responses. Attachment patterns tend to persist strongly through generations, and, without interventions, affect partnering and parenting performance. Functional literacy in the field of preparation for the options of partnering and parenthood, at least as important as mathematics, science and history, must now emerge as a highly-esteemed core curriculum in school, college and community. Civic survival, no less, demands that we take the mounting evidence long-term seriously.'

2009

Another professor, Richard Layard, and Judy Dunn, distinguished chair of the *Good Childhood Enquiry*, assert in the Children's Society

report, *A Good Childhood:* 'It is important that people get this information [e.g. understanding children; the strain of sleepless nights; inconsolable crying; and financial pressures] while they are in school before conception becomes an issue. So, as part of personal and social education, young people should receive proper and culturally sensitive education in the skills of parenting and relationships, and in the process of child development, a subject of profound interest to many young people.'

2010

Parenting should be at the heart of the national curriculum. Frank Field

Frank Field produces a report advocating a GCSE examination in parenting, with the approval of some other MPs and parenting practitioners - an idea not taken up by the Department of Education. He also recommends that parenting courses be 'offered as routine to new parents as something normal to do, rather than remedial, or something only for low-income families. Parenting is more important than income or schooling to a child's life chances.' Aside from these ideas, in a *Personal Commentary* he relates how he had 'asked to meet a group of 15-year-olds in one of Birkenhead's most challenged schools. I asked each of them to list which six outcomes they most wanted to gain for themselves from attending school. Most surprisingly, all of the pupils listed, as one of their requests, the wish to be taught how to be good parents. These young vulnerable constituents battle against home circumstances that would probably have broken me, and yet they prioritised the need to know how to be good parents.'

He regrets the dwindling of firm, attached and attentive child rearing. 'Parents who set clear boundaries for their children's behaviour, who love them, bond with them, read to them and teach them essential social skills are the agents who open doors of opportunity for them. But the end of the consensus around this style of parenting has had a

devastating impact on many children's lives – particularly the poorest.' And he holds that a 'tough love' approach to parenting will lead to higher life chances. He seems more concerned with rising from poverty than better emotional health for its own sake, although of course poverty is linked with a greater risk of poor mental health.

Frank later visits the new Manchester academy. 'I again met a group of 15-year-old pupils to whom I set the same task. All of the pupils similarly wanted to know how to be good parents as one of the six responsibilities they wished their school to fulfil.' He continues: 'Here is the basis for our key recommendation that we should seek ways of teaching parenting and life skills through the existing national curriculum with appropriate modules being available for study through a range of existing subjects. The Manchester academy is preparing a pilot along these lines.'

Frank doesn't want to impose more on schools 'who already in many respects have to do too much of making good for the failure of families,' so he wants parenthood to become integrated in all subjects, as well as wanting the creation of a Parenthood GCSE. I later ask why else he thinks it preferable to include aspects of parenting in existing lessons rather than running dedicated ones. 'I think parenting classes should be integrated into the general curriculum. Perhaps keeping them in separate classes makes students feel they are not worth learning,' adding humbly: 'I will think on this a little more if I may.'

But, by 2024, most of those who put so much effort into promoting these ideas have moved on. Frank was unable to update me on developments in Manchester or Birkenhead. Phil Hope and Penny Sharland have turned to other things. Dame Gillian Pugh has retired. Professor Richard Whitfield has died. The charity Parenting UK is no more. The welfare of future children, in this regard at least, has suffered.

2010

It is essential to lay the foundations of good parenting via a universal offer through the school system. Parenting UK

GCSE in Parenting and Relationships is published by Parenting UK which 'has been advocating parenting education in schools for the last 10 years. It is now generally accepted – as it was not ten years ago – that schools have some responsibility for giving children the skills to be good adults and parents in the future. If we are to change society, we need not only to address how children are brought up in families but also what contribution schools make to children's emotional development.' Parenting UK's meeting of experts about the desirability of a GCSE in Parenting and Life Skills produces a consensus that it has to be:

- A universal offer, not just for the worst-off children;
- Not experiential or reflective as 'this only works if you have a baby or child at home to practice on';
- Wider than just parenting: to be a parent is to have a relationship with a child, so teenagers need to know how to form relationships.

But opinion is divided between having an exam; or good relationships modelled by staff; or making good relationships part of a character-building programme. And a GCSE would appeal mainly to girls. Because the average age for women to conceive is (at that time) 29, they might well, as parents, have forgotten what they learnt for GCSE. Parents of secondary school students should be included in any parenting education, 'particularly if teaching has called into question the way that teenagers themselves have been parented.'

Because so many qualities are needed to be a good parent, Parenting UK recommends that a *Core Lifeskills* GCSE (rather than a *Parenting* GCSE) should be compulsory. 'It would ensure that key skills which are necessary to successfully navigate adult life could be taken

seriously by all students.' They add controversially: 'Without an exam, this would not happen' and call for long-term teaching. 'A GCSE in *Core Lifeskills* would only be successful if it built upon a foundation of core teaching which began in primary school with programmes such as SEAL. The GCSE would be a way of validating learning which had happened throughout schooling. Teachers would need to model the behaviour and relational skills they imparted. Thus, relational skills and emotional resilience would need to be included in teacher training.'

2010

The report *Teaching Parenting in Schools* by Parenting UK complains that 'areas which are essential for being an adult and therefore a parent are not part of the mainstream curriculum (except peripherally through PSHE) and they include social and emotional literacy, negotiating conflict, personal boundaries, enterprise and drive, self-discipline, building and maintaining emotional resilience, and delaying gratification. The foundations of good parenting should be embedded across the country via a universal offer through the school system.' (In order to read the whole report, I tried without success to find a copy at Family Lives which inherited Parenting UK in 2012.)

2011

Chris Ruane, Labour MP for Vale of Clwyd and former teacher, asks the Conservative secretary of state (schools), Nick Gibb, two parliamentary questions:

1 What steps is he taking to deliver parenting classes within the school curriculum?
2 Whether he has made an estimate of the number of schools which offer parenting classes to their pupils.

The reply: 'The non-statutory programmes of study for personal, social, health, and economic (PSHE) education in England currently

provide a context within which schools teach pupils about the importance of parenting. In particular, the personal well-being programme of study sets out how young people should learn about the roles and responsibilities of parents, carers, children and other family members, as well as the skills and qualities needed in parenting, and their importance to family life. Our aim for the national curriculum is to reduce unnecessary prescription, bureaucracy and central control and to give schools and teachers greater control over what is taught. We do not therefore propose to ask schools to report on the content of their lessons, especially those that are non-statutory. 63-70 percent of secondary schools teach PSHE elements.'

As part of the review of PSHE, 'we expect to visit Manchester academy to understand the work they have undertaken on incorporating parenting classes into the curriculum. Notwithstanding the work in the academy, evidence shows that the most valuable parenting skills are best taught through a mix of practical application and teaching, which is likely to be more effective the closer it is to the age at which people have children - the average age for people to have their first child in England is in their late 20s.' I tried in vain to discover from Nick Gibb what the proposed visit to Manchester academy came up with.

2012

Parenting UK merges with Family Lives due to funding problems, and now has one part-time dedicated staff member. Parenting UK's library has been given away (recipient unknown) due to lack of space.

2013

Frank Field and three other MPs launch a cross-party manifesto, *The 1001 Critical Days,* stating: 'Vulnerable families should be given access to evidence-based services that promote better interaction between parents and their babies. All parents should have access to antenatal classes that address both the physical and emotional aspects of

parenting and the baby's well-being.' This is inspired by new neuro-scientific research showing the vital importance of good development between conception and age two (1001 days.) 'Too many children do not have the start in life they need.' Some attenders of the relevant All-Party Parliamentary Groups advocate parenthood education at school.

2013

Frank Field writes to Michael Gove, Conservative minister for education, about recent changes to the national curriculum, asking him to review it and to emphasise parenting and infant care-giving. He is concerned in particular that the science curriculum 'does not embody the current state of knowledge on parenting and the importance of early relationships. The curriculum should reflect a commitment to giving all young people an appropriate understanding of the theories that can inform their future parenting, their most vital responsibility. Students would welcome this.' He makes strong recommendations about the science, sex and primary school curricula, offering to meet Gove and his advisers. The meeting never takes place. However, no longer an MP, Frank tirelessly founds and chairs the *Frank Field Education Trust: Social Justice through Excellence in Education* to narrow the achievement and well-being gap between social classes in Cheshire and the north-west of England.

2013

Ofsted's report, *Not Yet Good Enough,* states that PSHE for 5-to-18-year-olds needs to improve in about 40 percent of schools and should take more account of the needs of students.

2014

A seminar, *Education for Parenthood,* is held by Foundation Years Information and Research. Nick Peacey from the Institute of Education chairs it; Suzanne Hargreaves from Education Scotland gives a speech; Frank Field responds to feedback. The Foundation

Years Action Group 'wants everyone to be educated about the importance of early affection, care and healthy attachment. Introducing education for parenthood into the national curriculum might be one way to secure a route to universal learning about the area.' Scotland seems to be way ahead: most LEAs introduce Roots of Empathy for five-to-eight-year-olds; its Curriculum for Excellence teaches students about parenting within the health and well-being syllabus, one of the three core curriculum priorities. 'Relationships, sexual health and parenthood play a vital part.' At each stage of the National Parenting Strategy, 'Scottish children learn about the relationships between parents and infants; the skills, commitment and qualities that parenthood requires; and the importance and the enduring and complex responsibility of being a parent/carer.' One idea by seminar members is to provide 'visual demonstrations to senior leadership teams on the importance of early attachment.'

2014

The Scottish government is committed to ensuring that all children and young people receive high quality relationships, sexual health and parenthood education. Scottish government

The ambitious, wonderfully idealistic *Conduct of Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood Education in Schools* is published by the Scottish government. Scottish schools have a legal requirement to teach high-quality Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood (RSHP) education within the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), a broad framework for learning, not a detailed programme. RSHP is a key part of the Health and Well-being section of the CfE for ages 3-18.

Health and Well-being permeates every aspect of the curriculum, including in special schools and for children and young people not in school. 'As a subject it now has the same status within the curriculum as languages and numeracy and should be core business for every school or education setting. Children and young people develop an

understanding of the complex role and responsibilities of being a parent or carer.' They should be taught 'the value of a stable family life in a child's development.' The new RSHP curriculum will be published in 2019 with an open invitation to anyone to contribute ideas and give feedback. (Scottish education is separate from England's and has no prescriptive national curriculum.)

2015

The Education Select Committee's report, *Life Lessons,* calls for statutory PSHE education. But with the Brexit vote and a change of government personnel, this call recedes to the back burner until 2017.

2015

How much can one individual do to improve the emotional health of babies and children? The unusual story of George Hosking suggests: quite a lot. Born in Scotland in 1943 and having studied economics, he worked for Unilever as an accountant for 17 years, visiting 35 countries whose stark inequalities got him thinking about compassion and effectiveness and how to combine the two. This led to serious study of philosophy, psychology and criminology. He trained as a trauma counsellor, also providing successful therapy for violent offenders in and outside prisons. In the 1990s some horrific cases of child abuse led to the development of his work. 'I could not just accept such things and do nothing about it.'

George belongs to the Quakers with their impressive record of prison reform and peace campaigning. They don't just talk about social problems but take action. In 1996 he established, in a small way, the WAVE Trust, Worldwide Alternatives to Violence, 'a children's charity working to make the world safer by breaking damaging, inter-generational family cycles.' His influence grew: he has advised the Home Office, prime minister, police, Welsh government and, significantly, the Scottish Violence Reduction Unit whose dramatic success in Glasgow now inspires English thinking. WAVE was

commended by the World Health Organisation. George was given an OBE in 2014.

WAVE bases its work thus: 'To solve deep-seated problems, you must first understand the root causes, then tackle those root causes.' One cause is lack of empathy and nurture for babies and tiny children, which is why WAVE puts huge effort into researching and providing resources for parent education in schools, commissioned by the Scottish government, producing two documents of especial interest to us: an Evidence Review and a Toolkit.

The Evidence Review, *PREP: Parenthood and Relationships Education Project: Raising the Best Generation of Scottish Parents* by Sarah Watkins and Claire Hillson, is published. The Scottish government wants to make Scotland 'the best place in the world to grow up.' (Meanwhile, Upstart, chaired by the indefatigable Sue Palmer, campaigns for the kindergarten stage for all three-to-seven-year-olds.) The Scottish government's National Parenting Strategy states: 'We are committed to doing more to enable our children and young people to develop healthy, positive relationships and to prepare for possible future parenthood.' It not only finances Roots of Empathy in any primary school that wants it, but commissions WAVE to write an evidence review and make detailed recommendations for pilot projects.

WAVE's online surveys and other research aims to discover what youngsters and young parents know about parenting. They speak to 25 professionals; look at international programmes; hold a focus group for 25 young people; and canvass the views of parents - a thorough exploration of all aspects. What do teenagers think about school-based preparation? 'We know how to make a baby but not how to look after it,' says a boy of 17. The Review describes what Scottish young people know and believe. WAVE outlines ideas, based on its research, about the best ways to provide parenting education in Scottish secondary schools.

'There seems to be very little, if any, focus on preparing for the softer skills of parenting such as relationships and empathy.' Schools teach about prevention of pregnancy, not about being a good parent. 'There is little or only sporadic education about parenthood in Scotland.'

The young parents whom WAVE consults advocate parenthood education at school. Let's look at their suggested topics:

- Put on CBeebies for hours with a screaming baby in your ear;
- Show a film to show the experience of young parents;
- What it's like to be pregnant, how hard it is to get a house and job;
- What you're letting yourself in for;
- The work involved: how hard it is, not just about cuteness/outfits;
- What life changes are needed;
- The physical and mental strain of pregnancy and parenthood;
- The importance of mutual respect and equality;
- Less freedom;
- How to get through the day;
- What support is available.

Discussions with professionals emphasise what is involved in a successful programme:

- Support from the school, head, senior management;
- Sufficient planning and formal training;
- Adequate time;
- An implementation manual;
- Ongoing support for staff;
- A solid but flexible programme to suit specific youngsters' needs;
- One-to-one as well as group activities;
- An ongoing programme that builds on previous learning;
- A choice of easily taught sessions or an entire course;
- Core activities for all, as well as additional activities;
- Content and language appropriate for the age group;

- Good quality, relevant and suitable materials;
- Inclusion of the role of fathers;
- Emphasis on the importance of play;
- Bringing in young parents;
- Encouraging peer support networks for young people.

And the document outlines the qualities needed by facilitators. WAVE hopes this project will 'lay the foundation for, and build momentum in favour of, transformational change in the preparation for positive parenthood.'

2016

The WAVE Trust's 147-page Toolkit, *PREP - Parenthood and Relationships Education Project*, is published, giving schools very detailed recommendations of what and how to teach. It is available for free on the WAVE Trust's website.

2017

Justine Greening, Conservative education secretary, says she places relationships and sex education 'on the top of my in-tray,' announcing plans to make it statutory from year one to the end of secondary school via amendments to the Children and Social Work Bill: an historic step. Wide consultation will take place in 2018. Economic well-being and careers are still not statutory, but most of the PSHE Association's concerns, including health education, soon will be.

2018

What About the Children? charity had been founded in 1993 by Susannah Clasen and the late Doreen Goodman. The charity promotes the emotional needs of children from birth to age three. It gives evidence to the Green Paper, *Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health*: 'It is important that young people have the opportunity to consider the responsibilities and demands of family life as part of their understanding of the adult world of work. The

emotional needs and care of babies and children and how, as parents, they will meet these needs should be a fundamental aspect of PSHE, RSE and other subjects across the school curriculum.'

Elizabeth Hartley-Brewer, social policy specialist, later recalls: 'I knew that parenting hadn't been discussed by ministers ever' until the murder in 1993 of two-year-old James Bulger by two 10-year-old boys. 'I realised immediately there would be a political call to monitor parenting styles and quality, which is what happened. Parenting entered politics then. It took a few years for people to suggest that we needed to start teaching parenting in secondary schools.'

2018

Kate Middleton, Duchess of Cambridge (married to Lady Diana's son William, pregnant with their third child), convenes a symposium in London about early intervention, organised by the Royal Foundation. She sets up a steering group to make recommendations for collaborative action, due to report late 2018/early 2019. 'We need to highlight how important it is to support mothers too, potentially before they even give birth. It would seem that we cannot intervene early enough. We need a focus on parenting and family support but potentially we could start to look even earlier, by teaching parenting and relationship skills to teenagers to get the next generation of parents child-ready, well before they have to put these skills into practice.' The steering group consists of:

Chair: Scott Greenlaugh, Bridge Management Fund. MSC Evidence Based Interventions. Charity Trustee;
Professor Jane Barlow, Oxford. President of Assn. of Infant Mental Health;
Kate Billingham CBE, Nursing Institute. Family Nurse Partnership;
Naomi Eisenstadt, Oxford Sure Start Unit. Think Family. Women in Prison. Impact of poverty;
Professor Leon Feinstein, Director of Evidence, Children's Commission for England. Formerly Early Intervention Foundation;

Professor Peter Fonagy, CEO*,* Anna Freud Centre;
Dr Alain Gregoire, Founder and Chair, Maternal Mental Health Alliance. Obstetrician. Perinatal psychiatrist;
Anna Marie Hassall MBE, National Children's Bureau;
David Holmes, CEO*,* Family Action;
Professor Eamon McCrory, Neuroscience and Psychopathology. Director, Risk and Resilience Unit, UCL. Anna Freud Centre. Early Adversity and Behaviour problems;
Dr Matthew Patrick, CEO, South London and Maudesley NHS Foundation. Formerly at Tavistock Centre. Psychiatrist / psychoanalyst;
Kate Stanley, Policy and Evidence, NSPCC. On Board of Hope and Home. International interests;
Ed Vainter, Principal, Co-Founder, Reach academy, Feltham. Formerly Peckham, White City and USA.

Ipso MORI is commissioned to discover the attitudes and knowledge concerning early years (conception to age five) of thousands of UK parents. Its report, *State of the Nation*, will be published in 2020.

2019

Sir Al Aynsley-Green, the first children's commissioner for England (2005–2010), is still passionately interested in all aspects of the health and welfare of babies, children and young people. His revealing book, *The British Betrayal of Childhood,* asks: 'How can we educate young people about the importance of relationships and parenting? Should this be a key component of relationships and sex education in schools and if so, who is best prepared and suited to teach it?' He answers his question a bit later: 'What matters is whether children have stability in their lives, are nurtured, are secure, and above all, loved. Promoting this is not just the job of parents, crucial though that is, but for society as a whole, with schools having a special responsibility to promote the importance of relationships and the skills of parenting.'

2019

'I would love to see parenting classes in every school,' says Values-based Education, a not-for-profit organisation aiming to transform schools. Its founder Dr Neil Hawkes later writes to me: 'I think you are tackling a very important subject. I think at a macro level, many of the issues about parenting are systemic, and individuals feel alone and not prepared for the role. I think your book is timely.'

2019

Alice Hoyle and Ester McGeeney write *Great Relationships and Sex Education: 200+ Activities for Educators Working with Young People* including activities about parenting. More in Volume 2 of this book.

2019

After much lobbying, the government creates two new curricula, mandatory for every student in all types of school in England. This is agreed in the House of Commons with 538 Aye's and only 21 No's.

The legal title is Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019 which come under Sections 34 and 35 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017. Every school has to make a 'statement of policy' on its provision of Relationships Education (primary schools) or Relationships and Sex Education (secondary schools.) Every child must learn about relationships, every teenager about relationships and sex. This means that 75 percent of PSHE education is now compulsory in all schools. (There will be a review of the curricula in 2013.) Here is the government's guidance in full:

Relationships Education for primary schools

The guidance lists five sections:

a) *Families and People who Care for me*

This is the only section directly relevant to parenthood education. By the age of 11, 'pupils should know:

- That families are important for children growing up because they can give love, security and stability;
- The characteristics of healthy family life, commitment to each other, including in times of difficulty, protection and care for children and other family members, the importance of spending time together and sharing each other's lives;
- That others' families, either in school or in the wider world, sometimes look different from their family, but that they should respect those differences and know that other children's families are also characterised by love and care;
- That stable, caring relationships, which may be of different types, are at the heart of happy families, and are important for children's security as they grow up;
- That marriage represents a formal, legally recognised commitment of two people to each other which is intended to be lifelong;
- How to recognise if family relationships make them feel unhappy or unsafe, and how to seek help or advice from others if needed.'

The other sections are *Caring Friendships, Respectful Relationships, Online Relationships* and *Being Safe.*

Relationships and Sex Education for secondary schools

This also has five sections. Again, the first is the only one directly relevant to parenthood education. By the end of secondary school, 'pupils should know:

a) Families

- That there are different types of committed, stable relationships;
- How these relationships might contribute to human happiness and their importance for bringing up children;

- What marriage is, including its legal status, e.g. that marriage carries legal rights and protections not available to couples who are cohabiting or who have married, for example, in an unregistered religious ceremony;
- Why marriage is an important relationship choice for many couples and why it must be freely entered into;
- The characteristics and legal status of other types of long-term relationships;
- The roles and responsibilities of parents with respect to raising of children, including the characteristics of successful parenting;
- How to: determine whether other children, adults or sources of information are trustworthy: judge when a family, friend, intimate or other relationship is unsafe (and to recognise this in others' relationships); and how to seek help or advice, including reporting concerns about others, if needed.'

The other sections cover *Respectful Relationships including Friendships, Online and Media, Being Safe* and *Intimate and Sexual Relationships including Sexual Health.*

The ten sections comprise a total of 68 items. Only 12 of the 68 are relate directly in some way to parenthood. The guidance notes don't mention parenthood education, though they point out the Key Stages 3 and 4 science curriculum includes fertilisation, gestation and birth. What's equally worrying is the recommendation that pupils are 'assessed' on their learning. Tests, written assignments and self-evaluation 'to capture progress' are chillingly mentioned. Although this would be a sign that the subjects are taken seriously by the school, assessment is by no means the only way to show that. Rather, any formal assessment is likely to make these subjects burdensome for some students, and to encourage traditional attitudes and methods of teaching, rather than imaginative, enjoyable, experiential - and therefore memorable - methods. (Parents in any school can withdraw their child from sex education but not from relationships education.)

2020

As it stands, only one in four people recognise the specific importance of the period from conception to five in securing health and happiness in adulthood.
State of the Nation Report

The report *State of the Nation* is published. 'Our research shows that recognition of the importance of the early years is far from universal. Even among parents of a 0-to-five-year-old, recognition of the first five years as being the most important for health and happiness in adulthood is relatively low, with just 31 percent stating that this is the most important developmental period. This means that seven in ten parents of 0-to-five-year-olds (69 percent) are not aligned with the scientific consensus that the conception-to-age-five period is crucial in providing the foundation of health and happiness. Our conversations with parents suggest that the lack of emphasis placed on the early years is sometimes due to the perception that children do not develop during this period.

'Just over one in three parents does not recognise the brain develops fastest in the conception-to-two-years period; one in four does not recognise that what parents do between birth and 18 months has a large impact on their child's future. These beliefs are in opposition to scientific evidence demonstrating that brain development during this time is faster than at any other period of development.'

The first theme emerging from this research is 'the importance of promoting education and dissemination of evidence on the primacy of the early years to parents *of the future* and the whole of society.' Most UK parents underestimate the importance of the early years, 'pointing to the need to elevate the importance of the pregnancy and early years period in the public consciousness; not only among parents but also *among the parents of tomorrow* and the whole of society.'

Further, 'to increase understanding of brain development, we need to translate and increase accessibility of developmental science so that parents, *future parents* and wider society understand the importance of active interaction with children in the 0-to-five age group (with a particular focus on the 0-to-two period) on the life chances of babies far beyond these first years. These findings are intended to provoke discussion and debate.' (My emphasis throughout.)

2020

The PSHE Association produces its 38-page *Family Life: Exploring Relationships, Marriage and Parenting* for Key Stage 4 (14-to-16-year-olds.) This contains teacher guidance, three lesson plans, and resources, and is available to Association members. Lesson one is about long-term commitment; lesson two, marriage; lesson three, parenting. They should all be used as part of a more comprehensive PSHE programme about relationships and parenting. The 60-minute lesson 3, which you should deliver only after reading the guidance, consists of discussion and writing. Each activity is given a few prescribed minutes. A box for anonymous questions is also suggested.

2020

I ask the Early Years Alliance (formerly the Pre-School Playgroups Association) whether it still advocates placing teenagers in early years settings. The gratifying reply: 'It is as important now as it ever was. This may be on a school work-experience placement where they can experience what it is like to work with young children as a potential career. This will be supported further from September 2020 with the roll-out of the new T-level qualification, replacing the BTEC. It has increased requirements for time spent in settings to develop the skills elements of the award.

'Not every young adult sees working in early years as a viable choice. Being able to experience it first-hand helps to promote the opportunities and vital importance of the work and the possible

career progression. Breaking down barriers and changing attitudes towards the work is essential, so first-hand experiences are important. Additionally, time spent in early years settings contributes to their "personal" development, providing an opportunity to understand more about what caring for a baby or young child really entails, as they observe early years professionals supporting children's learning and development.

'The young adults may become young parents and may not have a support network of family and friends to act as role models or be a protective factor for young parents who are themselves vulnerable.' Playgroup placements can give insights into children's development, what they need to thrive, and how carers respond to their needs. But 'there are many considerations before agreeing to host a teenager:

- The setting must meet the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage, including safeguarding arrangements for the young adults themselves;
- There should be a clear purpose and support for the young adult whilst in the setting, to be agreed with the school beforehand;
- The hosts should be clear about the route to working in the sector i.e. apprenticeships, to foster any interest shown in the work;
- Practitioners should recognise the potential for mentoring and role modelling young adults who are spending time in their setting;
- The experience of having young adults in the playgroup should be of mutual benefit to children, practitioners and the young adults.'

A lot has been written about teenagers and playgroups, much of it in the PPA's magazine *Contact*.

2021

Crossbench Lord Aberdare says, during a House of Lords debate about the *Skills and Post-16 Education Bill*, 'It's always seemed odd to me that so many of us complete our education with extensive

knowledge of maths, English language and literature, history, languages, sciences and other academic subjects but with few, if any, of the skills listed in Amendment 90C from the noble Baroness, Lady Bennett.' Baroness Bennett (Green Party) calls for practical skills such as parenting (and several others) to be taught to students aged 16+.

2021 and 2022

The PSHE Association's new resources for members consist of three lessons about fertility and pregnancy choices to 'equip young people with the knowledge and understanding they need to make informed decisions related to fertility and becoming a parent in future'; and two lessons about how to 'manage and de-escalate family conflicts.' Students learn to 'identify the roles, responsibilities and challenges of being a parent.'

2021

Kate Middleton sets up the Royal Foundation Centre for Early Childhood to raise awareness of the importance of the first five years.

2021

Science researchers at Oxford university devise a programme for teenagers about babies' brains. Nearly 4,000 students take part. After the lessons, 90 percent now know how best to speak to a baby; 86 percent can name an activity which would help development. 'It's the foundation for their whole life, so I'd treat them differently. I'd play with them' (Jack.) 'If you speak to babies in a singing sort of voice, it makes them interact more and play more' (Divina.) The researchers state, 'Even those who may not grow up to become parents will have contact with very young children as siblings, babysitters, uncles and aunts, so understanding how their brains develop is crucial.' Over 100 schools express an interest in adopting the lessons as part of the science curriculum. Kate Middleton visits one of the pilot schools.

Part Two

What has been written and said in the US

(All sections in this book referring to the US/Canada have north American spelling)

Preamble

The dynamism in US public life contrasts with the slower pace in the UK. Perhaps it goes back to the move west from 1803: the initiative taken by people chasing economic opportunities. Whatever the reasons, it was pleasantly surprising that all my emails to the projects which follow were answered immediately with great enthusiasm and encouragement. 'You should be commended for wanting do this. We'd be glad to help in any way.' There's a high teenage pregnancy rate in the US: the UK and New Zealand come next in the developed world. (Some African countries have the highest rates, often due to early marriages. Scandinavian countries have amongst the lowest.) The increasing number of abused, neglected US children, and the level of violent crime, have motivated the north Americans we meet below to try to change things by teaching parenthood to all ages in schools. We include details of the huge efforts made by the White House Conferences to improve children's well-being, with or without reference to teaching parenthood in schools. As in Europe, many distinguished US professionals, politicians and parents, going back to 1888, have taken the topic seriously. In 2009, Prepare Tomorrow's Parents listed 12 flourishing programmes in the US and Canada. Few remain - a recent tragic decline in most of this innovative work. What follows is an account of US projects which have ceased, despite the passion of their advocates.

Our fervent wish for the future is that child abuse and neglect be eradicated. More realistically, we hope that a heightened emphasis is placed on parenting education in our high schools so that young people will learn how to care for children and have accurate knowledge of what to expect in a child's natural development. Only when young parents have been thoroughly educated in the realities of child rearing and realise that each child is a precious gift from God will abuse, neglect and abandonment be ended, perhaps forever.

Sara O'Meara and Yvonne Fedderson, Co-founders, Childhelp

Chapter Six
1888 – 1960

1888

Things are so bad for many children in the US that *The Society for the Study of Child Nature* is founded by five women to study children 'from the mental, moral and physical viewpoints.' Over the decades they study Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, Locke, Spencer, Adler, Froebel, Montessori, the psychologist Granville Hall, and Havelock Ellis.

1901

In her book *What a Young Wife Ought to Know,* Dr Emma Drake reflects, 'A beginning has been made in our schools toward a wider knowledge along the lines of being, which heralds the day when teachers who are intelligent in these matters shall prepare our young people for the responsibilities of life – then those whose home training has been neglected, shall not come out of our schools unprepared, but fitted to take their places as home-makers, as fathers and mothers capable of training their children in the wisest way.'

1907

Blanche Tucker, in *Notes on the Care of Babies and Young Children: For the Use of Teachers,* believes that 'the prevailing ignorance of mothers in the feeding and care of infants should be combated. As future mothers all schoolgirls should receive intelligent instruction in hygiene, the care of infants, and cooking.'

1908

The Society for the Study of Child Nature is renamed the *Federation for Child Study,* becoming a national agency to promote the understanding of child development, child rearing and family life, sharing the experiences of small parent education groups across the country. Its

earnest, pioneering study groups look at modern psychiatry and psychology, and interpret these insights to American parents.

1909

The many problems of American children and youth are being taken seriously. The series, over 70 years, of seven White House Conferences on Children and Youth begins, hosted by no less than the president. These conferences aim to raise public awareness. The first, called by Theodore Roosevelt, is about children's well-being. Two-hundred delegates focus on the care of dependent children, opposing the institutionalisation of those who are neglected, and promoting the importance of family life. There are results. The Children's Bureau is created in 1912. The origins are established for what will become in 1920 the Child Welfare League of America (still flourishing today.) The widows' pensions movement develops. There are more adoption agencies. Cottages replace large institutions for looked-after children.

1911

Dr Helen Putnam, former president of the Council of American Academy of Medicine, writes in her article *Education for Parenthood* about the necessity of this education for children. In this era, writers seem more willing to bluntly criticise parents than in our own. 'A very large part of modern social effort is struggling to undo the mistakes of parents.' Therefore, 'our duty is to prepare in the scientific knowledge of parenthood, teachers of children, the potential parents, for the foundation of good parenthood must be laid before the event; after is too late to undo the errors committed and duties omitted in childhood and youth.

'This preparation of teachers of potential parents has been developing during the last 20 years in certain places along definite lines until paths well-blazed by successful experimentation indicate where our efforts should concentrate. This training for parenthood was

launched in Boston by the intelligent insistence of college women and, against political indifference or incapacity or opposition, is winning its way in every state.' The courses take female students aged 17-to-30 who, for most of four years' teacher training, learn the scientific bases of home making as applied to housing, food, clothing and 'character and social relations.' They study heredity, child psychology, 'children's vices,' 'the education of the will,' the declining birth rate and the 'duty of the educated in the preservation of the race.' When they become teachers, they can pass on this knowledge to children and in parents' clubs.

As a doctor in an age of widespread sexual diseases, her emphasis is on physical health and 'clean living.' She advocates introducing the topic of reproduction to young children through the study of flowers and animals and, as a Christian, refers to our duty to the 'laws of God.' Putnam regrets that men don't take the teacher training course, but boys at school can benefit. She asks a teacher, 'Do you think you have taught anything of clean living?' The emphatic reply is, 'I am sure I have. There were two boys two or three years older than the others. They were precocious and unclean minded. I had no private talk with them but at certain points I took special pains to have them understand. Before the course was over, there was a complete mental revolution, and moral too; I know from their manner. They are clean, good boys now, and twice as bright.'

1916

Thomas C. Blaisdell, dean of the School of the Liberal Arts at Pennsylvania college of education, is a man way ahead of his time, to judge from his article called, like Putman's, *Education for Parenthood.* The emphasis in those days is on eugenics and the physical, rather than psychological, care of children. Even so, his progressive comments and suggestions are greatly relevant for us in 2024.

An enormous number of children are dying in the US before the age of five. 'The right kind of education for the duties of parenthood in elementary and high schools, colleges and "continuation" classes would cut this startling total.' Like Herbert Spencer, he rejects the value of academic subjects when they have no practical application. A mother with a Master's degree 'might wisely ask: 'Would it not have been possible to "apply" my psychology and ethics to the training of children and to substitute courses in Training for Parenthood for the required work in foreign languages, mathematics and philosophy? Would it not be wisdom to make these traditional subjects elective, and to require a subject which is really fundamental in the education of all?' He wants this subject also for students who never get to high school. Furthermore, let males have it too. 'Is not the boy and youth and young man as much entitled to such training as is his sister?' He then asks three questions: What is now being done? What should be done? and: What can be done as a beginning?

What is now being done

Schools of all kinds are now teaching food values, cooking and sewing, all contributing to the 'right kind of education for parenthood.' However, they need to concentrate on 'kitchen aprons and bread or economical buying and balanced menus' rather than 'lace and fudge and angel's food.' In addition, teachers are 'too often hampered by tradition and by the thought of exhibits and examinations.' Finally, schools shouldn't spend lots of time on theory before letting students 'enter the sacred precincts of the cooking laboratory. Life is not logical and no dictum of the schoolmaster can make it logical. In life, we do, and, by doing, learn the theory of doing that makes us more efficient in doing the same thing again.'

Girls, at least, in some places are getting some practical experience. 'In Hartford (Connecticut), Montclair (New Jersey) and other cities, girls in the upper grades are taught to bathe and care for babies. In a few high schools, day nurseries are maintained, thus giving girls an

opportunity to learn something of the care of infants. Many schools by physical examinations are emphasising the care of teeth, of eyes and of the general health. If the thought of using such information in their own homes is kept ever prominent, such work is excellent training for the duties of parenthood.' He adds: 'In many schools, play is supervised. Games and folk dances thus learned may be made splendid education for use in the home. A few high schools are teaching something of eugenics; others are teaching sex hygiene.'

Even more direct work is going on in continuation classes for 16-to-24-year-olds, run by schools and voluntary associations in 'districts populated largely by the foreign born. The work done in training mothers to feed their children wisely and to care for them properly is notably efficient.'

What should be done?

The early school years should include a lot of theory and practice about healthy living. But, he charmingly advocates, schools should also teach 'something of how parents and children should play and chum and laugh and love and work together.' At high school, as well as ethics, psychology, biology, science, all taught with practical application to the home, 'at least one course of a year' is needed for both sexes in 'Life Problems,' aimed directly at training for parenthood. Students are to be encouraged to 'help mother to train younger brothers and sisters.' And a small class library of books is suggested 'for later reading.'

'All manual work, such as carpentry, is education for parenthood.' Blaisdell understands how children learn. 'It is peculiarly effective training when the pupil is permitted to make during his shop periods something he really wishes to make. When he is set a task and compelled to do what is irksome, its educational value is largely gone.' Girls should have the chance to 'drive a nail' and boys to learn 'bachelor sewing.'

Schools might plead lack of time for parenthood education. Blaisdell is vociferous. 'Would it not be better to require this work of all students than to require foreign languages, algebra, geometry and ancient history, if it is impossible to include both? Just how do any of these subjects make for efficient parenthood or citizenship? Do they function in life? But you must prepare for college. Who said so? Should the high school, which is the people's college, refuse to educate merely because many college courses of today belong in the centuries of the past?' Colleges should take as much interest in teaching parenthood as schools. 'No college should send forth a man or woman for leadership who has had no training in the most important business in life.' A required course in children's literature and training in story-telling should be included.

What can be done as a beginning?

'Every interested teacher can do something indirectly, if not directly. In time, something will be done directly in every school. It can come only by littles.' But act now. 'No school should wait for a demand for it from the people. The people do not demand advances in education. They look with reverent superstition on the medieval curricula of today. Foreign languages and mathematics are sacred. The change must come through the steady forward march of educational leaders.'

Teachers can send off for government publications. *A Reading Course for Parents* lists books about education for parenthood; and *Education for the Home* by Benjamin Andrews 'sums up all that is being done in schools and colleges the country over.' And they can learn of the work of the American Association for the Study and Prevention of Infant Mortality.

'Most of all, every community should organise continuation classes,' just needing 'one individual with a real interest in the subject.' Bodies like the YMCA can get involved. Out-of-school training 'can make up for what the schools and colleges have omitted.'

1919

This is The Children's Year. The second White House Conference, called by president Woodrow Wilson in Washington D.C. as well as in eight other cities, is about standards of child welfare. Minimum standards are drawn up about child labour, the health care of children and mothers, and help for children with special needs. The conference prompts 'widespread awareness of the need for better standards for maternity and infancy protection.'

1921

Miss May Bliss Dickinson chairs the Mothercraft Committee of the Massachusetts Federation of Women's Clubs. Her paper, *Mothercraft Instruction for School Girls,* begins: 'Mothercraft, now introduced into 25 states and several foreign countries, is a very recent development in public health education. It seeks to utilise the maternal instinct of young girls and build on it a knowledge of simple hygiene and sanitation. The child carries this instruction to the home and the standard of home health is raised.'

1924

The *Federation for Child Study* receives grants, and changes its name to the *Child Study Association of America* (CSAA), providing parent education and consultation on child development until the 1960s when it shifts to professional training. There are mergers and financial difficulties until the 1980s when it gradually, tragically, winds down. Descendants of the activists write in 2017 and 2018: 'My mother was deeply involved in *Child Study*. I was part of an interracial exchange with a black student in the late 1960s. We spent a week in each other's school and home, a deeply affecting "experiment" with tremendous results. I didn't realise the extent to which *Child Study* delved into the lives of children.' And: 'My grandmother, Maud R Hartman, was an active member and on the Board. I remember Bruno Bettelheim who was ransomed by the CSAA from Auschwitz [Bettelheim in fact was in Dachau and Buchenwald camps.] I'm grateful grandmamma didn't

live to see its demise. She would have been heartbroken as she devoted her life to its work. It was such a privilege to have such a wise, avant-garde grandmother influencing my life.'

1925

The US National Council of Parent Education is formed. Its C21st website listed many books about parent education, some in schools. It appears now (2024) to have evaporated, or maybe it's incorporated in the National Parents and Families Engagement Council (2022.)

1930

The substantially funded White House Conference under president Hoover – 3,000 participants! - has an ambitious aim: 'To study the present status of the health and well-being of the children of the US, to report what is being done, to recommend what ought to be done and how to do it.' Over 1,000 experts in 17 committees prepare documents. All participants receive a 643-page volume. It advocates, amongst much else, parent education to confront 'all the problems facing family life.' It is followed up in 1931 by no less than 32 volumes of reports. But 'although the conference generated the most comprehensive report on the needs of children ever written, the overwhelming volume of reports and proposals impeded efforts to convert the recommendations into action,' writes a professional. One outcome at least is the creation of the American Pediatric Society.

1931

President Hoover includes in the Children's Charter, developed with 3,500 experts, the demand for *every* school pupil, 'regardless of race or color or situation,' to have 'such teaching and training as will prepare him for successful parenthood.'

1939

Another White House Conference, called by president Franklin Roosevelt, *Assessing Research, Taking Action,* is about children in a

democracy, 'highlighting the democratic values, services and environment necessary for the welfare of children.' Its 98 proposals for the 1940s cover ten years of a child's life. It leads in 1943 to the Emergency, Maternity and Infant Care program, giving free medical, nursing and hospital services for mothers before and after delivery, and complete care for babies under the age of one.

1950

President Truman calls an enormous White House Conference which includes, amongst others, 400 youth for the first time, representing every state, and 200 foreign delegates from 30 countries. The topic is healthy personality development. The focus moves from the previous concentration on teenage pregnancy and delinquency, and calls for 'an ecological and strength-based approach to improve children's health and well-being.' Over 460 national organisations help to plan this work. One-thousand local committees are set up; each state submits a report about its children's needs. The purpose is to 'consider how we can develop in children the mental, emotional and spiritual qualities essential to individual happiness and responsible citizenship, and what physical, economic and social conditions are deemed necessary to this development.' There are new themes this year. Participation in the arts is recommended, and minority groups pinpoint the needs of various ethnic populations.

1957

E E LeMasters states in the article *Parenthood as Crisis*: 'Couples are not trained for parenthood, practically nothing in school or out of school got them ready to be fathers and mothers - husbands and wives, yes, but not parents. Parents are caught unprepared, even though they have planned and waited for this event for years. The literature beamed at parents in the ante-natal situation is not relevant. What students are taught at school is potentially more relevant.' There are limitations to preparation. 'Can people have a full realisation of the parenting experience before they are immersed in

it?' - the fatigue, the joys and delight. No, but that's no excuse to do nothing, says the author.

1960

The 1960s begin on an expansive note. The sixth White House Conference on Children and Youth recommends that 'the school curriculum include education for family life, including sex education and family life courses, including preparing for marriage.' This conference under Eisenhower's presidency is a Golden Anniversary one, celebrating 50 years of the conferences. Its theme, *Getting Creative,* attracts an amazing 7,000 participants, some of them youth. It recommends that family life courses, including marriage and parent preparation, be instituted 'as an integral and major part of public education.' There is much talk of the benefits of creative writing, visual arts, music, theatre and dance. Pediatricians credit former conferences for the enormous drops since 1910 in infant mortality (a 78 percent decrease), deaths of one-to-four-year-olds (92 percent) and youth (75 percent.) There are a staggering 670 final recommendations.

1960

Dr Hans Heinrich Stern's international review shows a 'vigorous and spontaneous parent education movement in the US, nourished by much research on child development.' Over 60 percent of schools are estimated to provide courses on family living starting at primary level, including the psychological as well as practical aspects.

About 90% of the U.S. population will become parents: over 84% give birth to children; another 6% become parents through step parenting, adoption, and foster parenting. More people become parents than go to college or drive a car (59% and 83% respectively.) Abuse and neglect are reported for over 7,000,000 children every year. Nearly half of all pregnancies are unintended.

Educate Tomorrow's Parents

Chapter Seven
The 1970s

1971
Health educator Rose M Somerville, studying parenting education in schools, identifies a few problems: the subject's low academic status; lack of adequately prepared teachers; reluctance to modify existing timetables and traditional classroom procedures; and low male participation, among both students and teachers.

1970 and 1971
The last of the huge White House Conferences: one on children, one on youth. The first, called by president Nixon in Washington D.C, has the theme *Cherishing Individuality and Identity*. It cites the 'national neglect of children and those primarily engaged in their care - America's parents. Many parents are not guides, friends or companions of their children, and are often engaged in a rat race. A child often spends more time with a passive babysitter than a participating parent.' The television might be on for six hours a day. 'In the modern way of life, it is not only parents of whom children are deprived, it is people in general' with the breakdown of community, mothers working, the isolation and alienation. (Robert Putman, professor of public policy's future book *Bowling Alone* in 2000 is relevant here.) Children depend on their peers. Infanticide has increased since 1957. 'The most deprived parents are so overwhelmed that they have no energy or psychological resources to take part in parenting programmes.'

There are regional conferences in six other cities. The conference on youth takes place over four days at a YMCA in Colorado and discusses many topics affecting 14-to-25-year-olds. It stresses the importance of 'direct and immediate implementation' of its priorities. One outcome is a council in each state to monitor the status of

children. Another is the new subcommittee in Congress about children and youth.

After this, momentum fades, with only a few small one-day events from 1979 about single issues, called by presidents Carter, Clinton and Bush. Reagan organises none, though he gives money to individual states for their own events. 'Long-term preventive care policies are not fashionable,' comments professor Richard Whitfield. But the major conferences might have led to this:

1972

The US Federal Office of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare allocates $3m for a six-year nationwide program for teenagers, the Education For Parenthood Project (EFP.) With a structured curriculum including practical experience with children, it is used eventually not only in 2,600 junior and senior high schools but in 450 colleges and universities, and 800 non-school community agencies, as well as over 100 institutions abroad.

Exploring Parenthood, a one-year practical, elective course, initiated and funded by the Children's Bureau and the National Institute of Mental Health, encourages teenagers to remember their own childhoods, thus improving relationships with siblings as well as parents.

The course covers basic concepts of child development, avoids dogma - an exploration rather than a reliance on pre-planned and structured content - and combines study with regular work with young children. The main funder, the Office of Child Development, sees it as a way to prepare students for parenthood, for careers involving children, or 'simply for citizenship, with the responsibility for making daily decisions that affect children.'

Students are carefully prepared for their placements in response to what have emerged as their major concerns. Their insight, confidence

and self-esteem are bolstered. They benefit from the appreciation shown for their work with children. There are teacher training workshops and evaluation reports.

The Salvation Army and the Scouts movement both get three-year grants to develop innovative methods: placing teenagers in day camps, hospitals, in the homes of pre-schoolers, and with handicapped children (the word used at this time.)

> *I used to have to almost kick him out of bed to get him off to school but now he's on the first shift of the day care center. He is up early and so enthusiastic about those little kids and he's doing much better in all his other classes too.* Mother

1973

W. Stanley Kruger, who develops EFP, is Special Programs director, Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education, Washington, D.C. His heartfelt paper describes his research and ideas. The rationale for this project is 'based on the ineffectiveness of current laissez-faire policy [regarding preparation for parenthood] in the schools, as reflected by problems of child abuse, retardation, infant care, drug abuse, and divorce rate for young marriages.'

1974

Dr Lee Salk, professor of pediatrics, states in his book *Preparing for Parenthood*: 'Parenthood is one of the most important, if not the most important, role a human being can take on in life and yet it is frequently the role people have had the least amount of training for. In particular, they have little or no preparation for the emotional impact of parenthood. Since we human beings purport to place such value on human life, and since our children represent the life of the future, it seems incredible that in our society so little information concerning the responsibilities of parenthood is available.' And Elizabeth Ogg writes *Preparing Tomorrow's Parents* (28pp) in 1975.

1977

A very detailed independent evaluation of EFP (179 pages), *Education for Parenthood: A Program, Curriculum and Evaluation Guide,* edited by Larry Morris, reports significant gains in teenagers' knowledge, skills and sensitivities. Programs were delivered by Boy Scouts, Boys Clubs, National 4-H clubs, Girl Scouts, National Federation of Settlements and Neighborhood Centers, Salvation Army, and Save the Children Foundation (which publishes its own *Education for Parenthood: A Manual for Group Leaders*), as well as in schools. However, professor Whitfield writes that despite the proliferation of programs across the US, 'the picture is one of lack of co-ordination and adequate evaluation.' What education there is, reaches only a minority of those in need.

1978

The non-profit Education Commission of the States invites ten educators, political leaders, researchers and social scientists from all over the US to speak at a conference on parent education in schools at the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies in Aspen, Colorado, moderated by Jerry Lesser, professor of education and psychology at Harvard. Lively, optimistic discussion follows the presentations, including the how and why of parent education and the roles of federal, state and local government in providing it. There is agreement that it's essential for local communities to shoulder the responsibility, planning and coordination through a 'tight network of co-operative relationships' – the key to fruition. But there can be only modest claims about the effectiveness of this education. There's still a lot, they admit, that we don't know about it.

1979

Contributions to the above conference are published in the report F*amilies and Schools: Implementing Parent Education*. Yale's professor Edward Zigler states that 'the need for such education is unquestionable.' It must be 'truly universal,' not elective within home

economics lessons. If elective, 'the people who need it most will not take it. In fact, the group most likely to enrol, generally females already expressing positive attitudes towards themselves and children, are probably the ones who need it least. If we wish to promote a view of childcare as a difficult but certainly important activity for people of both sexes, we must make a special effort to reach boys as well as girls. Either parent education should be a required course for everyone, or it should be incorporated into the curricula of existing required courses (e.g. social studies, health education, biology.) The fieldwork would then be part of a work-study program, or a separate course in and of itself. Without fieldwork, parent education classes have been shown to have little impact on adolescents' attitudes towards children. Any program that hopes to succeed must have a fieldwork component.' This had been shown in the evaluation of *Exploring Childhood.*

Zigler cites proof that parent education can help curb child abuse. 'Lack of knowledge and/or unrealistic expectations about children's capabilities and understanding is a common characteristic of abusing parents. Normal childish behaviour is misinterpreted as intentional trouble-making, deserving of and in fact demanding punishment. Abusing parents often have a tragic ignorance of how little punishment a child can tolerate without sustaining injury. These findings demonstrate the need for parent education so that all parents will know about human development.' Evaluation of *Exploring Childhood,* the curriculum of the federally sponsored *Education for Parenthood* project which puts a joint emphasis on course work and field experience, shows that 'parent education can foster attitudes favorable toward the open expression of tenderness and affection, the use of mild rather than severe punishment and the encouragement of a child's autonomy,' as reported by a couple called the Gruendels.

Parent education is especially needed now. 'We have become a nation of small, mobile, self-insulated families, isolated from the kind of

support that used to be provided by the extended family or close community.' It's a time of social change: more divorce, relocation, domestic violence, stress, more single parents and tiny families.

'One role of parent education is to dispel any rosy and romantic notion teenagers might harbour about children as a never-failing source of joy and love.' The course should avoid preaching or claims that any way of childrearing (which is 'not instinctive') is the right one. And he adds, 'In seeking to prepare adolescents for parenthood, we must not ignore their own struggle to solidify their identities and to redefine their relationships with their own parents accordingly.

'It is difficult to imagine any skills more basic than that of being a good parent, or any body of knowledge more crucial than that of knowing how to raise a sound family.' During the 1970s there's been more attention to parent education by educators, legislators and the public, with many courses and pilots, with 'the federal government reportedly on the verge of considering a plan of action for stimulating the development of parent education programs in the schools. The Children's Bureau and the US Office of Education have for a number of years operated an *Education for Parenthood* program featuring a model curriculum that has had a substantial impact on local schools.' This is no passing fad. It looks like it's here to stay.

There's a widespread, expanding, very well-funded set of 30 programs in Californian schools too, such as in Montgomery County, reports William Whiteneck from the local department of education (and Texas has some too.) They are seen to have halved the number of school-age mothers who drop out of education. But how, he wonders, to gain acceptance for early years centers as part of a comprehensive high school campus? 'The greatest key to a success is the location of the infant development center' at these schools. The next best thing is to use a center one block from the school. Personalities are crucial to success. For a good program, everyone has

to accept it totally, as an integral part of the regular secondary school curriculum.' And it's what students want. He is encouraged by the formation of a Task Force on the subject by the US legislature.

Caldwell and Pagan are aware of primary school classes too. 'Recycling the material at many levels throughout the school years appears to be the best option when schools are organised in such a way as to permit it.' Between them, other speakers mention the youth who are trained as home visitors; the high emotional content of family life and its effects on parent/child interaction; the advantages of looking at all stages of childhood, not only the earliest years; surveys showing the support by parents for school-based parent education; and the vital involvement of parents and Parent Teacher Associations learning to work with teachers who then discover 'the richness that parents can bring into a room.' (How comfortable are teachers with this? they ask.) Adequate time to train and to plan is essential. Give incentives: awards to teachers for outstanding achievement in the subject. Make sure to include a variety of ages: train teenagers to be good babysitters; invite grandparents and professional groups to volunteer in class.

Be realistic about what you really want from parent education. Don't just choose measurable, surface level outcomes, but look at personal meanings, such as the experiences of being a teen parent or the recipient of domestic violence. The need is not just for technical information which is 'a poor second to actual experience with children and the opportunity to talk about it.' Although 'parent education has its reality only to a parent, especially a new parent,' the existence of services for babies, toddlers and young children on school grounds arouses the interest of older students, providing a laboratory for their direct experience. 'This is the most valuable part of parent education.' Young parents too can be invited into school to learn. And don't overlook 'the genuine and widespread human talent of parents themselves.' Enlist local effort and resources. Be aware of

the values, norms and ideologies behind the teaching. Note differences in childrearing of various socio-economic populations.

Britain's famous *Plowden Report* (1967), they say, shows that the attitudes of parents are more important than their economic level or social class. So why not do everything we can to nurture healthy attitudes through a comprehensive national program, given our knowledge of the importance of the earliest years? 'In view of the evidence, early childhood education without an accompanying program of parent education has been, and continues to be, a futile and wasteful effort. All the Head Start and early childhood programs in the world are not likely to counteract the adverse effects of poor parenting and lack of nurturing in the home.' So, integrate family and parenthood studies into all levels of the state school curriculum. Use school buildings to provide pre-marriage counselling and parent education for any adult. The goal is to 'help parents maintain a sense of power, dignity and authority in the rearing of their children.'

The final speaker realistically points out that 'the many social, economic and personal problems that beset parents cannot be solved by parent education.' Parents can be overwhelmed by adverse circumstances. So only modest claims can be made. We could add that research has probably never been done on whether parent education at school does in fact help students, once they are parents, to cope any better with other problems in living.

1979

Influential psychologist, father-of-six, professor Urie Bronfenbrenner states in his book, *The Ecology of Human Development*, 'It is now possible for a person 18-years-of-age to graduate from high school without ever having had to do a piece of work on which someone else truly depended, without ever having cared for, or even held, a baby, without ever having comforted or assisted another human being who really needed help. No society can long sustain itself unless its

members have learned the sensitivities, the motivations and skills involved in assisting and caring for other human beings.'

1979

John Dewey as Educator by Arthur Wirth is published. The book tells us that Dewey, the psychologist and educational reformer, wanted schools to address the real life of families. 'The child entering school was to find it a place in which activities of social life were carried on. The idea was to guide the child's interest in his family and his natural environment and in himself, to get sound ideas of the basic function of people in the home and neighbourhood. The child would realise that the classroom was not isolated from life.'

1979

Ester Buchholz and Anne Addington write an article for the journal *Alternative Higher Education*. The abstract tells us, 'There are numerous reasons why curricula in parent education should be developed in universities and colleges today. An important question is whether, given a body of knowledge as well as social justification for parenthood courses, there is a sufficient number of interested students to enrol in such courses. A survey of high school students, college students and PTA members was conducted across a large metropolitan area. The results are that between two-fifths and one-half of the participants are interested in pursuing, as a minor in college, or as a subspecialty, course work in parenthood on a scientific and scholarly basis. About one-fourth to one-third of those from every group are prepared to pay for formal education in parenthood.'

America's families and their children are in trouble, trouble so deep and pervasive as to threaten the future of our nation. The source of the trouble is nothing less than a national neglect of children and those primarily engaged in their care - America's parents.

Report to the president by the Forum on Parents and Children 1970

Chapter Eight
The 1980s

1980
President Carter's small White House Conference reinforces the recommendations of previous conferences about preparing students at school for parenthood.

1980
David Harman and Orville Brim publish their deep and detailed book, *Learning To Be Parents*, mainly about teaching adult parents but with references to this subject at school. 'One aspect of parent education that has grown, largely out of acute necessity, is that of pre-parenthood education. An effort to utilise the schools primarily and youth organisations secondarily, pre-parenthood education has conceptually sought to create a preparedness among adolescents to enter into their future parental roles. At the same time, parent education is attempting to fill a void in assisting teenagers upon whom parenthood has unwillingly and prematurely been thrust, to adjust to and cope with their situations. Both pre-parenthood education and parent education for adolescent parents are facets of the field so new as not to have been alluded to in Brim's *Education for Child Rearing* (1959.) That parent education today encompasses these areas of practice is, perhaps, indicative of its inherent flexibility and responsiveness to concrete, situational needs.'

They have misgivings about teenagers' ability to really imagine being parents, but because the drop-out rate is high in adult parent education, 'it is more convenient to address programs to school-going groups. It has been argued that school-age children present a more receptive and impressionable target because of their younger age, the fact that they have less to unlearn, and because they show a natural curiosity and desire to learn new things.' The current curriculum

reform movement stresses relevance to students' interests and the need to learn 'living skills. Parenthood, family life and sex education are basic to this. Students have less and less experience of young children at home. Parenthood education is increasing in schools with 'particular popularity,' e.g. the *Exploring Childhood* course. Does it work? It's popular with students 'but its effects are less clear. There are gains in knowledge, positive attitudes and self-confidence.' But results are 'tentative and suggestive, as too few full evaluations have been done' showing statistical significance using control groups.

Boy Scouts of America, Girl Guides and 4-H Clubs also sponsor programs, mostly for youngsters in lower socio-economic classes. Family Life Educators often deliver the course: they are 'virtually the only professional group primarily trained for careers in family education of which parent and pre-parenthood education are major components.'

The authors recommend the use of films, slides and filmstrips, better than TV as they're constantly available. Lectures and lecture series are increasing popular, especially in independent schools, with parents invited, enabling real contact and two-way interaction with experts. Plays, puppet shows and case presentations also have their place. It's important that this education reaches every student and is group-oriented. Include it in psychology, literature, history etc. lessons, so that all are exposed. Reinforce the material, repeat and validate it. However, they recognise 'there is not much room for additions' to the timetable, and some aspects, like sex education, are 'contentious.'

1982

Johnson et al's study, reported in the journal *Pediatrics,* finds that without intervention, high school students have relatively little knowledge of child development and health maintenance. Boys at all grades know less than girls and are more likely to choose punishment

and abuse as a way to discipline. The authors recommend a guarantee that all students receive education for parenting.

1983

In *Parent Education: Needs of Secondary Students,* Mensah, Schultaz and Hughes describe their meticulously detailed enquiry in Iowa school districts that offer vocational home economics into what 265 teenagers want to know, using the 50-item Parent Information Inventory. The strongest needs are to address planning and decision making; parenting and childcare; and adolescent social development, though there are significant differences between males and females. The rise in teenage pregnancy motivates the research. In 1978 one-fifth of all babies born in the US were to adolescents. People worried about the care which the babies got. 'One means available to assure adequate quality of care for the children of teenage parents is to prepare young people for the responsibilities of parenthood.' As Kruger says, the secondary school is 'the last universal opportunity for parenthood education.'

1989

Tom Luster and June Youatt's study in Michigan assesses whether there are benefits to students who take parenting education in school. They find that these students are 'more knowledgeable about child development than are the control students; less likely to believe that infants are spoilt by responsive and affectionate care; more likely to emphasise the importance of talking and reading to children; more likely to believe that infants should be given considerable leeway in exploring the home environment; and less likely to be authoritarian in their parenting practices.'

The attitude of nations towards child welfare
will soon become the test of civilisation.
President Henry Hoover

Chapter Nine
The 1990s

1990

Betty Cooke gives advice in the article *Teaching and Evaluating Courses in Parenthood Education for Adolescents*: 'If knowledge taught in child development and parenting is to be available for translation into action, it must be taught through methods involving direct and fairly extensive observation and experience with children.'

1991

Boys Will Be Boys: Breaking the Link between Masculinity and Violence by Dr Myriam Miedzian is published, urging that school students observe, study and interact with babies and young children, in order to help prevent violence by young men.

1992

Nel Noddings, in *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education*, (Teachers College Press) is one of many US writers promoting the concept of caring, and specifying the full force of its benefits and what it really means. 'All students should be engaged in general education that guides them in caring for self, intimate others, global others, plants, animals and the environment, the human-made world and ideas. Moral life so defined should frankly be embraced as the main goal of education. Such an aim does not work against intellectual development or academic achievement. On the contrary, it supplies a firm foundation for both.'

1993

In his detailed paper for the US Department of Health, *Child Neglect: A Guide for Intervention*, Dr James Gaudin boldly states: 'Schools must become the primary vehicle for providing parenting training for children and adults. Schools are in a key position to offer preparation

for parenting and life skills development beginning with very young children in kindergarten through critical pre-teen and teenage years and for young adult parents through extended-hour programs. Curricula should include child development and childcare skills, interpersonal skills, problem solving and decision-making skills, budgeting, health maintenance/physical fitness and identity enhancement skills. Development of these critical life skills would do much to prevent neglect in the current and next generation of parents.' Like O'Connor (1990) and many others in the UK and US, he believes that this education needs to stretch over many years.

1993

Congress authorises another White House Conference, but the funding, during Bill Clinton's presidency, doesn't follow.

1994

Estelle Weinstein and Efrem Rosen's article in the journal *Adolescence* addresses the need for boys in particular to know more at school about pregnancy and childrearing. They ask how teenage males can learn how to prevent pregnancy or to be responsible, non-stereotypical fathers, especially as they have no experience of parenting and its realities, and have unrealistic ideas about how babies and young children behave. This can lead to physical discipline.

They advocate that schools and other agencies should be proactive and work with adolescents to make sure that males know as much as females. This education should take place from the age of 5-to-18 for boys and girls alike. Experiential lessons must teach all students about parenting and child development. That will result in fewer early pregnancies. Adults choosing to become parents later on will be better prepared and more successful in the role.

They specify what could be taught to the various ages:

5-to-9-year-olds: Babies don't appear by some mistake or accident / different families and cultures have different ideas / looking after babies is very time consuming and difficult / caretakers can be male too / information and services for parents / tour of local hospital / meet male nurses and female doctors / price items for baby in shop / ask parents about reasons for their name / birth rituals in other cultures / carry hard-boiled egg for two days / fragility of babies / things to do daily for baby / invite male parent to class, not just female: prepare questions for them.

9-to-12-year-olds: Control of conception / pre-conception health / father's role in preparing for baby / how a baby affects whole family: cultural and historical perspectives / draw genogram of their family / community resources / childcare agencies.

12-to-14-year-olds: Making decision about becoming a parent / fetal development / birthing options / prevention of pregnancy / various kinds of families / risk-taking behaviors / needs of babies and how to meet them / pair up male and female students, role-play as parents / contrast pregnancy at 16 and 25 years / parenting skills / cost of babies' needs.

14-to-18-year-olds: Impact of pregnancy on health, and on present and future lives / pregnancy and birth experiences for both males and females / visit local agencies; assess accuracy of information given / divide students into groups: married parents, cohabiting parents, single parents, gay and lesbian parents, consider adoption needs / male students to pretend they are teenage parents / good pre-natal care / show film on fetal development and birth / study changes in first year of a baby's life / observe and interview parents.

1994

Dr Bill Cosby has a message. 'At a time when the extended family has broken down and more and more teenagers are parents, we are in dire need of parenting education. Being a parent is one of the most important jobs we have to do in our short time in this world. That's

why parenting education must become part of our schools' curriculum. Every student, boys and girls, should know some of the basics about being a good parent and child development before they become a parent.'

1994

The Carnegie Corporation of New York states that 'with smaller and more isolated families, the opportunities to learn about the joys and responsibilities of parenthood at home have been reduced, and responsibility has shifted to schools. The Task Force recommends a substantial expansion of efforts to educate young people about parenthood. Education about parenthood can begin in elementary school, it should start no later than early adolescence.'

1994

Dr Alvin Poussaint, professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, writing in *Parenting Magazine,* advocates a mandatory class in childrearing for all high school students, male and female. 'This would ensure that everyone would have at least a rudimentary knowledge of child development. Even if they only remember 20 percent of it by the time they have kids, that's a big step toward improving the quality of parenting in this country. This is the most important job we have to do as humans and as citizens. If we can offer classes in auto mechanics and civics, why not parenting? A lot of what happens to children that's bad derives from ignorance. Parents go by folklore, or by what they've heard, or by their instincts, all of which can be very wrong.'

1994

Senator Edward Kennedy praises a specific program. 'The Education and Labor Committee urges local education agencies to consider incorporating Educating Children for Parenting as part of their comprehensive drug and violence prevention activities.'

1994

Dr Karol Kumpfer from the Office of Juvenile Justice advocates an early start. 'Family education to prepare youth for future family responsibilities can begin as early as elementary school [4-to-11-year-olds] up to senior high school. With teenage pregnancy in this country, beginning such pre-parenting courses in junior high school [12-to-14-year-olds] seems a good idea.'

1995

Daniel Goleman, in his book *Emotional Intelligence,* realises that 'as family life no longer offers growing numbers of children a sure footing in life, schools are left as the one place communities can turn to for correctives to children's deficiencies in emotional and social competence.' Emotional literacy courses, as in New Haven schools, 'seem to help children better fulfil their roles in life, becoming better friends, students, sons and daughters - and in the future are more likely to be better husbands and wives, workers and bosses, parents and citizens.' Teenage violence is rising. 'One reason is that as a society we have not bothered to make sure every child is taught the essentials of handling anger or resolving conflicts positively.'

1995

The Parenting Project, a national non-profit organisation, is co-founded by Suzy Garfinkle, Dr Myriam Miedzian and her husband Gary Ferdman, and inspired and funded by Suzy's father, Sandy Garfinkle. It's renamed Prepare Tomorrow's Parents (PTP) in 2005. PTP aims to document all programs, and to advocate for their use. The board is composed of Joan Barbuto, Gary Ferdman, Mary Gordon, Stuart Harris, Harriet Heath, Carol Lewke, Dana McDermott, Myriam Miedzian, Mimi Plevin-Faust, Janet Pozmantier and Marilyn Swierk, with others joining later, and Suzy as president.

1995

The project p.a.p.a. (Parenting and Paternity Awareness) produces its first curriculum for schools in Texas.

1996

Douglas W Nelson, a leading advocate for children, as executive director of the Annie E Casey Foundation, has developed it as one of the most influential, respected foundations. He claims in *Time* magazine, 'It may well be the nation cannot survive, as a decent place to live, as a world-class power or even as a democracy, with such high rates of children growing into adulthood unprepared to parent.'

1996

'A caring human being does not equal a good parent,' Janet Falon states in her article, *Preparing Children for Parenting: A Curriculum Approach,* for *Creative Classroom* magazine. 'Teaching elementary school students how to be good parents may sound premature or even inappropriate. After all, children need large doses of parenting themselves. But the skills involved in good parenting – shaping values, negotiating conflict, communicating, knowing right from wrong, responsibility, patience and teamwork – make for successful friends, students, siblings, colleagues and spouses. Learning and practising these life skills helps to create effective, productive, nurturing and accountable human beings who will have the tools for good parenting.'

1996

Dr David Popenoe, sociology professor at Rutgers university, thinks that 'children's education should orient them towards having families as opposed to just having jobs. In our current system, we pretend the only adult role of importance is the work role, and never mention that marriage and children may be a major part of a man's future life.'

1996

David Blankenhorn's book comes out, *Fatherless America: Confronting Our Most Urgent Social Problem.* He recommends preparation in school for marriage and parenthood.

1997

The distinguished professor N Dickon Reppucci of Virginia university writes simply: 'The ideology behind parent education classes geared towards school-age children and adolescents about child-rearing roles and responsibilities prior to parenthood decreases the risk of child maltreatment by these children as adults. In other words, it is a model for primary prevention.' He draws upon the NCB's description of parent education as a 'continuous process, starting with birth and early childhood and going through school days, adolescence and committed relationships, pregnancy and parenthood itself, with education tailored appropriately to developmental tasks.' Often, programs are 'reality-based, offering experiential learning with infants and small children in on or off-site child-care centers. They sometimes are incorporated into existing classes, such as personal and social education, moral education, home economics and a variety of primary school classes.'

1997

Joan Barbuto, journalist and author, forms the Connecticut Coalition for Parenting Education (soon to be called the Connecticut Coalition for Child Development Education.) Its message is clear. 'Education prepares young people to do adult jobs. What is the most challenging and most important job any adult does? Parenting children of course! Yet our schools do little to *prepare tomorrow's parents.* The Connecticut Coalition for Child Development Education is working to change things. Quite simply, we want Connecticut school districts to incorporate child development education, for all students, into their curriculum. We believe that while individual districts should decide for themselves how best to do this, we have compiled a

recommended list of child development topics that should be covered. (Original emphasis.)

'Statistics show that 80 percent of Connecticut's high school students will be tomorrow's parents. Although child development courses are offered in many high schools, state-wide only eight percent of students take them. We think ALL students should be prepared for this most important job! Child development education is working in other states. We want Connecticut to remain a leader in education that prepares young people to become productive and responsible adults.' Psychologist Dr Robert Margolies is co-chair of the original group and chair for many years after Joan Barbuto's death. The Coalition campaigns, presents papers at conferences, writes articles for professional journals, and pilots its own school courses.

1998

Janet Pozmantier gives a presentation at the 12th National Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect in Ohio: *You Can't Start Too Young! Teaching Children Today the Parenting Skills They Will Need Tomorrow.*

1998

Richard W Riley has been US secretary of education. His department's high level conference report states: 'Participants agreed that parenting skills are paramount to raising healthy and literate children, and that schools have an important role to play in teaching today's students – tomorrow's parents – about what it takes to nurture a child.' 'I could not agree more,' says Richard.

1999

Benjamin Cruz has been chief justice of Guam, a small tropical US island. His plea is heartrending. 'For over 12 years I have implored Governors, legislators, Boards and Directors of Education to implement a Parenting Curriculum in the school system. As a Family Court judge I cannot count the number of times that children come

before me unaware that the physical and/or sexual abuse they were suffering was not the norm.'

1999

The prize-winning journalist William Raspberry, writing in the *Washington Post*, recommends, because of recent research about the development of the brain, compulsory training in parenting for both girls and boys at high school. This is urgent, he says, given the latest findings that the thinking, emotional health and language of small children are mostly formed before they are three, which is long before they go to school.

1999

Former US secretary of education, Rod Paige, is specific. 'I strongly encourage other school districts and community–based organisations to implement the program Parents Under Construction. Benefits are both immediate and long-lasting on many levels.'

1999

The eminent, prolific Yale professor of developmental psychology, Edward Zigler, still making the case after 20 years, gives testimony to the Connecticut Committee on Children, stating, 'It is important to help children learn as much as possible about parenting to prevent social problems like premature childbearing and child neglect and abuse. Now that we know more about brain development in the very young, it is critical that we teach our future parents the important role that parents play in stimulating and nurturing their children, and in preparing them to reach their full potential in school and in later life.'

1999

American parents back relationships and parenting education in schools. Lake Snell Perry and Associates do a survey. 88 percent strongly support it in high schools, 82 percent in middle schools, and 69 percent in elementary schools.

Chapter Ten
The 21st century

2000

New York State makes parenting education compulsory for all high school students. The State Education Department prepares a *Parenting Education Resource Guide*.

2000

Oprah Winfrey asks on her daytime TV show: 'I'm thinking there needs to be a universal unified teaching system in the schools to teach people how to parent. What do you think of that idea?' And vice president Al Gore replies: 'I think it's a great idea. I think that parenting education is an idea whose time has come. I am very much in favor. For one thing, we all see the continuing impact of generational patterns.'

2000

In Texas, professor Bruce Perry from the Child Trauma Academy and the psychiatrist John Marcellus write: 'Today we reap what we have sown. Despite the well-documented critical nature of early life experiences, we dedicate few resources to this time of life. We do not educate our children about development, parenting or about the impact of neglect and trauma on children. We put more value on requiring hours of formal training to drive a car.'

c. 2000

The inspired teacher Sally Scattergood, whom we will meet later, argues eloquently: 'Schools validate what our society considers preparation for important work. In them, you learn skills that some day will let you be a lawyer, doctor, teacher etc. If parenting is to be viewed by children in our society as important work, then that work must be validated as vital by being made a subject of study and

reflection, and developing understanding and skill from kindergarten up.'

2000

Dr Riane Eisler is founder of The Partnership Way and The Caring Economy campaign. In her award-winning book *Tomorrow's Children: A Blueprint for Partnership Education in the 21st Century*, this creative public figure argues: 'Given that relations between parents and children – particularly during the formative years – so profoundly impact our lives and our society, why are courses on parenting literacy and competency not part of the school curriculum? Children can and should be given the opportunity to experience the joy that comes from caring and care-giving, as a way of helping them to acquire different attitudes and habits for their own lives.

'Certainly, parenting courses for adults are important. But the adults who need these most are often the least likely to take them. So this schooling has to start much earlier, not only through a partnership process, which makes it possible for all children to experience real one-to-one caring from their teacher, but also through the opportunity to experience the giving of caring themselves. This experiential learning of caring and care-giving behaviors as part of the school curriculum is important for all children, but is essential for neglected and abused children, as well as for children who, at home, have learned to associate caring with fear, coercion and violence.'

2000

The distinguished doctors Berry Brazelton, pediatrician, and Stanley Greenspan, psychiatrist, are all-embracing. They recommend that 'an organised, federally-led education effort *mandating* education in human growth and development is needed in grade schools, middle schools, high schools and colleges. [My emphasis.] It should have the same level of importance as history, English, science or math, and include readings, hands-on experience and discussion appropriate to the

child's age and the issues relevant to that age. Sally Scattergood's program in Philadelphia, which brings babies into first grades, is wonderful. First graders have the opportunity to diaper, feed and observe developmental progress in small babies. Since most children are not in large families today, this gives them an opportunity to see the baby as a person and to experience a role in handling and nurturing babies.

'The long-term effects on such outcomes as teenage pregnancy or the ability of these students to nurture their own babies has not yet been studied. But we can bet that it might be one variable in affecting their image of themselves as able to nurture another. Right now, children are learning more about frogs and other non-human species than they are about human beings. All of the programs we know of that have been so successful use that [hands-on] approach. In some pregnancy prevention programs on the West Coast, teenagers have been exposed to handling babies and having to diaper, feed and watch their stages of development. The chance to watch human behaviour in a child smaller than you are is a marvellous way to engage the interest of a child of any age.'

2001

Dr Rae Simpson is consultant and program director of Raising Teens at the Harvard Parenting Project. Her ground-breaking, widely disseminated report states the case for teaching parenthood to adolescents - an age of reflection, introspection and abstract thought, enabling them to think about others and imagine new situations.

2001

Leading child psychiatrist and educational reformer, Dr James P Comer, writes in his article, *Schools that Develop Children:* 'Given the purpose of education - to prepare students to become successful workers, family members and citizens in a democratic society - even many "good" traditional schools, as measured by high test scores, are

not doing their job adequately. A good education should help students to solve problems encountered at work and in relationships, take on responsibility of caring for themselves and their families, get along well in a variety of life settings and be motivated, contributing members of a democratic society. Such learning requires conditions that promote positive child and youth development.'

2002

Michael Joseph, founder and president of Character Counts! Coalition, looks to the future. 'The crucial challenge for educational policymakers is to acknowledge the inevitable role that schools play in character development and to consciously decide whether public schools should be doing more to produce men and women worthy of marrying our children and parenting our grandchildren.'

2002

Becky Weller and Sachin Jain, social scientists interested in 'at risk' teenagers, study the results of 16 sessions of parenthood education at an alternative high school, finding that students who complete the course score significantly higher on 'parent effectiveness' than a control group. 'Unless a proactive approach is implemented, the cyclic pattern of dysfunctional parenting will continue. Education programs may provide a catalyst to learn positive parenting techniques and skills from sources outside one's own upbringing.'

2005

Professor Pedro Portes of Georgia university is concerned with inequality. He has a valuable, little discussed perspective. Dr McDermott tells us that in his book *Dismantling Educational Inequality*, he advocates teaching parenting in schools 'as a way to lessen the disadvantage gap in achievement for many children. His rationale is that the subject of families is an area, unlike math, reading or science, in which middle-class students are not way ahead of everyone else.'

2005

Matthew Liao of James Hopkins university, in his interesting paper *The Right of Children to be Loved,* has some unusual and controversial angles. 'My first idea concerns the possibility of introducing mandatory-based parenting education for all children during middle to high school years. As I envisage it, it would focus on teaching basic scientific knowledge about childhood development; the nature of parenting; and how the society can influence the parent-child relationship. Such an education would seek to inform middle to high schoolers about the latest scientific research and theories on pre-natal development; the role of proper nutrition during pregnancy, an infant's perceptual, motor, learning and social skills, sleeping patterns, eating habits and temperament; the varying needs of children from birth to adolescence; and how to create a safe, healthy, stimulating and loving environment for children generally.

'For many, having basic parenting education will be as important as learning math and sciences. It could be taught in conjunction with sex education or other existing courses, e.g. a general science or biology course, home economics or psychology, so that it need not take up an entire course and overcrowd the existing curriculum.

'Providing it in schools has the advantage of ensuring that everyone will receive some basic knowledge of the important task of parenting, irrespective of social-economic background and culture. Because, as I envisage it, it would restrict itself to teaching about the scientific facts regarding child development and the like, it would not involve teaching "morals" to children, an objection some people have levelled against what might be called comprehensive parenting education which seeks to teach not just basic scientific facts about childhood development but also the more value-laden type of parenting skills, such as empathy and caring. Furthermore, court judges, social workers, and educators who are part of the prison system, have relied on parenting education as a remedial response to families who abuse

or neglect their children. Mandating basic parenting education in schools would provide such knowledge before abuse and neglect take place. Such an education would help every middle to high schooler to be fully aware of a child's need for love.'

2006

The launch of another *Prepare Tomorrow's Parents Month* takes place in May in the House of Congress. We quote the whole speech (five minutes' worth) by California congressman Bob Filner:

'Mr Speaker, I rise today to speak about the fourth national *Prepare Tomorrow's Parents Month,* the month between Mother's Day and Father's Day. This month is a time for teachers, parents and youth group leaders nationwide to promote parenting education and relationship skills classes for all young people.

'Prepare Tomorrow's Parents Month is being sponsored by *Prepare Tomorrow's Parents*. Suzy Garfinkle Chevrier, founder and president, says, "Parenting is no hobby. It is the most important work most of us will ever do. Let's not leave our grandchildren's future to chance."

'Is it not strange, Mr Speaker, that one of the most important and difficult skills, raising children, goes untaught? Learning parenting skills is vital because the early experiences of children's lives impact their potential for learning and for mental health. We need to create better parents because neglected or abused children are especially prone to perpetuate this cycle when they become adults without resources for healthy parenting.

'An alarming number of children are at risk of being abused, neglected or otherwise poorly nurtured by inadequately prepared or non-supportive parents. Inadequate parenting can contribute to teen pregnancy, depression, addictions, academic failure, delinquency and, later, criminal behaviour.

'I imagine that the vast majority of adults in the United States believe that parenting and relationship skills should be taught. Yet few students now receive this instruction. School-based parenting education programs can help to prevent future child abuse by developing an understanding of child development in future parents and by providing parenting skills such as empathy, listening, problem solving and critical thinking.

'Regardless of how much detail the young people remember from their classes by the time they become parents, the instruction gives them a deep sense of the reality of parenting, of the sacrifices and demands as well as the joys. *Prepare Tomorrow's Parents* is a group working towards a society in which every child is well nurtured, and parenting is valued and undertaken by prepared adults.

'Parenting education for students is being taught successfully in many schools around the nation, primarily through family and consumer science classes, but not enough young people, especially boys, participate in these elective courses. Expanding and requiring these classes will save many more current and future families much heartache. It will help us to help our young people to succeed at being parents that will make them, their children and their parents happy, productive and proud.

'Finally, establishing parent education classes honors the work of mothers and fathers by teaching our young people what a complex effort it takes to raise a child. As well as learning new skills, they will begin to appreciate more and more the care they have received from their parents.'

2006

The professor of education, former school teacher, distinguished mathematician and mother of ten, Nel Noddings, who has written profusely about ethics and education, and the need for schools to be caring, makes the case for parenting education thoughtfully in her book *Critical Lessons: What Our Schools Should Teach*.

Knowledge is important, but she's all for students reflecting, thinking for themselves and challenging ideas. We need to respect their views. After all, there are disputes amongst the experts.

'Among our most important human relations is that of parent and child. Why is parenting not a central object of study in schools? Raising this question provides an opportunity to discuss the traditional liberal separation of public and private life, and to ask who benefits and who is harmed by this separation. The study of parenting should also include open, sensitive examination of parenting styles and why it is now widely believed – at least in professional circles – that an authoritative style is more effective for life in a liberal democracy than either an authoritarian or permissive style. Not only would social studies and psychology courses be enriched by such study, but one can well imagine great interest being aroused by a semester's study of children's literature in English.'

Reading colourful children's books and fairy tales is valuable. It will fill in gaps for teenagers who missed out, remind those who didn't, and make it more likely that they will read in future to their children, strengthening the parent/child bond. Spend a term or two on children's literature. Encourage them to set up their own book club, but never demand written reports. They are often put off by English lessons but these studies might change that. They can enjoy the wordplay in, for example, *Alice in Wonderland*.

'If life itself is the material of education, we would surely name knowledge of parenting as central to human interest.' By teaching it, we give the message to students that it's important. And students are still being parented themselves, so it's relevant. They might take school in general more seriously if there are topics relevant to their future. There's no reason why we can't teach both parenting *and* important academic subjects. Many parents don't read books,

including books on parenting, so school might be the only place for future parents to learn about it.

She gives more ideas of how and what to teach. 'The psychology of childrearing for late teens is more important than physical care.' They can reflect on their own experience. But never expect or tell them to talk about their own lives. (Some might want to.) Teaching about the history of childhood; of motherhood and childbirth, how men have controlled reproduction (rf. USSR, Nazi Germany, China); concepts about adolescence; the value of genuine communication at family meals (all talk about their day, its ups and downs): include all of these. Discuss cultural differences (avoiding stereotypes), or whether or not parents should help their kids with homework. Consider the merits of parent-centred or child-centred parenting or a middle way. Address current problems: TV, over-eating, drugs, lack of exercise and outdoor living, and 'the misguided pressure to succeed academically,' with money as its main aim. Introduce students to the idea of childhood without penalties or deadlines. And she is refreshingly honest. 'Mothers have always had ambivalent feelings about their children. Possibly nothing about motherhood is more important than this for young people to understand.'

2008

Several senators and congressmen call for two-yearly White House Conferences to focus on 'child welfare issues and challenges.' These never take place. The Child Welfare League calls for the re-establishment of the fully-fledged grand conferences of the past, 'part of a larger strategy to refocus the nation's attention on ways to improve outcomes for the most vulnerable children.'

2008

Dr Dana McDermott, deeply involved with parenthood education, reminds us in her book *Developing Caring Relationships Among Parents, Children, Schools and Communities*: 'With small families, and with families

scattered all over the country to find jobs and separated from extended families, how do people learn how to do all that parents need to do? On-the-job training is insufficient in the face of all we know about the importance of the early years.'

2008

Texas high schools are *required* to teach parenting and paternity awareness (the p.a.p.a. program.) Is this the second place in the world where schools are told that they *must* teach the subject? New York State high schools got in first in 2000.

2008

Randi Rubenstein founds Education for Successful Parenting, asking in her document, *My Life-Plan for Parenting: Discussion Guidebook*: 'Why is it important for adults to talk with teens about parenting? Sooner or later, today's youth will have children. About 90 percent of the US population become parents: over 82 percent give birth to children, and another eight percent become parents through step-parenting, adoption, and foster parenting. More people become parents than go to college or drive a car. It's important for teens to learn about parenting now, so they can make healthier decisions and be better prepared to care for their future families. Parenting involves three basic responsibilities: to provide for, protect, and nurture a child.'

She doesn't mince her words. 'But in far too many instances, people have been entering into parenting unprepared, affecting the well-being of millions of children. Will our teens choose the right time and the right partner for their life goals? The US has the highest rates of teen pregnancy among industrialized nations. Nearly half of all pregnancies are unintended. Will they be prepared for the responsibilities and costs of parenting? Today, one in four children are being raised without a father in the home. There are 15.8 million children (one in five) living in poverty in the US. Will they know how to protect and nurture their children? Unhealthy adolescent lifestyles

(smoking, binge-drinking, and obesity) can lead to preconception and prenatal risks affecting the lifetime health of their children. Abuse and neglect are reported for over 6,000,000 children every year. The origins of many health and social problems affecting our children intersect in the decision-making of adolescents. To improve children's lives, we must start educating young adults before they have a child.'

2010

A Family Life Education curriculum is introduced into Fiji schools, due to increasing rates of teenage pregnancy.

2011

Dr Robert Margolies and Janet Pozmantier give a joint presentation at the Yale Victory Over Violence Conference in Kentucky, *Closing the Achievement Gap Through Parenting Education*. This is just the latest in a series of their presentations from 2001.

c. 2013

Dr Myriam Miedzian acknowledges how impossible it is to regulate gun ownership in the US. All the more reason why parenting education is so important. 'If we're going to diminish Columbine and Newtown mass murders and just violence in general, we need programs like Baby Watch to counterbalance the fact that guns are so easily available, so that there will be less people wanting to use guns to kill and maim. In the long run, Americans who, as children, took Baby Watch classes might just be a lot more supportive of political candidates who commit themselves to providing programs that support families and children.'

2014

Nel Noddings' article *Can We Teach Parenting in Our Schools?* laments the fact that students learn algebra but not parenting. She discusses why the topic is neglected, what might be done, and how the topic connects with other subjects.

Where do we go from here?

The enormous amount that's been spoken, written and tried about parenting education in schools in the US and UK hasn't led to very much that has endured - a question of 'all words and little permanent action.' Volume Two, *Nothing More Important: How to Prepare Children and Young People at School to be Good Parents,* gives you a wealth of resources to use in school or other venues. It describes, in detail, the projects for 3–18-year-olds which are now being delivered in the UK and north America. (Some, such as B.A.S.E.®Babywatching and Roots of Empathy, operate in many other countries too.) The purpose of the two volumes is to inform, inspire and encourage you to press, at your school, college, trade union, political party, religious group, professional association or anywhere else you can think of, for the best possible parenthood education as a core subject for every student. That's hard work, but it's worth reminding ourselves and others that this education is not only good for mental health, schools and society, but also fascinating and fun. Our success will mean that the labours and perseverance of the writers, speakers and practitioners in the chapters above were not, after all, in vain.

I have long believed that the development of a child
does not begin the day he is born – or at age three –
but much earlier, during the formative years of his parents.
Dr Zigler, Former director,
Office of Child Development

Part Three

What has been done in UK schools

Chapter Eleven

The Ladies' National Association for the Diffusion of Sanitary Knowledge (1856)

If you'd like to teach parenthood to children and young people, there's an abundance of material from the past, described in the next chapters. Each scheme has a slightly different emphasis. No reinventing the wheel necessary: in fact, we're spoilt for choice.

As early as 1856, people are preparing school students for parenthood. Well, girls only, done by the posh to the poor and only about physical health and 'management.' But we include it because of the realisation even then that school is a good place for this. The aim of the Ladies' National Association for the Diffusion of Sanitary Knowledge is the 'preservation of the health of children' by establishing institutions to teach schoolmistresses and Pupil Teachers, for free, about all aspects of health so that they can teach their pupils. 'By these means, schoolgirls, the future wives and mothers of the working-classes, will obtain information which is at present possessed by very few.'

The 'management of Infants and Children' is seen as 'one of the most important duties of women,' and is also taught. The Ladies are practical, too. 'Some orphan Infants will be reared in the Institutions,' so teachers can get a thorough knowledge themselves of the children to pass on to their students. As well as this, the Association produces over one-hundred simple texts (e.g. 'How to manage a Baby'), sets up lending libraries about health, and gives 'popular lectures to the poor.' Its annual report of 1881 reports how the young mothers who ask the Association for help and information 'almost invariably regret that these things had not been taught them when girls.'

Chapter Twelve
Mothercraft from 1910

Dr L G Housden (1951) describes some fascinating schemes. He reckons that 1910 saw the first mothercraft course, at Ducie Grove school in Manchester, followed by practical instruction for older girls at a local day nursery in Acton, west London. These courses encompassed the whole concept of 'home-making' and family life, rather than concentrating solely on how to bring up children. Housden refers to domestic science flats and housewifery/home-making centres 'where home conditions are reproduced and the children spend their time living as members of a family.'

And this example, also from 1910, is wackier. Miss Rona Clarkson describes in retrospect (1947) her centre (her own home) for girls aged 13-to-14. It was an older average-sized house with the advantages and disadvantages of a real home, run as a home rather than a school – and here comes the wacky bit. The scheme 'is helped by the fact that the teacher lives in the house and each household duty is necessary.' By contrast, 'Non-residential centres are rather like a shell – beds are made but not slept in.' The teacher's own things 'help to give the home atmosphere. The children come every day for six weeks. During that time the home belongs to them. They must learn to work with me and with each other as if it were a real family. The girls are allowed everywhere and to move things round. They look after the "baby", bathing him each morning. Sometimes the girls invite their mothers to afternoon tea. They are usually fond of children and enjoy inviting toddlers. We had a garden party for the toddlers and played games with them.'

The therapeutic possibilities for students' present and future of such a scheme, with the chance for teenagers to get to know teachers as full human beings, are enormous. 'Some of the girls visit the house when

they have left and are working. I tell them that the house will always welcome them should they wish to call, and by trying to make their stay here as happy as possible, I hope to impress it on their minds.' It is unlikely that the girls would ever forget Rona and all that she taught them. She was, to use Paul Goodman's term, an 'authentic professional.' And, way ahead of her time, boys were sometimes included. 'On the whole the boys seem to enjoy themselves as much as the girls.' Housden adds that 'boys in general take a keen interest in matters relating to parentcraft, providing the lessons are not so labelled,' and recommends including the subject in a course called 'Citizenship and Home Making' instead.

The first full-time mothercraft teacher was appointed in Aberdeen in 1941 at a junior secondary school. The initially very large classes, which didn't allow for discussion and practical work, were replaced by groups of up to 20. Similar work followed in West Suffolk. Sixth formers in Shipley were invited to draw up plans for a new school. 'Every girl made provision for mothercraft teaching.' It's the same story: young people do want to learn about parenthood. Manchester's Housewifery Centres were, meanwhile, making waves, and an increasing number of girls' schools throughout the country now taught mothercraft.

Chapter Thirteen

West Suffolk; Sixth form colleges; Wiltshire 1966

Using private homes in West Suffolk

In order to educate teenagers, through experience, to create a good home and family, another successful scheme used real homes in the community, rather than artificial school-based ones. In West Suffolk (date unknown), families were found who were happy to invite a group of girls – four to eleven of them! – for one day a week from 9am to 4pm for one term. They ran the house with guidance from the owner, and if there was a small child at home, all the better: they looked after him too. 'With carefully selected home-teachers,' reports Housden, 'this form of mothercraft has a value beyond the actual technique of home- and child-care. The pupils learn from the mode of living and from conversation, ways of thought and behaviour which influence them for good.' And in case you're thinking of replicating this inspiring practice, be assured that 'it is unusual in a home where nothing is locked away, for anything to be stolen.'

Colleges for 16-to-18-year-olds

Housden's thoughts on education for this age group are strong stuff. (He doesn't make clear if the schemes he describes actually existed.) Attendance should be compulsory for one day or two half-days over the 44-weeks of the college year. 'Parentcraft will provide an attractive study. The view that it is better not to emphasise their role as future parents to young people of 16-to-18 loses sight of an important attitude to living. This is that family life is an experience more lasting than most and that the joy or misery which it brings will depend in large part on the preparation made for it.' He calls for universal education. 'The conception of family life as an end in itself, rather than just a passing incident, adds to the richness of living. It is an experience which should be sought. There has been a tendency to

direct the non-intellectual girl into studies of a domestic character, but the subject in its wider aspect is needed by all.'

And he recommends how it should be done and why. 'Self-reliance being one of the needs of any parent, the work at county colleges should be individual rather than class work. Each student should find and carry out the details of a project with as little reference to the teacher as possible. The disposition of students to do nothing until they are told to do it and shown exactly how, has no place in parentcraft.'

Wiltshire 1966

South-west England seems to have had the most parenthood courses. We read about activity in Wiltshire in Pamela Jordan's chapter *The Development of Social and Personal Education in Wiltshire* in *Health Education and Youth: A Review of Research and Developments*.

Wiltshire was one of the first authorities to establish a scheme for teaching in schools about personal relationships. As it said, 'One of the most important aims of secondary education is to prepare pupils for life outside school This involves self-knowledge and understanding the needs of humans.'

Wiltshire's local education authority was always forward-looking. Its chief education officer took this initiative (c. 1966), believing that you cannot advise students 'to develop into new areas without giving as much help and support as they are willing to take.' A booklet was written and disseminated about work with Years 1 - 6. The LEA co-operated with careers advisors and the Health Authority.

It is heart-warming to read of their approach. Senior staff need to embrace the work in order to get real development, and they need charisma, warmth, empathy and the ability to persuade their

colleagues, the ability to grow the work and move things along. It helps if they're loved and respected by most of the teachers. The headteacher must be committed, and allow enough time on the timetable. The deputy head in charge of the curriculum must be persuaded, educated. In fact, every teacher should take this topic on board and integrate aspects of it into their subject.

There's more in 1978, when its education committee produced the document *The Family and the Home*. Include variations on the standard family (e.g. lodgers); the effect of the arrival of children on parents' lives; infertility; artificial insemination; adoption and fostering; problems in the family; methods of upbringing; what do parents need from their children?; possible culture clashes in inter-racial marriages; grants; agencies that help; battered wives and children; irresponsible behaviour (gambling, alcohol etc.); the effects of special needs on the family; mental health problems; menopause; divorce; and 'the normal marital problems of a long, close relationship.' Some interesting new takes on the curriculum, though no mention of practical placements with under-fives, or visits.

Chapter Fourteen

Redbridge and Waltham Forest 1970s; Derbyshire 1972 – 79; Newcastle upon Tyne 1970s

Redbridge and Waltham Forest 1970s

There was enough parenthood education going on in these two north-east London boroughs for a research study of it to be undertaken by Lee Adams and Mary Tidyman (1983), resulting in recommendations. Fifty-two secondary schools were sent a questionnaire; 71 percent replied. Most Redbridge courses were formal and taught within home economics by only women teachers. 'This may lead to the perception by students of parenthood as entirely a female province and may explain why few boys opt for these courses.' The authors recommended that students get a wider view, with both male and female perspectives.

Aspects of parenthood featured within many Waltham Forest lessons: science, social studies, religious education, anthropology, social biology, humanities, English, community care, and health education. A few schools offered a specialist parenthood course, but these were mostly optional (and chosen solely by girls), meaning many students got no such education at all. The title 'Child Care' did not encourage boys to apply. 'Family Life Education' could be better. But 'some home economics teachers said they did not want boys in their classes'!

Just as the two boroughs, although adjacent, differed in how the subject was offered, the length of courses varied enormously. Some lasted three weeks, others three years. Formal courses with an exam took two years. The content of courses also varied, though most covered, in some depth, nutrition, conception and birth, sex education, dental health, and the growth and development of babies. More briefly, they covered children with special needs ('handicaps'), role of the family, roles of men and women, sexuality, sexually

transmitted diseases, abortion, family life in other societies, and the effects of deprivation. Most spent no time at all on housing, the extended family, ethnic styles of childcare, economics of childcare, play, language development, and the importance of communication. 'It would seem that the emphasis of courses [formally examined and not] is largely on factual information' rather than exploring a multitude of perspectives. Childcare courses tended to focus on practical, physical aspects. 'Child development, and psychological and current issues facing most young people, are ignored or covered briefly.' These included social problems, budgeting, housing, one-parent families, and the choice whether to have children. Outside speakers were brought in, but the researchers advised caution in using them.

Derbyshire 1972 - 79

The education committee produced *Growth to Maturity: An Approach to Health Education* (1972) with a suggested curriculum. For primary children, include the birth and development of a baby; family care and relationships; bringing up children; and relationships with parents. At secondary level, this is parentcraft, not mothercraft. Eleven-year-olds can discuss 'the wonder of life and the family' (four-to-eight hours.) It's useful to link this with the care of animals for their young. Study the ante-natal period, and care of the baby, toddler and young child. Include hygiene, 'but other needs of small children, communication, care and security, are just as important, and lead to increasing independence.' The topic, personal relationships and family life, 'can be partially fitted into existing syllabi, but on the whole it must be specially catered for, and timetable space and suitable staff found. The success of the Gloucestershire scheme [chapter 15] has led us to be guided by their methods.' The climate of the school is crucial. 'These things are important and are to be regarded as such by staff and head. The head must have fullest confidence in what this teacher is doing and give him ungrudging loyalty and support, and time to

explain the scheme to other staff and enlist their support. Although it may be that the teacher will not carry his colleagues with him all the way, it is hoped that he will maintain their respect by the sincerity of his approach. Shoddiness in any of his other work or behaviour will seriously affect his influence in education for personal relationships.' And parents must have confidence in him. 'The teacher should regard himself quite humbly as a servant to the young people's needs, and his authority will emerge from such a relationship, rather than by an authoritarian attitude. The teacher should be seen to be a happy and stable person.'

The teacher must have good rapport with the students, (no more than 20 at a time), understand their language, have sympathy with the group, 'speak to their condition, be unshockable and able to answer unexpected questions, with no judgment or condemnation, and encouraging the capacity to make moral choices.' The room must be 'informal and relaxed with no impossible or difficult conditions.' Have chairs, not desks; allow no interruptions. Unsurprisingly, 'great care must be taken in selecting the teacher' by a weekend selection process. Some applicants will be ready; some will be in future, some never. A residential training of two–to-three days is required. Best to have a recruitment team too: include a psychiatrist, two experienced people, and headteachers (male and female.)

Anthony Gell School 1972 - 79

We are trying to encourage children to become more aware of the problems of parenthood. Educational psychologists

For seven years, Anthony Gell mixed secondary school in Wirksworth, Derbyshire, provided non-examined preparation for parenthood for all boys and girls aged 15-to-16. The aim: to help students become responsible parents. Pupils must see this as a 'relevant and important part of their education.' They spent half-a-

day a week in an under-fives setting, including a mother and toddler group at the school. Year 5 (80 boys, 60 girls) was divided into three mixed groups. Six lessons were school-based, four were practical field work. There were films, speakers (child psychiatrist, psychiatric social worker); visits (children's library and bookshop, children's home.) They learnt about listening, and social and emotional needs. They were given 'simple but comprehensive' worksheets, taught what and how to observe, and discussed what they observed with their teachers. Students learnt about playing with children - the toddlers loved the boys in particular. Extra input came from lessons in home economics, home management, sex education, prenatal development, crafts and English. And there was an additional course for pupils with 'problematic relationships.' 'The headmaster considers the subject to be an integral part of the pastoral care of the school.' Teachers received in-service training, and showed experience and sensitivity about emotional topics. Early years staff met together to clarify aims and practices, and to review progress at the end of the work. Students were asked 14 questions on paper about their thoughts and feelings about the course. 'Thank you for doing this questionnaire. It will help us greatly,' they were told. This feedback was seen as essential.

Newcastle upon Tyne 1970s

This LEA offered something a bit different. Its '*How Are You, Man?*' course – a strategy for health education in schools - offered voluntary after-school sessions, with refreshments, till 5.30pm, to cover conception, birth, marriage and its alternatives, and invited speakers for questions and answers. For sixth formers, the topic of death was included. This work 'offers an opportunity for greater depth in an uninhibited and informal manner, covering topics in a frank and realistic way.' Blakelaw mixed secondary school (closed in 1998) was involved.

Chapter Fifteen

The Gloucestershire Scheme for Education in Personal Relationships and Family Life 1963 - 71

'The aim is responsibility, integrity and compassion.'

It was possible to unearth this innovative but long-forgotten work by visiting the library archives department of Gloucestershire council to read the third report and handbook (1971) by Gloucestershire education committee. C P Milroy, chief education officer for Gloucestershire, explained that 'the handbook was for staff of schools and colleges, youth leaders, parents and all concerned with young people in industry and the community. It reflected the continued experience of many teachers and others in Gloucestershire over eight years (1963 - 1971) and represented a systematic, concerted and practical attempt to help young people understand and face the problems of life, work, race, emotions, sex, drugs, abortion and VD.'

Introduction

The second report had come out (1966) with a wide circulation across the whole of Britain, used as a handbook in schools and colleges, and then an integral part of Gloucestershire's education programme, from primary schools to further education colleges.

A conference, *Teenage Morals* (1962), led to a group of staff from secondary schools devising a scheme. They wondered, where should we start to help? 'In the youth clubs or the schools, amongst the young of today who will be the parents of tomorrow?' Help was needed at all points. So they started two schemes: one in schools, and one in clubs and voluntary organisations. There was an overlap of staff; teachers worked closely with professionals in other settings. 'The staff of the Schools scheme have been together for a number of

years and the value of such continuity cannot be overestimated.' This was not just sex education - that would be too narrow - nor was it a fear response by adults, but 'a systematic effort to undertake moral and social education in county secondary schools of all types, and with children of a variety of backgrounds – some rural, others urban – and of all shades of academic ability through the agency of ordinary teachers, teaching in the same school in a variety of subjects. This is probably the first in the country at county level and has been of interest to other authorities.' The planning group was comprised of three education officers, a tutor from the Gloucestershire Association for Family Life, two medical officers and three headteachers.

The secondary schools scheme

Education in Personal Relations (EPR) evolved over eight years. The local education authority trained enough teachers to deliver it, producing a 'cadre of several hundred experienced EPR teachers,' despite some of them moving away. 'Some form of talk, followed by questions and discussion, is best for most students. The problems of learning are not as acute as in ordinary curriculum subjects, as the motivation is real and living. The pupils want to know, and the subject matter is life and living.'

Series One for 11-year-olds: Reproduction, emphasising the wonder of life and the family. Humans live in families. The man looks after his wife and children and provides protection. The woman looks after the home and children. The importance of family life: love and security. Sex education and birth are covered.

Series Two for 14-to-15-year-olds: '*Practically every school has it.*'
Physical, psychological and moral aspects, drugs, contraception, VD. Elementary sociology: the family as a social unit and its functions. The new-born baby. Self-regard and self-control in a child - either from fear or to be loved. Development from infant dependency to

maturity. Changes in adolescence. Relationships with parents. Parents' point of view. Sex roles, male and female differences. Babies and children need a secure home. The destructive effects of bad relationships. 'Be aware of questions asking you to challenge the authority of parents. Tread carefully when a young person is obviously behaving unwisely.'

Series Three for 16-to-19-year-olds: A development of the Series Two topics, going deeper for both sixth formers and young people who have left school.

Advice was given:

- It is better to keep the sexes together in lessons;
- Boys and girls mature differently, so teachers need to restate Series Two later when students are more mature;
- It is good to use several teachers, not just one, so that the EPR specialist can have a break to read and reflect. 'It is all too easy to become glib and superficial, or revert to stereotypes, and lose sensitivity to the needs of the pupils.'

The teacher of EPR

EPR covered the whole field of relationships. 'Anything that can be done for the young adolescent to help him or her to build a stable society is worthwhile.' Of the eight aims, those relevant to us were:

- To help students to lay the foundations for marriage and family life;
- The teacher to be a counsellor and guide to those in need, recognising who needs specialist treatment;
- To create a climate of opinion in the school that these things are important and are regarded as such by the head and the staff. The head must give 'ungrudging support' and enlist the staff's support. Not all staff will go all the way, but it was hoped they would respect

EPR 'by the sincerity of the head's approach to this work.' To repeat: 'The teacher must regard himself quite humbly as a servant of the young people's needs,' with authority via the relationship, not via an authoritarian attitude.

Techniques and qualities

Rapport is needed; conditions must not be difficult or impossible. 'It is essential that the group should not be too large: 20 at most. The room must be informal with a relaxed atmosphere and no desks. There must be no interruptions. Facts are given, and questions need clear, helpful answers.' The teacher must be a good listener. Group discussion should take place. The teacher needs to have sympathy with the group, must know the pupils' backgrounds, be prepared for unexpected questions, seem unshockable, with a quiet sense of humour. He or she must be conversant with the attitudes of the young and understand their language. 'He must recognise the rich and infinite variety of human beings' with no judgment or condemnation.

Encourage pupils to make moral choices. Keep up-to-date by reading and the media. Reflect on your own attitudes and beliefs in the light of changing circumstances. 'Possibly the hardest thing a teacher is called upon to do in group work is to express his own convictions, firmly and sincerely. Young people recognise and appreciate sincere convictions and are quick to see through superficial hearsay, just as they resent too authoritarian a presentation of the teacher's beliefs.'

Series One for 11-to 12-year-olds

An annual one-day training conference was held for teachers. There was 'no stipulation that they must be married.' They were taught techniques including the use of visual aids, books and film-strips. 'Pictures of babies and family groups have a great emotional appeal to children at this age.' Teachers were urged to treat 11-to-12-year-olds differently from 14-to-15-year-olds, to model an attitude that life is

good, using humour and reassurance, and not making lessons too scientific.

Series Two for 14-to-15-year-olds

'By the end of the third year or beginning of the fourth, girls are beginning to reflect on their future role as wives and mothers.' Visiting speakers should be invited, films used, 'the normality and happiness of ordinary life' discussed. 'During the adolescent years at school, a glimpse into the dynamics of parenthood can be presented, and sometimes specific parentcraft taught, as well as EPR. This is particularly successful with girls who often enjoy helping practically at playgroups as part of the course.'

Pupils should be taught about the importance of compassion and understanding of others as a requirement for stable adult relationships. This can be exacting for teachers. Some, during the introductory training, found they were unsuitable for this work. They needed to be 'carefully scrutinised and then well-trained. This assurance passes on to the parents who realise the care that's taken in the preparation of teachers.' Some staff wanted to train as counsellors. In time, they more often self-selected for this work.

Introductory training for teachers

This lasted for two days, using group work, case histories, and reflection on teachers' own personal backgrounds and lives. It was in-depth, 'invigorating and exhausting,' and emphasised the need for clear diction, the ability to command and maintain attention, and to identify with the groups of pupils. Teachers needed good intelligence, an understanding of human situations and a sense of humour, 'not wit, but a compassionate amusement and an awareness of their own weaknesses in relationship to others.' They needed patience, and the ability to withstand personal attacks on their own integrity. They

were expected to affirm the beliefs (in those days) of the National Marriage Council (now called Relate):

- Successful marriage, as the foundation of happy family life, is vital for the well-being of society;
- Marriage as a partnership for life, with reverence;
- Harmony in marriage through unselfish love and self-discipline;
- Children as the natural fulfilment of marriage, enriching the relationship;
- Contraception can contribute to the health and happiness of the whole family;
- Sex should take place only within marriage.

It was acknowledged that the teachers' own views might vary. They need to assess their own opinions. They were no longer required to be married, but they were usually expected to be aged at least 25 and not to be probationary teachers.

Series Three about teaching 16-to-19-year-olds

This involved a three-day residential training conference, and included books, lectures, small groups, short talks, handouts, methods, questions, and optional films. Students aged 16-plus were more likely to be better at self-expression; the teacher had more of a background role. Teachers knew that the LEA supported this work: 'Emphasis is given to the importance that the LEA gives to this training.' There were also refresher courses and local meetings. A Tutor-Advisor was appointed to visit and encourage teachers.

EPR with less able students

A more practical approach was encouraged for these pupils: for instance, discussion, question and answer, role-play and visits. Gossip should be avoided. Theory shouldn't be used; rather, lessons based on recent visits, experiences, films, TV, pictures, popular newspapers

they can understand and so on, with topics selected with which students could identify themselves. 'They are more likely to take note of a significant point if it comes from one of their group.' But they shouldn't feel the discussion is about their own family. It should help them think for themselves, receiving simple answers leading to more questions, within a happy relationship with the teacher.

It was recognised that sometimes a teacher could not answer a question. In that case, get the pupils to act out a situation. For instance, what time should a 16-year-old have to be in at night? 'It is dangerous to conflict with parental authority.' Students could act out their own parents' roles. That could help them see their parents' point of view and lives (for instance, if a parent had to get up at 5 am.) The role-plays could be recorded; other students could say what they themselves would do. 'The therapeutic value of role-plays should not be forgotten. Children living under stress and with unsatisfactory home lives can often be helped if they are given an opportunity in play to regress and pass through a stage which perhaps they had missed.' It could also, like a safety valve, enable them to give vent to pent-up emotions. The teacher is enabled to see their fears and problems, as children of all abilities 'often find it impossible to put into words deep seated worries.' And close liaison with home is recommended.

The Schools Council and Nuffield Foundation Humanities Project was set up (1967) to help teachers of adolescents of average and below-average ability. It produced a great deal of very useful and well-produced materials, including the topic of the family. It had links with Gloucestershire but with some difference of approach, wanting 'strict neutrality' from the teacher, whereas EPR allowed for teachers to contribute their own views and feelings.

EPR in the House system

Ideally, all form tutors should be trained in EPR. But 30 in a class is unwieldy for this subject.

Residential courses for students

Students in the fourth and fifth years (14-to-16-year-olds) went away in groups of nine for three or four days to learn how to live with others. They met students from other schools. The experience covered personal relationships at home, at school, work and elsewhere. It enabled them to grow, being away from both home and school.

EPR after secondary stage

There was a major conference (1967) about this stage, led by the chief education officer, followed by annual conferences for lecturers in further education and colleges of education about students' relationships with their families, and about love and marriage. There were also two-day conferences for the youth service, including the topic Courtship and Marriage.

EPR in the community: The Gloucestershire Association for Family Life 1962 – 97

This impressive body brought together people from the voluntary and statutory sectors. It trained 100 volunteers in eight subjects, including marriage and family life. The aim? 'To encourage, through education, an understanding of the importance of secure and happy family life as a basis of a stable and civilised community. Good personal relationships and a greater understanding of the behaviour and beliefs of other people are regarded as means to this end.'

Its members included the British Medical Association, the Family Planning Association, education committees, colleges, churches, social workers, child welfare staff, mental health workers, probation

officers, alcohol and drug workers, police, the Women's Institute, the Townswomen's Guild, the Mothers' Union, youth organisations, magistrates, Marriage Guidance, the Samaritans, the Workers' Education Association, and the YMCA.

It organised a breath-taking range of activities: speakers, discussions, one-off sessions, a series of sessions, and residential events. There were Brains Trusts about family and personal matters. It offered sessions to youth groups, private schools and adult organisations. There were so many volunteers that it could meet any request. Fathers' points of view; adjustments in marriage; teen marriage; what makes a family?; 'spare the rod and spoil the child;' marriage guidance; the family in history; changing patterns of family life - it was all there. The work appeared at school leavers' conferences, approved schools, students in trouble, and more. Its experimental work included research reports and a project in one small town. You can read all of its papers at the library archives department in Gloucester.

Questions and answers in EPR

In asking a question, a child might be testing the teacher, probing the teacher's depth of knowledge or sincerity. 'The class should have confidence that the teacher will answer questions fully and as comprehensively as possible.'

A box for anonymous questions, to be answered during the next session, could be provided, though schools and pupils vary about this. Some students, especially the shy ones, need anonymity all the time, not just via a box; others, just to begin with. 'The general freedom of the group should not be allowed to swamp the delicacy of the shy and withdrawn.'

The teacher should wonder: what was behind that question? Answer needs, not just factual queries. Listen carefully and take all questions

seriously, with no flippant or off-the-cuff answers. The teacher's attitude sets the tone of the session. Shock or condemnation have no place. Keep a sense of humour, whatever embarrassment the question causes. A light touch, an avoidance of high drama, and an understanding manner are needed. Teachers have to be prepared for questions, to anticipate them. Questions might be designed to excite or provoke, 'trying it on,' perhaps about contraception or 'perversions,' as a rebellion against the authority of their parents.

Students can accept that teachers don't have all the answers. And 'it is not very useful to go into great lengths of erudition when a simple answer will suffice.' With a written question, check what it means. And teachers can make it clear that intimate questions about their own private lives are not on the agenda.

Appendix
Social education for students in technical colleges

This included these questions:

- If pregnancy occurred, what would it mean for the girl, the boy and their baby? Would the couple really have to marry? When is it likely that such a rushed marriage would turn out well?
- Most women tend to want a child soon after marriage. Would premarital sex be likely to satisfy this desire, or cause frustration?
- What does 'being in love' really mean? Is it the same as loving someone?
- Why are families necessary?
- Is home only to sleep in? What makes a home?
- What are the qualities of good parents? Of good children? How much should parents sacrifice for their children?
- Has the older generation the right to demand sacrifices from the young?

- What responsibility have parents for transmitting standards of personal behaviour to their children?
- Has a son more freedom than a daughter?
- How far should people who are totally incompatible be forced to live together? Does it make a difference if there are children?
- What about plural marriage e.g. by Muslims?
- Do children have rights?
- Agreement on upbringing – is it a joint task of parents?
- Should family planning be encouraged more?
- Is abortion a necessary social evil?

There was no report on the effectiveness of EPR, but Whitfield considers that it 'undoubtedly influenced developments elsewhere.'

Of all the countries in which my colleagues and I are working, the only one which exceeds the United States in the willingness of children to engage in anti-social behaviour is England. England is also the only country in our sample which shows a level of parental involvement lower than our own with both parents – and especially fathers - showing less affection, offering less companionship and intervening less frequently in the lives of their children.
Urie Bronfenbrenner, Two Worlds of Childhood 1970

Chapter Sixteen

CSE and GCSE Exams 1976: Certificate of Secondary Education and General Certificate of Secondary Education

A CSE course in Parentcraft

Although children are a huge blessing, even an ordinary childhood demands an immense amount of time and mental and emotional resources from parents. Anon

There has never been a GCSE exam in parenthood, although Frank Field and others have advocated it. But several schools have offered a CSE in subjects related to preparation for parenthood. CSEs, which no longer exist, were invented for students deemed less academic. A CSE had three Modes. From 1976 a CSE for 16-year-olds in parentcraft was offered by the Southern Regional Examinations Board. The Board suggested 160 hours of lessons (four periods a week) over two years: 10 percent of a student's formal curriculum time. The aims make good reading:

a) To prepare students *of both sexes* for aspects of family life (my emphasis);
b) To encourage them to be aware of, and to be sympathetic to, the responsibilities which come with marriage, the birth of children and the establishment of a family unit;
c) To realise the value of a happy, healthy and stable family background in the physical, mental and moral development of the individual.

Of its ten objectives, three are of special interest to us:

- A knowledge of the psychological development of the child, and the ability to select the appropriate solution for behavioural problems in the context of family life;

- A knowledge of the tensions created by the interaction of personalities within a family, their possible consequences and the contribution which the supportive services can make;
- An understanding of the contribution which an inadequate family life can make towards social problems, e.g. drug taking or delinquency.

Hands-on experience is highly recommended. 'In order to give full scope to the practical objectives of the course, visits and work experience in clinics, nurseries, day nurseries, pre-school playgroups and local infant schools should be fully explored.' East Midlands Exam Board in 1977 reported 'an increasing growth from individual schools and groups of schools of Mode 3 child care and related subjects.'

A GCSE course in Child Development

At the end of the 19th century, home economics lessons taught working-class girls: home management, hygiene, safety, nutrition with a special emphasis on budgeting, and baby care. This gradually expanded to include all the needs of babies and children. The GCSE course in *Child Development* has a certain amount in common with the recommendations of this book. It follows the 'roles and responsibilities connected to child development from conception to the age of five,' and has three mandatory units:

- The Short Task (30 percent of marks) asks students to 'demonstrate practical skills and knowledge' via three tasks, e.g. 'Feeding young children can be challenging. You have been asked to look after two children aged three and five. Plan and make a suitable lunch and evaluate your work';
- Child Study of a 0–5-year-old (30 percent of marks assessing 'a variety of skills. Choose one of these as a basis for the study:

Physical development; Fine manipulative skills; Creative play; Social skills; Intellectual development; Language skills.

- Principles of Child Development (40 percent of marks): You will learn: Family and parenting; Preparation for pregnancy and birth; Physical development; Nutrition and health; Intellectual, social and emotional development; Community support.

All important stuff, but there's scant covering of emotional life. And in 2016, only three percent of students took it – nearly all girls. Boys' schools had not a single entry.

Nowhere is it mentioned whether research has been done into the outcomes of this type of course – apart, no doubt, from statistics of how many students attained which grades! We have no way of knowing whether students who took these CSE and GCSE exams became better parents as a result - the aim of the courses. We can only guess that some of them probably did – to some extent, at least.

Whitfield tracked down a teacher in a secondary school for 'delicate and maladjusted' children with IQs of 60 - 140. 'Our course in Good Parenting runs for one hour per week for both sexes in the final year.' Those were the days. 'We initiated it in 1974 because of our concern about parental handling; poor handling seemed to lead to inadequate parents the next generation.'

All the history, such as research by the British Federation of University Women (1979), shows that only a minority of students in the UK have ever taken courses which included parenthood - and that the overwhelming majority of those who did, were girls.

Other exam boards

It's interesting to compare aims and topics of various exam boards:

The Associated Examining Board ran child studies courses from 1972 when there were twelve candidates, rising to 154 in seven schools by 1976. Its aims included how to fulfil the needs of 0–to-11-year-olds; an opportunity for personal development; qualities of a mature woman. 'Preparation for family and community life, as well as parenthood, should begin.' Child development study 'will make the girls aware of the vital role played by the mother.' Its 1977 exam posed ten True or False statements, e.g. 'Children can sense when parents are happy or unhappy together, and react to it.'

Middlesex Regional Exam Board 1977 stated no aims of its course which consisted of an oral exam (20–30 minutes) plus twelve suggested questions. It included social and cultural influences on family life, 'with some reference to a multi-ethnic society.' Visits to nurseries, clinics and special schools were suggested only 'where possible.' Nothing about placements with under-fives. Students might join St John's Ambulance or the Red Cross. Exams: questions mainly about physical aspects (sweating, bedwetting…) though 'maternal deprivation' was on the agenda.

South East Region Exam Board 1977

Section A of the exam paper had 20 compulsory questions on physical, social and emotional aspects. 'Answer as briefly as possible. Give two reasons why a two-year-old is likely at times to give way to outbursts of temper,' and so on. Section B gets students to answer four out of five questions on baby feeding; playgroups; play; vocabulary; and the arrival of a new baby. In 1978 they have changed to cover a crying baby; twins; antenatal period; aggression; and sick children, to name a few. In 1979, 'It has been found that many girls and boys respond to the stimulus which the working closely with, and gaining first-hand experience of, young children provides.' It's a 'rich and rewarding learning situation', giving insight into students' own behaviour. The course covers the value of play in mastering anxiety; budgets; and 'if possible,' a study of one child, 0-to-seven-years old.

West Midlands Exam Board 1978

One aim: 'To teach parents of the future how to provide good, healthy, happy homes for children.' Its course covered the emotional bond between mother and child; father's role; siblings and grand-parent problems; illegitimate or motherless babies; developing understanding, skills and abilities to care for children. 'Where possible, include practical experience, and toy or game making.'

Metropolitan Regional Exam Board 1979

a) Pupils may be helped to grow towards maturity and become responsible parents by studying family life and the pre-school child;
b) There will be greater awareness of the needs of young children by learning about environmental and other circumstances affecting child development. *An essential part of the course is practical experience with under-fives in playgroups, nursery classes etc.* (Their emphasis.)

All students to keep a diary. Use films, slides, tape recording, books and other media which will stimulate interest. Visits and invited speakers. Each student to observe and make a study of two or more children. Practical sessions about food, clothing, toymaking etc. The many topics include family adjustment to new baby; mother's health and reactions, physical and emotional; adjustment to new routine for both parents; emotional needs of baby and young child include love security, warmth, companionship; personality development covers love, jealousy, hate, fear, grief, leaming to cope with emotions, problems associated with them e.g. aggression; maternal deprivation; communication with young baby; preparing for playgroup; books. Part B of the exam has one question: How has your child development course helped you (a) understand the needs of a young child? (b) understand more fully the meaning of 'responsible parenthood'? It's a two-year course but can last for one year for fifth and sixth formers if there's enough space on the timetable. There should be at least one session a week (a whole morning or afternoon) plus one other period each week.

North Regional Exam Board 1979
Parentcraft and child care were not examined, only child development, though 'the ability to handle and deal with children is considered to be of particular importance.'

1978
Cynthia Reynolds, indefatigable as ever, writes to all areas to see how many CSEs are taken, and what percentage by boys. A total of 19,015 CSEs were taken in child care and 'allied subjects,' of which 2,678 were taken in SE Region, 36 in west Yorkshire. She is less successful in getting other data. 'All Mode 3 submissions are the property and copyright of the submitting centre; many object to the information being made available in response to general enquiry.' Hm.

Devon LEA 1978
Their publication *Health and the School* advised these topics at primary level: making my home a happy one, parents, and pets. With secondary students, include the generation gap. This education can be integrated into existing subjects. By the end of secondary school, all angles should have been covered, including the effects of a child on the family, and the care of babies and young children.

North West Regional Exam and Associated Lancashire Boards
In 1979 they appear not to have run any exams in childcare, parentcraft or child development. Lancashire points out that parts of home economics address these topics. 'One of the important aims of the course is to help pupils to recognise and deal with the problems of living together in the home as a family unit' – suitable for boys and girls alike. The course covered only some very practical aspects.

East Midlands Regional Exam Board 1979
Its course had very little about emotional aspects: mostly physical health, speech, school, though resistance to toilet training and jealousy were covered.

Southern Region Exam Board 1970s
Its parentcraft CSE in 1977 had been taken by 1,521 girls and 5 boys; that in home economics by 7,428 girls and 830 boys. Its 1979 parentcraft CSE covered such things as: why talk to your baby?; why do teenagers break the law or play truant?; why might a child from a wealthy home take to stealing? advantages of a large family; mothers-in-law – help or hindrance?; how to cope with an uncontrollable 14-year-old boy; the influence of TV; and children playing one parent off against the other.

Yorkshire Regional Exam Board 1979
Its aims: To recall factual knowledge; apply it to situations at home and in the community; understand all the needs of babies and young children and of the responsibilities of parenthood; practical skills. The chief examiner reported a standard below the 'general CSE level. Some candidates were confused about the meaning of advantaged and disadvantaged. Few mentioned deprivation of mothering.'

London Regional Exam Board 1980
This offered a social studies course: development 0–to-five-years; mental illness; drug addiction; breakdown of marriage; extended and nuclear families; plus many non-family topics. The next year, its social sciences paper included heredity; children's development influenced by parents and siblings; child raising in other countries; divorce.

In 1985, the aims of its child development course: better understanding of the human individual; students may themselves be helped to grow towards maturity, and become aware of the responsibilities of parenthood. Practical experience with children under six is essential.

South-West Exam Board 1980
The aim: 'To test knowledge and understanding, especially of mental, emotional, social and physical needs.' No explicit mention of

preparation for parenthood or insight into the self. The course covered battered babies; multi-racial marriage; kindness; character; honesty. It was compulsory to do a child study as well as practical activities: making a toy, preparing food, telling a story etc.

Other courses included the family in other countries/cultures: kibbutz, northern Nigeria, Pakistan, Jewish families; and 13-to-14-year-olds having babies.

CEE: Certificate of Extended Education
The family-centred studies aimed to 'help develop awareness of factors which contribute to happy, healthy, stable family life, and help to foster awareness of the influence that family individuals have on each other.'

Other schools, LEAs and organisations:

Hurlingham school and Sydenham school, London 1971
Specimen exam questions: Why is it important to cuddle babies? What happens when a mother doesn't talk or listen? Their course for fifth or sixth formers**:** Aims to integrate the topic with other school departments. Show the relationship between enriched/deprived environment and intellectual development. Babbling. Imitation of word sounds. Child imitates/ responds in order to please. Childhood in the past; in other cultures; in primitive times. Very important to follow visits with discussion.

Childcare teachers at **Lausanne girls school**, **Margate, 1971-73** had their own view on the 'educational advantages of exams set and marked by the schools themselves. The internal mode of examining offers the opportunity of responding to the individual's needs and to the changing needs of the community as a whole, free from the constraints of an external syllabus.' The course's aim? 'To enable

them to become good mothers in the broadest sense of the term, and become aware of other people, particularly children.'

Stewart Headlam school, London, 1970s
The course included: The adolescent. Long and short separation. Acceptance of child's personality. Possessive versus democratic parenting. When mother goes into hospital for second baby. Effects of broken marriage. Stresses of immigrant children. Caesarean birth. Twins. Phobias. Toilet training. Bedwetting. Nail biting. Imaginary friends. Effect of 'handicapped' child on the family.

La Sainte Union Covent school in north London ran a CSE course, *The Family and Child Development* for non-academic girls in the 6th-form with two sessions a week for three hours each. The course was linked with the religious education, Christian ethic, and English departments.

Kidbrooke school, London, 1972 - 1973
It included in its course: maternity grants; jealousy of older siblings; accidents; routine in first six weeks; three disadvantages of demand feeding; vocabulary of two-year-olds; lies; feet; Downs syndrome; epilepsy; health visitors; reasons to adopt. In 1973 they added four qualities to look for in your future husband; pets; diabetes; temper tantrums; crowded supermarkets.

Barnsbury school, London
Its child psychology course for fifth year girls covered moral concepts to pass on; and the place of religion. If parent have no firm beliefs, what's their duty? They can use 'the minor upsets and tragedies of childhood to help children face the unknown hazards.'

West Sussex LEA, 1973
Very keen on health education and 'education for living' for adolescents. No mention of parenthood.

Levenshulme high school for girls, Manchester, 1974
It taught its fifth formers about children up to seven years, learning through observation. 'Girls will be encouraged to bring their imagination to bear on their discoveries.' There were regular visits, lectures, practical work, and individual research.

Mount Pleasant comprehensive school, Birmingham, 1973
It used the *Young Students' Book of Childcare* by Leonora Pitcairn, aiming to 'help towards giving children a healthy, happy upbringing in a good home, as the foundation for a full and useful life, by training the parents of the future.' Knowledge will be supplemented by children from good homes (no details of how to do it.) Homes not to be ideal, but present a 'clear, attractive picture of what can be attained through learning what to strive for.' Teachers could adapt the syllabus 'as appropriate.' Students did 45 minutes homework a week, and kept records of visits, childcare studies and special projects.

Palmers Green girls high school, London
This school thought it important that pupils got involved with 'children of various age groups.' Pupils did a three-month child study, visited the home of a baby weekly, and twice weekly of a one-to-five-year-old. They took GCE and 'O' level exams. The exam was 60 percent practical and only 40 percent written, for the benefit of less academic pupils.

Quarry Bank mixed comprehensive, Liverpool
It offered a Preparation for Living two-year course as part of integrated studies. The aim: 'To provide a fully integrated course which studies life as a whole and not as a disjointed group of subjects.'

Croydon Health Education Centre
This offered a one-year course ('which could be condensed') on *The Child and his World*, a study of 0-to-five-year-olds for students aged 14-

plus. It aimed at an understanding of physical development and care; the parts played by heredity and environment; and the importance of family life in rearing children.

Bromley LEA, 1971

This LEA suggested a course in health and personal relationships. It advised that teachers ensured that 'what is offered offends neither consciences of our pupils' parents, nor the sensibilities of the pupils themselves at their varying stages of maturation.' The 'sympathy and support of parents is needed. The Newsom Report said, Teachers may believe that somebody else is attending to a subject, and each has enough to do in his own department anyhow. What is everybody's business can easily become nobody's business.' The head must 'contrive measures to find a worthy place in the timetable for health education.' A substantial syllabus was suggested, to be delivered in various ways after good preparation: two periods weekly for Year 1; two-to-four periods fortnightly for Year 2; a one-term course; interdisciplinary work; year group lessons for talks, films etc; half classes for discussion.

The Royal Society of Health, 1974

The RSH devised a certificate in parentcraft and home management, including preparation for parenthood, involving 13 further education colleges. The exam was in the evening.

Chapter Seventeen
Birmingham / ILEA / Norfolk

In 1978, ***Birmingham*** held a four-day exhibition in the Council House of child development course work. In the mid-1970s after two conferences, it had offered a CSE exam, adopted by 15 schools as a Child Development and the Family course with a teachers' booklet, *Child Development Courses in Secondary Schools* (1977.) It included preparation for parenthood and children's emotional development, stressing the need for head and senior staff to believe in its importance, making time and facilities available. A team, not just one teacher, must be involved, especially when contacting outside agencies which should be known well. The team leader must be strongly committed, with an understanding of both adolescents and small children, and must work well with adults. All colleagues at school are to be welcome to add their specialist angles on the subject. The venue should be informal with space for practical work. A flat in the home economics department is ideal, as is a dark room for film-making. Ten percent of students chose this course (virtually all girls.) LEAs don't keep all the records. 'In a recent exercise to archive records, we only saved the information that we had a statutory duty to retain.' For this reason, useful, interesting documents must have gone down the pan, lost forever, as there was no statutory duty. But many are retained in the Institute of Education's archives.

Inner London Education Authority (the widely lamented ILEA, 1965-90, abolished by Thatcher) also offered a CSE course, taken up by many schools in its 13 local authorities. One of its aims was 'to help students to come to a better self-understanding and become caring and responsible adults and parents in the future.' It covered, amongst much else, the father's support; post-natal care; social services; types of play; aunts and uncles; problems in family/ human relationships; children's homes; NSPCC; and starting school. Based

usually in home economics departments, the vast majority of students again were girls; it was never a compulsory course for everyone. ILEA made a 15-page list for teachers of books, films, organisations, and toy suppliers, as well as books for sixth formers.

In 1972, one of its occasional papers, *Health Education in Schools* by Leonard Payling, reported special courses at boys' schools, for example after school. Its home economics course dealt with the need for love, the effects of deprivation on young children; and care of the helpless (e.g. a new-born baby.)

In 1979 its *Good for You* publication on personal relationships didn't explicitly include parenthood, but its growth and development syllabus did: 'the ways in which adults can encourage the mental development in children and sound emotional development – e.g. acting in a way which enables the child to feel loved.' It proposed visits by a health visitor, a doctor, a mother, and 'people with unusual interests.' There was no mention of direct work with under-fives.

Norfolk had a slightly different take (1979.) Whitfield reported that the education department had got together with the area health authority to produce a secondary school Health and Social Education programme. The LEA recommended that 'it would be desirable to involve as many pupils as possible as a preparation for living.' What stopped them from making it a core compulsory subject? Its three modules included one on 'mental and emotional health: feelings and emotional developmental needs of adults and children, relationships and marriage.' Interestingly, the working party recommended that ages 11-to-14 should learn mostly factual stuff through existing lessons such as science, RE and PE (shades of Frank Field and the Manchester academy) but that 14-to-16-year-olds should have an hour a week of a dedicated lesson for two years. That would amount to about 70 hours all told. Not bad. But my search for the handbook

came to nothing. The archivist wrote, 'I could find nothing relating to Health and Social Education, 1970s.'

Whitfield cites the LEAs of, amongst others, Bedfordshire, Coventry. Devon, Lancashire and Waltham Forest, as doing 'significant work.' He predicts that a national report would result from the DES-funded Aston university project (1979–1982.) He also describes two projects (mid-1980s) funded by the Schools Council, intended for 5-to-13–year-olds and 13-to-18–year-olds, curricula designed to encourage informed choices, positive self-image and attitudes, and decision-making skills. One topic for 13-to-18–year-olds was entitled *Education for Parenthood.* This included a look at helping youngsters cope with loss and separation, important subjects rarely specified. He doesn't say where, or even whether, these curricula were ever adopted.

I'd say that all teachers and all subjects include an implicit wish to educate children for responsibility as adults and parents.
Teacher

Chapter Eighteen

A school in Avon, West England 1979 - 83

The Aston university researchers carried out an especially detailed survey of parenthood education at one school. This school attracted them because a local advisor for family-related education had done such sterling work there for some years, two local exam boards ran relevant CSEs, and there was a very helpful official from the area health authority. Unlike most, this school, a co-educational comprehensive with 1,000 pupils, had an established achievement in parenthood education, esteemed by the exam boards. It was in a semi-rural, suburban-growth area with a full cross-section of family and home backgrounds. I describe its work in detail as I have heard of no other school which offers, or has ever offered, so much relevant education to every student, as both a core and an optional subject. Despite its difficult complexities, it is the nearest thing we can probably find as a model of good and comprehensive practice.

A fascinating part of the account includes the views of teachers. The subject was taught by very senior staff responsible for pastoral care, all committed to preparing students for life in its broader aspects, but at the same time all resenting doing so because they did not believe it should have to be the job of the school – rather, the job of parents. They 'deplored the fact that schools were now expected by society to do this very necessary work.' Teachers underwent rigorous training, making them aware of their own feelings and attitudes so that they could encourage classroom discussion on some pretty sensitive and emotional topics.

Although wary of being prescriptive, keen not to put too much emphasis on what they considered 'right' and 'wrong', aware of the need not to preach, they did feel free to 'communicate their own moral stance' and 'wished their influence upon the pupils to be felt

because of the weakening in the influence exerted by other controls such as parents, the church and society in general.' One spoke of the 'bad behaviour, low achievement, involvement with the police outside school, emanating as these things usually do from family difficulties, separation and ineptitude on the part of the parents.' Nevertheless, they responded to the researchers with enthusiasm, taking part in questionnaires, interviews, incidental discussions in the staff room, 'elsewhere in and out of the school,' and agreeing to classroom observations. This was heartening. Parents were also asked for comments, but little resulted.

The school decided that some lessons would have a focus on parenthood as a *primary* aim and others as a *subsidiary* one. Primary meant that parenthood was dealt with explicitly; subsidiary meant implicitly. The school managed to run not just one but several types of parenthood-related education. Education for Personal Relationships (EPR) was provided for every student as part of general studies, including in the sixth form. Education for parenthood was its primary aim. It was a core curriculum subject for half-a-year for one hour a week for 14-to-15-year-olds, amounting to about 18 hours. This had been instigated by the Gloucestershire Association for Family Life which trained 'rigorously selected' people who could handle sensitive topics, especially with adolescents. There were 'religious and moral' overtones.

EPR had eight inspirational, whole-school aims, some rather lofty or diagnostic: informing adolescents about themselves; how to form stable relationships and accept others as they are; facing common situations in all sorts of relationships; reminding them of the problems of humanity and of their responsibility to their neighbours; laying foundations for marriage and family life; acting as counsellor and guide to those in need, recognising those who need specialist treatment; maintaining a careful balance between sex education and the teaching of personal relationships in a wider context; and creating

a climate of opinion in schools where these things are important and are regarded as such by the head and the staff.

The way all this was taught in no way resembled a conventional lesson. Staff encouraged an interchange of ideas and group discussion in a free atmosphere. This was not formal teaching, and had a 'strong flavour of counselling.' It was flexible, addressing the needs expressed by students. Topics were merely a guide, not frozen into some fixed learning/teaching model. I doubt if they had heard of lesson plans, learning objectives or outcomes in those days and certainly didn't need them, as there was no exam.

EPR aimed to impart the need for responsibility in all relationships and provide a general preparation for adult life. Preparation for parenthood was not seen as a subject in its own right 'but rather as part of the general impact that the school made on its pupils.' Staff needed 'considerable experience and skill' to do this well.

Teachers might cover in the half-a-year: puberty; teenage psychological development; contraception; abortion; sterilisation; reproduction; menstruation; sexual feelings; masturbation; sexual intercourse; prostitution; promiscuity; homosexuality; homemaking; alcohol/drink/drugs; racial and class prejudice; violence; emotions; problems; moods; loneliness; the family; father's role/views; work; leisure; illness; sexually transmitted diseases; addiction; pregnancy and birth. Films were found to be useful in encouraging discussion.

With such a long list and only 18 hours, it is not surprising that teachers concluded that half-a-year was 'all too little, especially if free discussion is to be stimulated and to play its full part, but the work has to compete for its place,' yet again, 'in a subject-structured and exam-directed curriculum.' As for outcomes, they recognised they had 'no short-term way of evaluating the results' of their efforts except subjective judgements of the response they got from pupils.

Then there was the optional *Family and Child* course over two years for Years 4 and 5, with a CSE or GCSE exam at the end. This was an initiative of the home economics teacher who saw a 'keen need for it in the families and surroundings of her pupils.' As usual, nearly all the takers were girls. The few boys tended to be of low intellectual achievement. To include every boy, the subject has to be compulsory. Most girls who chose it had done babysitting and thought the course might be useful for future careers. Only a few said things like, 'It will help me when I have children of my own' or 'I think it's something everybody ought to know - how to look after children before you have them. It's not fair on the children if you don't know how to.'

Visits to playgroups were mentioned as a particularly popular feature of the course – a theme coming up again and again. We must never underestimate the importance and benefits of getting out of the classroom, especially for students who don't take to academia. Let these girls speak: 'My friend said she didn't like the first part because it was just writing and things like that, but the second part was good because you went out on trips and got about.' This is all the more vital for students for whom traditional schooling is a form of minor torture: 'You can't do nothing in school. It's boring – you're not allowed to do nothing' and 'It's like being in a jail or something.' The cruelty and futility of subjecting these students to a formal, abstract curriculum, not relevant to their experience, could be avoided if education addressed and expanded their real-life interests.

There was discussion about which subjects were the most important. Some students believed that parenthood education should count more than maths and English. 'Everybody thinks maths and English is important. Well, it is if you want to go out and get a job but I think childcare helps you to find out how children work.' This was concrete, useful education, chosen also by some of the academically higher girls.

Then there was an optional two-year *Child Care* course, tightly organised as there was an exam at the end. Whereas EPR focused on the feelings of pupils, this focused on the needs of the growing child. It also looked at services for the family; mixed-race marriages; single parenthood; nuclear and extended families; changing social attitudes and conditions; divorce; the family as a social unit; and family problems. Each student carried out a child study, and observed and took part in work with children. Teachers were confident that it was an effective use of school time. This was no superficial exercise. The generous time-scale had another advantage. 'The pupils experience, and benefit from, a variety of teaching styles and personal attitudes over two years,' something hardly possible in a much briefer course.

A main argument of this book is that good parenthood is so important, and has so many aspects, that it makes no sense to limit it to a short treatment, some of which is not even compulsory. However, the teachers of this course were not able to keep up-to-date with the latest information. 'They felt their work suffered somewhat because of the pressures of the exams,' although they did derive satisfaction, concluding humbly that 'what the school could do was only one of many sources of knowledge and experience upon which the students would draw.'

(The only examination course I learnt of which was exclusively about parenthood preparation was run by the NAMCW. This was for all abilities and both genders and included regular practical experience with young children. Every student received some preparation for parenthood within their tutorial times.)

The researchers list seven existing subjects where the Avon teachers were encouraged to include parenthood education as a subsidiary aim. Many teachers found that for the first time, their work could include this subject. As you can imagine, proper co-ordination was needed: so many teachers were dealing with these aspects in so many settings:

1 Religious Education (RE): Every pupil had one RE period a week for the whole of their school life. Preparation for parenthood was a subsidiary aim in Years 1 – 3 (primary school level); in Years 4 and 5, it became a primary one. RE at secondary level looked at child development; sex; emotions and problems; personal relationships; and the family. There were four or five hours about adolescence and the same about marriage. Students could choose to take a CSE or 'O' level in RE.

2 Science: All pupils attended three periods a week in Years 7 and 8. One-third of this time was parenthood-related: reproduction, menstruation, pregnancy, birth. They were treated to a series of films on the physical and social aspects of these topics. As 11-to-13-year-olds, they had just reached puberty but mostly were not yet experiencing its emotional effects.

The researchers appreciated the advantages of this method of education. 'This is probably wise as the teachers are primarily trained to teach science and may not feel equipped by training or experience to deal with the more personal and sensitive issues of parenthood.'

3 Biology: It was not specified if, or how, teaching differed from that in science lessons.

4 Social Geography: This included a look at the family – possibly in different countries and cultures.

5 Home Economics: No details given.

6 Citizenship: Interestingly, more boys than girls chose this; it led to a CSE exam. Its curriculum included child development; parent/child relationships; the generation gap; benefits; marriage and cohabitation; divorce; the family unit; adolescence; and social changes. There were visiting speakers. Half the curriculum concerned parenthood-related topics.

7 English: Many opportunities here. For example, one teacher used *Cider with Rosie* by Laurie Lee, and *Walkabout* by J V Marshall.

Sixth formers could take a one-year course, *Child Development,* leading to an 'O' level. There were 'O' and 'A' levels in psychology and an 'A' level in home economics. In both subjects, 'parenthood-oriented content was considerable.' In fact, over half of the psychology curriculum had 'preparation for parenthood significance,' featuring, for example, styles of childrearing, heredity, and the work of John Bowlby. This popular course provided 'ample opportunities for the discussion, at a quite mature level, of parenthood-related topics.' Home economics went further, with a whopping 65 percent of its content concerned with parenthood and family relationships. So much for the notion that academically bright students are less interested in these concerns. 'These courses' value lies in exploring what can be done beneficially at a more mature level with more highly motivated students who have academic interests.'

The research team asked students what qualities they thought described good and bad parents. Whether the replies bear much resemblance to the most important thing - their future practice as parents - is something we will never know, nor whether they understood the issues more deeply and permanently than young people who had not had so much preparation. They said:

- *Good parents:* Loving, good tempered, caring, time to help children (there was more emphasis on emotional than cognitive aspects);
- *Bad parents*: Nasty, ill tempered, irritable, don't let the child do what it wants or what is good for it, battering, don't help the child.

The research team had a concern. Given that the ages of 12-to-14 are so crucial in the development of most boys and girls, why did preparation for parenthood feature more in Year 7 (11-to-12-year-olds) and Years 10 – 11 (14-to-16-year-olds)? 'The omission of any

compulsory attention to parenthood during this period raises the question of whether the omission is deliberate and that, in the light of experience, education for parenthood is best left till later. Another explanation is a less positive one, namely that this has been found the most convenient way of fitting the work into an already congested curriculum.' In other words, the subject, even at this school, has probably been somewhat side-lined due to timetable and exam constraints.

The team's overall conclusion was pragmatic. 'The problem raised by this organisation of the school's courses appears to be how to make the various fractions somehow add up to a coherent whole for each pupil,' a useful point today for any school determined to prepare its students for the most complex, important job that most will have.

Job Advert

Wanted: responsible person to undertake 20-year project. Candidates should be totally committed, willing to work up to 24 hours daily, including weekends, (occasional holidays possible after five years' service.) Knowledge of health care, nutrition, psychology, child development, the education system essential. Necessary qualities: energy, tolerance, patience, sense of humour. No training or experience needed. No salary but very rewarding job for the right person.

Jean Shapiro, Good Housekeeping 1981

Chapter Nineteen

Open University courses 1981 and 1983

Education for Family Life: A planning pack for teachers 1981

The Open University is a progressive innovation whose founders in 1969 include Harold Wilson and the indefatigable socialist Jennie Lee. The rather outraged press reactions (1977) to its short courses for parents and parents-to-be questioned why these were needed. After all, parenting is a matter of common sense and natural instinct. Who is the OU to tell people how to parent? Undaunted, the OU produced this pack, written by Dr Dorit Braun and Naomi Eisenstadt in association with the Health Education Council (now defunct) as part of the OU's in-service education for teachers, drawing on teachers' experience. It now resides in the university's archives, available also in the British Library. My attempts to discover which schools were guided by it came to nothing. However, we can assume that some teachers heard of it, obtained a copy and put its ideas into practice.

The pack consists of eight parts:

1 The Study Book (94 pages);
2 The Source Book (58 pages) with articles about teenage pregnancy: whether to marry and have children; teaching parenting skills; and a secondary school course in education for parenthood, amongst other topics;
3 The School Survey booklet (18 pages) about the questionnaires suggested for students and their parents;
4 Assignment Booklet (6 pages) which includes recommended reading;
5 Child Development including preparation for parenthood, written by the Health Education Council, listing a veritable wealth of resources, such as relevant books and films;

6 Relationships and Sexuality (43 pages), an annotated selection of publications and teaching aids, written by the School Health Education Project 13 - 18;
7 *Too Great a Risk:* a cartoon strip for teenagers about unprotected sex and pregnancy scare;
8 Envelope with leaflets by the Family Planning Association and other organisations concerned with sex and family topics, such as child safety.

The Study Book

This has a thoughtful, friendly style, sometimes witty, with a huge amount of detailed discussion and practical advice to digest. *The Need for Family Life Education* quotes the mid-1960s innovation by schools in Gloucestershire: personal relationships courses which influenced other local authorities. Resources you can use in the classroom include newspaper cuttings (e.g. *Baby Bashing Expected to Get Worse,* or how social services missed signs of child abuse); statistics by HMSO on marriage and divorce rates; and cartoon strips depicting the anguish of pregnant teenagers or stressed parents.

What should be done by schools of various types

This considers the need for pastoral care at school to compensate for 'the ills of family life,' including poor parenting. It discusses preparation for marriage and motherhood (sic), and advocates courses in childcare, child development and practical skills. It questions who delivers this teaching and how far this work can influence students' attitudes and behaviour, given the many other influences in their lives. PSHE lessons need to be informal, it insists, dealing not so much with information as with feelings and problems. As for parenthood education, it recognises that it is provided 'often only at a very modest depth' and should involve less discussion and more 'direct teaching' - by which it probably means practical and experiential. Five case studies are given about teenagers with various problems which would be of interest to the class.

The pack reproduces an article in *Education* magazine (1979) by Richard Clark, the Gloucestershire chief education officer. He argues that teachers should take a 'more realistic view of children's home backgrounds.' This begs the question of how much secondary school teachers in particular are able to discover, and whether they have time or desire to do so. But when they teach about parenthood, it is necessary to be aware of circumstances such as domestic violence, divorce, and child abuse of all kinds, some of which are bound to feature in the lives of certain students in a class of 25-30. The article *Please Sir, Mind Your Own Business* by Nicolas Tucker (*Guardian* 3. 3. 81) reminds us that some students might object if they find teachers' curiosity to be intrusive. Diplomacy and judgment are always needed. But no assumptions should be made about the background of any student: it can be full of surprises - and even shock.

Clark makes another significant point. 'Pastoral care has much to answer for.' If done by specialist staff, it can let the rest off the hook, absolving them from pastoral responsibility or persuading them that they are not fit for it. In teaching about parenthood, a sensitive, empathetic, pastorally-minded attitude is vital.

The features and skills of a 'successful family,' as outlined by Joan Cooper in the government document, *The Family in Society* (1973), are listed in chapter two of this book.

'What can schools achieve?' …

… asks the next section. It reminds us that these lessons evoke strong emotions, unlike much of the school curriculum. Every student has experience of family life and being parented on which to draw. The media, family members, other people, circumstances and situations all have an influence on their attitudes: school is just one. And merely imparting knowledge can make no difference. We recall

from the history of drugs education that knowing the facts does not necessarily change behaviour.

An activity that a school can try is to consider an 18-month-old toddler beginning to have a will of her own. How do parents respond to her wish to dress herself? Students can choose:

a) 'This is the shirt for today'
b) 'Do you want this red one or the blue one?'
c) 'Why do you make me so angry?'

They can consider similar approaches to choosing what to eat: strict? kind? encouraging independence? And suppose parents disagree with each other? What different expectations do parents have of their boy or girl? Do mothers see things differently from fathers? Do parents feel a failure if the child does not meet expectations? Does the child get smacked? Do some parents mollycoddle - or tell the child to fight its own battles? You can make a long list of things which children do, and invite students to reflect on which children should be allowed to do and not do, and why.

Other topics can include: how mothers feel after birth; the effects of breastfeeding on the father or toddler; mothers' experience at home - the isolation, feeling housebound, loss of friends, anger, guilt. The aim is to de-romanticise pregnancy and parenthood, and to ask: as parents, what knowledge, sensitivities, attitudes and decision-making skills are needed? How far is parenthood and family life a 'career?' You're warned that some students might feel anxious when certain problems are discussed. As ever, be on the lookout for signs of distress; make sure they are addressed soon. Spend time getting to know where your students are in their thoughts and emotions.

An excellent cartoon strip, *It'll Never Be the Same Again* by Sarah Curtis and Gillian Crampton Smith (Longman 1977), would be a vivid

teaching method, telling it like it often is and not protecting students from reality. An exhausted father of a new baby nearly makes a serious mistake at work and risks losing his job. Coming home from the pub, he finds his tea hasn't been made. Both parents can hardly keep awake. There's a row; his shouting wakes the baby. He storms out. A kind friend supports the lonely, weeping mother who says, 'I always wanted a baby but no one tells you how hard it is! Sometimes I could strangle her when she doesn't stop crying.' The friend gives advice ('Don't rush potty training' / 'Husband needs to get to know the baby'.) Husband returns with apologies: 'Let's go to the pub.' She resists, then agrees: 'Just for a little while.' They then seem to leave the sleeping baby on its own for half-an-hour (or maybe the friend babysits.) A point for discussion!

The needs of young people

Family life education, we are wisely told, must address the interests, needs and preoccupations of young people. It comes as no surprise that the National Child Development Study (1976) found that a majority of 16-year-olds wanted to know more about the care of babies and the practical problems of family life: two of the least catered-for topics at school. John Balding of St Luke's college, Exeter (1976) surveyed fourth-year girls. What they wanted to learn about were sex, personal relationships, contraception, and the care of young children. We are advised to keep abreast of the magazines, comics and problem pages that teenagers read. (Nowadays, of course, social media of all kinds must be added.) Our teaching needs to draw on students' own experience.

When looking at families, we can show photos of the single parent; nuclear, extended or mixed-race families; those in communes and kibbutzim; and those with one or two gay or lesbian parents. (We can add: families which foster or adopt; and families with special needs of parents and/or children.)

The curriculum jigsaw

The Study Book discusses how to fit this education into a school. Schools need to be aware if various departments unknowingly duplicate the contents of the subject.

School policy

It is suggested that your school adopts a policy about the teaching of parenthood and family life, with these sections:

- Reasons for teaching it;
- The needs of students;
- The wishes of parents;
- Home-school links;
- Record keeping;
- Monitoring progress;
- Pastoral care.

Co-ordinator for this work

Any suitable teacher can take on this important role. Qualities needed are, as ever, sensitivity, informality, supportiveness, a wish to use outside organisations, and to expand what is done already at the school. Enthusiasm by the headteacher and other senior staff makes a huge difference. The co-ordinator needs to remember that a new subject is likely to cause resistance, suspicion and even hostility by colleagues - all natural reactions to change. He or she should enquire about the attitudes of the staff, set up a working group open to all, foster a true exchange of views, and realise that it takes time to get going. The subject might feel threatening to those with insecure personalities, so keep everyone informed, use simple language (never jargon), and behave in the least threatening ways you can.

Classroom planning

Decide the minimum that every student will learn. Try to gauge its effectiveness as you go along. Define what you hope for. Assess what resources are available at the school in terms of staff abilities, accommodation, equipment and materials. How can the subject be fitted into the existing curriculum? Reflect on the possible outcomes: how much do students know? Understand? What do they do? Do they learn how to make decisions? What are their beliefs, attitudes, and levels of awareness?

The emotional and social curriculum from birth to five

Themes can include dependence; trust; caring versus over-indulgence; fear; grief; insecurity; jealousy; ability to cope; independence; and discipline. Discuss children at risk. What do parents do? What times do they spend with their children?: listening, reading, telling stories, outings, playgroups. What differences do mothers and fathers show when with their child? What about sibling relationships? You can discuss intellectual and physical stages and development if you don't want to concentrate solely on the emotional aspects.

Exams - or not?

There is a thorough and interesting section on the pros and cons of having an exam. Those who think there should be one, would argue:

- It is a waste of time if no exam;
- Students and staff are not motivated without an exam;
- As a new subject, it needs a role and status;
- There is status for teachers to teach it if there's an exam;
- Students' competitive spirit is fostered by an exam;
- Future bosses like new staff having exam results behind them;
- An exam is an objective measure of progress.

And those against:

- Teaching for an exam is a cop out for teachers: students are less trouble if kept quiet and writing notes;
- You can't examine qualities such as increasing maturity;
- Students should never risk 'failing' a subject like this: it will badly affect them and their future parenting;
- Teaching to an exam syllabus restricts and inhibits the teacher, and prevents creative follow-up;
- Students choosing this exam would likely be girls of lower ability, so the subject would have a low status.

However, there is a long list of examination boards, including the NAMCW, which have set exams in related subjects.

Teaching methods and materials

Teachers should ask themselves how each teaching method increases knowledge and sensitivity; fosters attitudes; nurtures decision-making abilities; and develops practical skills. Methods listed are:

- Teacher presentation;
- Question and answer;
- Demonstrations;
- Individual written work;
- Private reading;
- Individual research and project;
- Group research and projects;
- Work sheets and cards;
- Placements in playgroups etc;
- Competitions;
- Posters, leaflets and hand-outs;
- Discussions;
- Role-play, drama and simulation;

- Films and audio-visual aids, e.g. about child abuse (and the film *Sybil* is mentioned, about multiple personality);
- Visitors and local organisations coming in;
- Inventing problem page questions and giving advice (this can help students' decisions about their own lives);
- Personal stories in newspapers and novels;
- Questionnaires.

It is pointed out that at school, students' opportunities just to think are 'in short supply.' They need to learn how to listen to children and to each other. Role-play helps them to get to know themselves better. Critics of parenthood education have complained that it concentrates on physical rather than emotional needs. Drama can certainly help convey the latter. Other critics advocate more emphasis on the needs of adults. Again, drama can help young people to 'get into the shoes' of parents.

A useful resource to de-glamorise parenting is Claire Rayner's sheet *What Does It Feel Like to be a Mother?*, pointing out that having a baby is like 'throwing a stone into a pond because it causes so many far-reaching ripples. Going by some of the advertising on television and in magazines and romantic stories and films, new mothers are supposed to feel marvellous, happy and fulfilled, new babies are supposed to be adorable, well behaved and cuddly, and everything in the maternal garden is supposed to be ideal.' The mother needs to understand the feelings of the baby, other people and herself in order to enjoy parenthood. To this end, Rayner provides two boxes:

Wonderful

Elation: The waiting, the hoping, the longing are over. He is here, he has finally arrived and you want to shout your joy to the whole world;

Fulfilment: You, who were for so long a child yourself, in the charge of others, are now proven to be an adult, a mother, responsible now for another person;
Perfection: You were just an ordinary woman but now you have joined the ranks of the special woman. You are one with Mother Nature, the source of life, the Madonna;
Achievement: You have reached the pinnacle of femininity. You have proved yourself, worked and struggled to give birth, and now you can glory in your own success;
Worship: He's the perfect baby, so soft and beautiful, sleeping sweetly with his tiny hands gently clutching your finger, and you adore him so much.

Dreadful

Exhaustion: After the long, hard working hours of labour, you are so tired. You just aren't interested in anything but sleep;
Back Seat Status: For almost nine months they've been worrying about your health, your comfort, your well-being. Now it's the baby they're fussing over, leaving you alone;
Resentment: When he cries, it wells up in you, a horrible feeling, a sort of anger, a furious wish he'd leave you alone, not be so maddeningly helpless;
Depression: Grey flat clouds make you feel as though nothing good will ever happen again. You want to scream, or burst into tears;
A Trapped Sensation: It all adds up to an awareness of no longer belonging to yourself, of being tied down, your future committed to this baby, as though you no longer mattered to anyone.

How to teach?

The authors are quite clear that this lesson should not involve telling children in an authoritarian way to keep quiet or risk detention. Don't tell them to stop laughing, never use language they don't understand (e.g. they might not know that 'sibling' means a brother or sister.) If they appear to be daydreaming, something important might be going on in their mind. Might they be self-conscious if they feel

observed while showing a keen interest in handling contraceptives? Don't get them to do an activity where they can cheat to get a good mark (not that marks are given.) If they have visited a nursery, for example, and discuss this in class later, ensure a friendly, enabling atmosphere, otherwise they might consider the discussion a waste of time. Find out how they experience the lessons. Are lessons relevant to their lives? Get close to them, in order to make the content as meaningful and immediate as possible.

After each lesson, ask yourself in fine detail:

- What did the students do? List everything;
- What did they learn? List everything possible;
- Was it worthwhile? If you think so, why?
- What did I do in the lesson?
- What did I learn?
- What will I do now? Use the insights you have gained.

Although these seem simple questions, they are recommended as extremely useful, enabling far from simple answers.

The Assignments Booklet

This recommends books such as *The Death of the Family* (David Cooper), *The Symmetrical Family* (Michael Young) and *Future Shock* (Alvin Toffler.)

Child Development

This booklet contains an impressively long list of resources. Though available in 1980, which some might dismiss as dated, they represent a wealth of information and perspectives, still relevant today.

Recommended Books

Many of them are classics, some controversial, including:

What is a Child? by Nicolas Tucker
The First Relationship by Daniel Stern
Pyjamas Don't Matter: What Your Baby Really Needs by Trish Gibbon
Sheila Kitzinger's many books on childbirth, crying babies and much else
Talking with Mothers & *The Birth of a First Child* by psychoanalyst Dana Breen
Preparing for Parenthood: Understanding Your Feelings about Pregnancy, Childbirth and Your Baby, and other books by child psychologist Dr Lee Salk
Birth without Violence by Dr Frederic Leboyer, the radical French obstetrician
Many books by Claire Rayner, such as *For Children*
Your Baby and Child from Birth to Age Five (revised and updated 2022) and other books by child psychologist Dr Penelope Leach
Baby and Child by US paediatrician Dr Spock
Book of Child Care by UK paediatrician Dr Hugh Jolly
Preparation for Parenthood Lesson Plans (Joan Aarvold, Newcastle NCT)
The Captive Wife by Hannah Gavron: book, or audiotape (45 minutes)
The Experience of Parenthood by Chris Buckton (Longman Dictionary)

Films, slides and audio cassettes

The list includes nearly 200 films, slide sets and audio cassettes for various ages, some in black and white, some in colour, targeted at secondary school or college students; others at new parents; others at professionals. Some last only a few minutes; others up to half-an-hour or more. They cover physical facts; the emotional life of babies, children and parents; some show groups of mothers or couples talking; a 22-year-old talks of how motherhood has changed her life. There are resources about ante-natal information; the life of the fetus; pregnancy; exercise in pregnancy; effects of smoking and drugs; childbirth; bath time; breast feeding and other baby feeding; post-natal depression; communication with babies and children; love; hate/anger; parent-child relationships; vital role of the playgroup; various stages of life from conception to six years; battered children; father and son talk about pregnancy; mixed-race families; unplanned pregnancy; adoption; separation (Joyce and James Robertson's

ground-breaking films such as *A Two-year-old Goes to Hospital*); safety; disability; hearing tests; play; toys; second child; teenage pregnancy; and support by father. Other examples: *If Only We'd Known* with booklet (three films about 16-year-olds having a child); *Hello Baby*, a 25-minute multi-racial film about fathers.

It is an extraordinarily comprehensive list of resources. As it's probably available only if you make a trek to the very helpful Open University archives or the British Library, I am happy to post you a full copy. Drawbacks using these items could include:

- The small number of non-white participants, whether or not you teach in a multi-racial area;
- The probability that some material is outdated;
- The possible lack of appeal to today's students of styles that might seem quaintly old-fashioned, not at all cool;
- Difficulty of obtaining some items: many suppliers have closed;
- Schools no longer having the equipment to show slides, 16mm films, or to play audio cassettes.

However, some of the towering giants in this field are represented. The importance of their messages should outweigh any prejudice about voices from the past. For more recent films, you would do well not only to use YouTube, but to contact Concord Media in Ipswich. They sell, rent, or rent online, a vast selection of material on social issues, including parenthood-related topics.

The pack contains articles which add interesting and important extra considerations. Let's now look at reflections and advice by three talented, thoughtful, experienced teachers of parenthood.

A Secondary School Course in Education for Parenthood by Bernard Baxter, former head, Gloucestershire

As we've seen, Gloucestershire schools were pioneers of this subject. We can assume that Baxter's school offered it. He states that it is 'parents who ought, and many certainly do, provide education and guidance in the general area of preparation for parenthood for their children.' He also points out that 'there are some things that have to be learnt by every young adult primarily from first-hand experience. Thus, in providing courses of this sort, teachers are aware that there is a limit to the usefulness of what they can offer.' We might reply that by exposing students to substantial experiences as part of a course, such as taking home a virtual baby, buddying a toddler, or getting to know young parents and their babies, we can go at least some of the way to helping them realise what really is involved in parenthood. It's certainly true that nothing can prepare them fully.

Baxter, aware that parenthood is a sensitive topic, writes that 'parents may well hold strong views on the extent to which they are content to give the school a free hand in its presentation.' He does not reveal whether this was the case at his school, but recommends a partnership between parents and teachers, as well as 'an openness of both towards teenagers.'

Preparation for parenthood is not just about child development and sex, he argues. He doesn't shy away from teaching realities: ethical aspects to courtship; choice of partner; different kinds of relationships; awareness of homosexuality; venereal disease; drug abuse; housing; financial management; impact of the law; child abuse; domestic violence; mental and physical disability; knowledge of helping agencies; and political and social issues. 'Parenthood implies coping with all the stresses and pressures that prejudice secure relationships within which children can grow up with the best chance of an undamaged adulthood themselves.' Because of this wide-

ranging scope of topics, the specialisms of various teachers need to be used.

He asks, 'By whom should the course be taught?' Rather than having a change of teachers according to their subject expertise, the best model, in his experience, is continuity: for one teacher to be stably attached to one class, with added input from others with extra specialist knowledge who put together material from subjects such as sociology, economics and biology, for the main teacher to use. This 'attachment model' enables an atmosphere of 'mutual confidence in which discussion and debate will flourish.'

Extra activities can include films and visits. There are possible downsides. Teachers 'must master a mass of material outside their normal expertise. There is a luck-of-the-draw element in how well particular groups and teachers interact.' And, like many others, he emphasises the need for a good co-ordinator of the team: someone with 'considerable energy, powers of persuasion and organisational skill.'

Baxter lists the many serious family problems that some children experience from an early age: battering; parents' unemployment; parental separation; unskilful parenting; and undue pressure from parents. Because of this, 'many of the experiences that children are having in their families whilst still at school suggest strongly that it is the school that is best placed to help them make sense of these experiences, and that they should not be ignored as outside the curriculum. Just as in other subjects such as geography, where first-hand experiences are provided by field trips, in preparation for parenthood the first-hand experience by students of family conflicts and problems should be used – they already have the raw material for learning.'

Parentcraft: A Teacher's View by Alison Orton

During the past two years I learnt things I'd never have thought of. Student
I think parentcraft is the best lesson in the school. 'Less able' student

Orton clearly had substantial pioneering experience, teaching this subject in the 1970s when there was little in the way of materials. Her useful article lists not only the aims of parentcraft, as it used to be called (e.g. 'To encourage pupils to enjoy the company of children'; 'To help deprived children – who exist in the class, and those who may exist as their offspring – in the future') but also reflects on the qualities needed to teach. The teacher must:

- Be secure as a person and as a teacher;
- Be experienced and able to handle problems. Some subject areas are sensitive ones and require careful handling. One has to tread softly, e.g. about children in care; pregnancy/abortion;
- Not be disturbed or distressed by trying, difficult situations, since the parentcraft course can be a tension-releaser for certain pupils;
- Be consistent and must be trusted by the pupils. The 'them and us' barrier must be broken down;
- Not cause trouble for students at home by offering unexplained and conflicting opinions;
- Know a little of the background of pupils before she first meets them. 'Therefore, it is important that the teacher talks to the pastoral head who will outline any necessary information, which obviously remains confidential';
- Allow time for the class to gel, feel relaxed, and become happy to communicate, leaving more delicate subjects till later in the course.

As far as personnel goes, she likes the idea of inter-departmental team teaching ('the shortcomings of both teachers and departments may be offset by the shared strengths of other teachers and disciplines'), and also recommends making full use of outside speakers: health visitor,

hospital staff, vicar, NSPCC, speech therapist, school staff who are parents, and so on. She anticipates the concept of observing babies in the classroom (see, for example, chapter 30) when suggesting that the babies of staff members visit: 'periodic visits long-term.' Having found it difficult, due to the timetable, to arrange placements in outside playgroups, she set one up at the school on three mornings a week with 20 small children referred by social services and other agencies. 'It was considered an important part of secondary education.' Boys did better at it than girls, she tells us, and 'less able' or disruptive students came into their own. It took some initial funding, and needed insurance, toilets and a supervisor, but the rewards were great. And this education is immediately valuable for older siblings who take care of younger ones.

Her views on examinations are mixed. Exams can focus attention and give an incentive to less able students as a challenge and reward for effort and achievement. However, they put constraints on the content and timing of the course.

Teaching Parent Skills by William Rice

Rice speaks deep from the heart, emphasising how quickly society is changing, and how young people need to be prepared to cope with all aspects of it. He considers the 'universal and persistent' qualities needed by all adults, including parents, identifying the core skills as:

- **Flexibility** of mind and thinking, including 'a full understanding of life's more important issues';
- **Consistency** of attitude and behaviour, being dependable, as good as one's word, the sort of person 'with whom we know where we stand' - a luxury possible only within a secure environment. 'Parental responses which reflect a whim of the moment, rather than being based on some relatively abiding regime, cannot help shape the behaviour of the child';

- **The ability to communicate**. Being verbally competent doesn't mean you're communicating. 'Perhaps we need, in our parenthood teaching, to be able to think about listening and observing';
- **The ability to love and undertake relationships.** Rice appreciates that support is important not only for the obviously needy. 'We're all well aware that disadvantage has many origins and just as many expressions';
- **The importance of individuality.** 'Perhaps one of the hardest facts a parent has to accept is that they have produced another human being, rather than a model or alter ego of themselves. Parent skills include the ability to allow the gradual growth of that boy or girl, so that they become themselves; become, in the deepest sense of the word, individuals.'

He reflects on the environment needed to nurture these qualities. 'In order for a person to become a loving being, capable of entering into relationships which have value and meaning, they must have in their turn received just such loving, and this demand applies in school as it does in the home. How can we teach about love, if the very atmosphere is a denial of what we all mean by "love"?' In other words, a school must demonstrate love to students.

Qualities needed to teach the subject? He suggests:

- **Practice and understanding**. Effortless action is the result of enough practice and understanding of the principles behind it. 'If we're to teach parent skills, two main considerations have to be incorporated in our schemes of work: practice and understanding';
- **Appreciative thinking, flexible and open-minded.** Present students with a set of typical real-life experiences; get them to analyse them, suggesting alternative courses of action and outcomes. 'That is the cognitive side, but we also need to engage in affective training in which something of the "feel" of real life is generated by means of role-play and simulations';

- **Exercise in empathy.** 'Construct occasions in which pupils are expected to assume unfamiliar roles, and conform to rules with which they may have little sympathy.' Students need to understand people from other races, religions and value systems;
- **Exercise in communication.** Again, use a mixture of cognitive and affective learning. 'Teaching about communication should include references to non-verbal communication, since we all make use of such clues and signals';
- **Action.** As well as teaching crafts (cooking, repairs,) students can take part in community service. 'Many schools encourage this but fail to draw the maximum benefits from the experience gained.' Becoming deeply committed to a hobby can also be relevant, 'developing perseverance that all parents need in great abundance.'

Themes which could give a structure to a course include:

- **'Give them enough rope.'** Striking a balance between controlling your child and encouraging independence;
- **'Do as I do, not as I say.'** Setting an example, providing a model for your child;
- **'Talk to me.'** Why is this so important? What happens if it doesn't happen, or operates in one direction only?
- **'Do unto others.'** The conflict between one's own wishes and those of other people.

'Of over-riding importance is the need to be relevant to the children's current and *anticipated* circumstances and, in addition, to give them some internal "feeling" of what it is like to have to think and act as a parent of the future.' Recognising the difficult home and relationship problems that some students experience, he concludes: 'Throughout all of our teaching about parent skills, we need to ensure that there exists within the learning milieux a real feeling of support and care. These are essential if we are to provide both an environment for good

learning, as well as a model of how to set about dealing with the challenges of modern living.'

An unusual feature of the OU pack is a page: *Whether To Have Children?* Students need to be challenged about the idea that parenthood is an inevitable part of their future which everyone wants or should want. There is a useful list of common assumptions or myths:

- Having a child is the sole or most important or easiest way to feminine fulfilment. The 'mystique of motherhood' has been challenged by feminists;
- A baby completes a family: the only valid family is the nuclear type;
- A child will cement or repair a relationship. The opposite is often true;
- A child belongs to his parents like their other possessions. This makes it more difficult for children's rights to be accepted;
- Parenthood is a wholly positive experience.

The pros and cons are listed:

Advantages of having children

- The couple gain social approval, and thus an increased self-image;
- Having children offers an opportunity for a personal growth-stimulating experience: it offers new, different personal interactions;
- It ensures that there are no regrets about missing an experience after childbearing years are over;
- It helps society to avoid the enormous consequences of widespread voluntary childlessness, i.e. depopulation;
- Children can provide personal support in emergencies and old age;
- We might add: children enable the family name, heritage and legacy to be passed on.

Advantages of not having children

- Increased options open to women, particularly in training/career;
- Avoids the stress-producing impact of children on couple relationships; enables couples to concentrate on their relationship;
- Eliminates financial, emotional, physical, time demands of children;
- Avoids the negative consequences of involuntary parenthood, e.g. child battering;
- Neatly links the need for population control with individual freedom and personal choice;
- Less restriction on men's career choices;
- We might add: Respects the personalities and wishes of people who do not like babies and children, have no interest in them and have never seen themselves as parents, now or in the future.

Looking at these factors (and using drama to drive the points home) will help students to deeply understand many realities of parenthood.

Education for Family Life across the Curriculum:

A report of a course 1983

Dr Dorit Braun, project director, wrote about a six-week INSET evening course for teachers held in Birmingham. The team, co-ordinated by Naomi Eisenstadt, aimed to develop with teachers a curriculum, leading to the two OU packs. Also involved were Derek Price, Dee John, Kate Torkington and Lesley Smith, with others (ILEA, social services etc.) on the consultation group. The report covered both the course and practical classroom outcomes. Thirteen local schools represented were Handsworth Wood girls; Blessed Humphrey Middlemore RC; Saltley; Hamstead Hall; Four Dwellings; Bordseley Green girls; Bournville; Perry Common; Highgate; Handsworth New Road; Duddeston Manor; Golden Hillock; Cardinal Wiseman RC; plus the British Youth Council social education project. (Only two sent men. Six men were invited; three replied.) Two participants were deputy heads.

Session 1 Hopes, fears and expectations were invited. Students could be asked what they think they will be doing in ten years' time. A very lively session, full of disagreements, ending with honest feedback.

Session 2 Teachers revealed their backgrounds, attitudes and values.

Session 3 Curriculum planning. 'Design a sexist/racist course'.

Session 4 Developing ideas for the classroom. Highly recommended was the book for young people, *The Experience of Parenthood*, edited by Chris Buckton, with stories, poems, short plays, essays, photos, cartoons, and including various cultures and social classes. The report lists many materials: Chris Searle's *Stepney Words*, Gilbran's *Parents and Children*, adverts, and TV programmes. Include students' relationship with their parents: its complexity, the ups and downs.

Session 5 Feedback from classroom experience. In the classroom, teachers should identify and justify their own views, but not defend them at the expense of the views of the students.

Session 6 (all day): Evaluation. Most wanted a longer INSET course. All agreed it had been practical and useful. Braun concluded: 'The quality and quantity of the classroom work which emerged confirms the potential of teachers as a huge resource for curriculum development.' They know what's possible or not in the classroom, and can be very creative, given the opportunity to think together. And when developing materials with teachers, group leaders should:

- Join in activities;
- Admit their mistakes - they are fallible;
- Act as facilitators with a chairperson who sums up and gives direction to discussion.

Chapter Twenty

Five schools in five Local Education Authorities 1983 - 84

'Most important were individual teachers' perceptions, aims, experience & skills"

Preparation for Parenthood in the Secondary School Curriculum was published by professor Richard C Whitfield, Teresa Grafton and their team at Aston university to assess the 'objectives, timetable structures, teaching approaches and outcome' of this work in five schools in five LEAs: Avon (Northavon), Lancashire (Wyre), Northamptonshire (Kettering), Leicester, and Knowsley. These LEAs, which all volunteered, were carefully selected to represent a wide mix of socio-economic populations. The project's steering group consisted of distinguished professionals from the worlds of education, psychology and child psychiatry, as well as from government departments. This was serious stuff. As the most ambitious, comprehensive national survey ever attempted, its survey of the 66 English LEAs which responded showed that 'specific policies with respect to preparation for parenthood as such were essentially non-existent.'

Courses in the five chosen schools existed in various forms, but with patchy and unbalanced curricula. Different people had different ideas of what the subject was about. The team concluded: 'There does seem to be wide consensus that this is a field of study which the schools cannot, and should not, ignore if their pupils are to be adequately prepared for life beyond school, of which parenthood (and non–parenthood) may well be a part. Although some school-based preparation for parenthood may not, for lack of intermediate drill and practice, lead to long-term gains in knowledge and practical skills remembered when and if parenthood arrives, there are grounds for believing that pupils' intrinsic interests can, through appropriate teaching, lead to a heightened awareness of important choices.'

The team found that these methods were used: audio-visual aids, theory taught in nine courses; practical work, discussion, visits out in eight; worksheets and visits in seven; leaflets in six; project work in five; role-play, note-taking in four; group work, designing, writing work, demonstration (e.g. breastfeeding or dissection of a pregnant rat) in two; survey work, experiments, pupil interviews, self-assessment, community service, questions to tutor, child observation in one. Visits in and out of school were 'especially popular and particularly apposite to preparation for parenthood teaching.' But arranging visits to outside venues takes time which staff don't always have: e.g. letter to parents, transport, follow-up. There are timetable limits. It's easier to bring in visitors from outside. Visiting speakers included doctors, nurses, community workers, traders, Samaritans, blind people, Alcoholics Anonymous, Relate, and single parents.

The authors keenly encourage 'imaginative and well-planned practical work' which 'adds greatly to preparation for parenthood attractiveness and educational value. There is increased recognition of the importance of interest and practical experience to the learning process. Preparation for parenthood education offers splendid opportunities for both.'

Films were frequently used (one-fifth of the time.) The most popular included: *Barnet (The Child); Boy to Man; Don't Let Him Die* (Scottish Central Films); *Drugs and the Nervous System* (Concord); *Dying for a Smoke* (Central); *Eating Can Be Good for You* (Health Education Council; *Food for Their Future; From Conception to Birth* (BBC); *Frustrating Fours and Fascinating Fives* (Central Films); *Girl to Woman* (Scottish Central Films); *God Bless Mummy and Make Her Good* (Farley); *Half a Million Teenagers* (NAVA Library); *Marriage Guidance* (Forum Films); *Micronutrients; Preparing for Sarah* (Gothen Films*); Ready for Baby* (Farley*); Responsibility* (HEC); *Then One Year* (Concord); *To Janet a Son* (Concord); and *Headlice* (Camera Talks). But all schools lacked a

dedicated room for the work. It would help to have one, perhaps shared with related subjects: citizenship or PSHE.

The team made ten recommendations:

a) Each LEA should have a designated adviser about preparation for parenthood so that schools can discuss and share ideas and how to 'bypass constraints.' The headteacher is central in ensuring co-ordination within the school;

b) Each school should plan and co-ordinate the work. Teachers must have time to plan their teaching 'in an area requiring probably more preparation and administrative liaison than many others.' One member of staff needs to co-ordinate all aspects;

c) Pupils of high academic ability, including boys, need this education. It should not be confined to girls of average or low ability;

d) Senior staff and male staff should be involved: crucial if the subject is to get proper status and stability, alongside longer established areas of study. 'Strong encouragement from all senior staff is needed to eliminate differences according to gender and ability';

e) Although some staff are reluctant to make this subject compulsory for all if it reinforces traditional gender roles, 'for others it is simply a logical element within preventive health in its widest sense.' A child psychiatrist is quoted: 'My idealistic preventive aim is that every youngster in our local schools should have the opportunity to prepare for life with a fairly sophisticated understanding of people's normal psychology of development and of some of the relevant variations in human behaviour. The preventable situations arise from straightforward parental ignorance of key elements in child rearing and from those who, from deviant behaviour, emotionally damage their children. Opportunities for primary preventive work

occur throughout much of a child's captive life in school.' The researchers advocated futures with or without children as careers in themselves, which need educational support. The authors wondered whether this education is best provided within tutorial periods and pastoral care, but were adamant that preparation for parenthood should reach all pupils and that 'new efforts in secondary teacher education are needed to back this up';

f) If pupils' progress in the subject is formally assessed, this could raise its status. Assessment can look at factual information, understanding, attitudes and changes in overt behaviour, perhaps through *Record of Personal Achievement* journals kept by pupils;

g) Each school should construct a programme, taking careful note of the social, ethnic and cultural diversity of its catchment. This is crucial - and the programme must be flexible. Let the students voice 'their own experiences, feelings and perceived needs for information.' Consult parents and community agencies; face up to areas of controversy. 'Both school and community need to recognise and accept that challenges to their value systems will necessarily be involved in this consultation';

h) Liaise with external agencies. These bring knowledge and experience of working with young people. But teachers need enough time to co-ordinate this, organise placements and visit students on placements which involve responsibilities with small children. 'This is one curriculum area where the expertise of outside agencies is called upon, and this creates a natural link between school, home and community';

i) Because there is no specialist teacher training in this subject at colleges and universities, teachers learn only haphazardly and in isolation. 'Informal and less didactic teaching strategies may be recognised as necessary, but are, for many secondary school

teachers, both unfamiliar and disturbing. Some teachers experience contradictions in respect of their different roles as pastoral tutors and as subject teachers. These stem both from the nature of the commitment which this area of the curriculum entails and from the different relationships with pupils, often necessitated by the less formal but nonetheless demanding teaching approaches. In this value-sensitive area, teachers need guidance in formulating their objectives. They also need to be tactfully confronted with their own attitudes and even prejudices with respect to family life education. New knowledge and a developed repertoire of relevant teaching and negotiation skills would also be important within revised training initiatives.'

Secondary teachers might benefit from the attention paid to child development as a topic of professional interest by primary teachers. 'Initial and in-service training needs to cover the range of methods required for skilled teaching in this area, including how to handle a variety of teaching strategies appropriate to different classroom situations e.g. open group discussion about relationships and parenthood, with teachers enabled to acknowledge first to themselves, and then to pupils, the conflicts and uncertainties inherent in this area.' They need to liaise with colleagues with specific knowledge but 'should not be required to cover topics for which they do not feel themselves competent or committed';

j) A Centre for Family Life Education should be set up to support this curriculum and produce resource packs, possibly drawing on Open University materials. (Since 1983, Hope and Sharland, and the WAVE Trust, have also produced these.)

A Working Group based in Bath was distributing a ten-topic resource package for schools in Avon, Somerset and Wiltshire, with topics that the group believed should be covered by all pupils before they left

school. A balance should be found between enjoyable practical work and theoretical stimulation for intellectually able students.

There were long analyses of how all five schools offered this subject. This thorough, detailed report concluded: 'Resources must be provided for curriculum and teacher development with in-service opportunities. Presently the picture is one of unco-ordinated and scattered growth sustained by enthusiasts, insufficiently under-girded by training and professional development and proceeding in most LEAs with meagre resources. It is hardly possible to believe that this is a satisfactory state of affairs. The findings of this survey do not prompt complacency. The imaginative leadership of a number of secondary school staff needs support and encouragement; government has a duty to ensure that action follows to support its well-meaning rhetoric. Hence a clear yet informed and sensitive lead, along with sufficient resources to back it up, is now required from central government and its related agencies in order to build upon the scattered innovations and the research-informed policy framework of the past decade.

'To have simply been a child and a family member oneself is generally an insufficient preparation for a possible parental role in modern society. The complexities of bringing *Preparation for an Adult Role in Family Life* into the secondary school experiences of all boys and girls have to be recognised politically as well as professionally. The resources for curriculum and professional development which are necessary to build adequately upon existing practice depend on this recognition. While the results of such investment in parenthood education as a part of the school experience may not be easily and unequivocally transmitted into later adult life, the social benefits could be enormous. It is hoped that the project's reports will enable policy guidelines to be framed at the school, local and national levels.' Whitfield hoped in vain: the report now sits on shelves, little known, despite a vast expenditure of time, money, effort, and passion.

Chapter Twenty-one

Parenthood education in four mixed comprehensive schools: village, small town, Cambridge, Hackney 1983 – 84

'When the collective knowledge of a class of pupils is put together, it forms an impressive classroom resource in itself.'

Shirley Prendergast and Alan Prout of Cambridge university's Child Care and Development Group wrote *Knowing and Learning about Parenthood: A Study of Parenthood Education in Secondary Schools* (1987) for the Health Education Authority. Theirs is a valuable document, based on three years of research, with much food for thought. They found four schools with an impressive reputation for this type of education, and studied in detail how it was done over one year. It is fascinating to see how differently the schools approached the subject.

The four mixed comprehensive schools with good practice were in a village near Cambridge; a small town and its surrounding villages; the town of Cambridge; and the inner-city London borough of Hackney. The authors produced an intensive, thoughtful account after interviewing 65 students (mostly girls) aged 14-to-15, and observing lessons. Their main interest, in this study at least, was students' knowledge before and after the course of lessons, rather than the content and methods of lessons: there had been few attempts elsewhere to discover what students gain from parenthood education. They categorised students' levels of knowledge as: less than minimal; very shallow; shallow; deep; very deep.

Parenthood courses should have a less marginal place in the curriculum, they said, but don't wait till they have a higher profile. Get on with them now. 'Developments and improvements are

possible outside of a global change, and though they may be more modest and partial, they can nevertheless also be real and important.' They argued the need to make this knowledge an integral part of the curriculum, advocating a focus on feelings and attitudes, rather than lectures and the dissemination of facts.

School One (village near Cambridge)

This school covered PSHE-type subjects through all the form tutors. Parenting education was given to Year 10 for eight hours over six weeks. Students watched five films and were given talks.

School Two (small town and surrounding villages)

PSHE was taught only to Years 10 and 11, with six weeks for all 14-year-olds about parenthood. The parenthood lessons were run by health visitors who used newspapers, TV, films, slides, discussion and visual aids, and offered individual counselling after lessons. Topics covered physical health; the work of health professionals; conception; menstruation; contraception, fetal development; advanced pregnancy, the needs of small children; weaning; food; accidents; help in emergencies; resuscitation; heart disease and attacks; diet; fitness; breastfeeding; and cancer and its prevention. A mother with two small children visited briefly. Students visited the playgroup which the school had set up both for the community and to provide the young people with first-hand experience of small children. They were 'pitched in at the deep end to watch, play and help' with two-to-five-year-olds for the whole morning once a week for six weeks. It is significant that many students chose to arrive early to help set up, and stayed late to clear up. They enjoyed both elements of the course. At the end they had to answer questions in writing.

School Three (central Cambridge)

At this high achieving, academically-minded school, there were good results in the two-year *Childcare and Development* CSE (taken by girls

only.) The East Anglian Examination Board stated that the course's aims were 'of vital importance to all young people who, before many years have elapsed, may have children of their own.'

We learn of the 'relentless agenda' and pressure to get high CSE exam grades, meaning that the disappointed teacher was hardly able to provide the visits and contact with young children which the girls were so looking forward to. The teacher gave talks; the girls took notes. Priority was given to making good notes for revision purposes. There was little group discussion. A few films were shown, textbooks and childcare manuals were available, and two visitors came in over three terms – only one with a baby. It all culminated in the exam: two-and-a-half-hours of written work (70 percent of marks), plus a written child study and an individual interest study, including a viva, making up 30 percent.

School Four (London borough of Hackney)

This multicultural school in the Inner London Education Authority had cross-curricular links, with a very active home economics department providing childcare and development courses for every student in Years 10 and 11 as part of social studies. Topics included teenage parenthood; images and the media; ideal parenthood; and sex roles, taught through small groups, discussion, films and bringing in teachers across the board, though efforts to involve more men weren't very successful. Films covered puberty; fetal development; venereal diseases; and responsibility. One showed an actual birth. *Hello Baby* film concerned the first 15-months of life. There was also a CSE course: *Child Development and the Family* - all girls again. With no male teachers involved, boys were put off and left the course. Coursework counted for 70 percent of marks, a written paper for 30. The course was mainly theoretical, but the teacher knew that a more practical one would be better 'because it can be related to the girls

themselves, their world and interests. It's got to be made relevant to have any effect.'

The group met for a whole afternoon (two-and-a-half-hours) for two years. The students had to organise activities for children aged under six (20 percent of marks), and cooked for and organised a Christmas party at a primary school. They explored their own lives and families, learnt about adolescence; family planning; alternative families; one parent families; responsibility; the effects of a baby on adult lives; safety in the home; language development; special needs; child development; and they did a child study. There were group discussions; many worksheets; role-plays; interviewing of parents; and the making of toys. There were outings: the human biology section at the Science Museum; the Toy Museum; a maternity hospital in Greenwich with talks by midwives; seeing the delivery suite, the special care baby unit, and the post-labour ward.

It is all too possible for a teacher to be so intent on his own interpretation that it never comes to significant relation to those of his pupils.
Douglas Barnes, educationalist 1976

'Knowledge and learning are complex phenomena.' A key finding was the surprisingly large amount of basic knowledge by students about most aspects of parenting before they had any school lessons about it - not necessarily detailed knowledge, and they tended not to understand the reasons. Most knew the age when babies begin to walk and speak, and that parents should talk to them. They realised the problems that parents have when the baby becomes mobile. Most knew about playgroups and how they helped mothers to relax.

Students focused on the problems more than the positives of parenthood, but 'most had very child-centred views on a baby's need for care, stability, love and attention.' They said they wanted to

know more. They recognised the hard work, isolation and loss of social life, and had no romantic, idealised picture of parenthood.

Teachers are advised never to assume ignorance. Find out what students know before you start. It is of no interest if you present information that they already have. Encourage them in small groups to share and exchange their knowledge. The areas they knew less about were the psychological aspects, as well as sociological ones such as how to get childcare, employment rights of parents, rates of divorce, and single parent families.

There's a lady I know in my street. She gets depressed. I've heard people saying she's in the house alone all day with the baby, she can't get out.
Student

In some topics there was a need for more realism. Students knew the importance of ante-natal clinics, scans and attendance, with a rather exaggerated view of what these can achieve. They didn't realise the problems and limitations: long waits, nowhere for small kids to play, failure to diagnose certain conditions. Students might be confused about motherhood. On the one hand, you should have children to be a 'proper' woman, but society prizes a job and career more highly; motherhood has low status. Although most students believed fathers needed to be involved, girls seemed resigned to a future role of taking most of the responsibility. Attitudes to the pros and cons of breastfeeding were complex. Most vaguely knew its benefits; many were against it due to the embarrassment it could cause. These were all subjects needing some sophistication of learning. A 'soft' outcome of this education is 'insight': a student suddenly understands what it is to be a single parent or suffer the effects of domestic violence: not measurable or tangible, but probably long-lasting.

I know another lady whose husband walked out on her. Student

One finding was puzzling. 'Pupils' interest in school parenthood education is generally not very lively. Pupils appear not to be as greatly stimulated by it as they are by other sources.' This should not be blamed on poor teaching. On the other hand, the researchers saw the subject as undervalued and the teaching 'rather fearfully and timidly done' which 'upsets no one and engages no one.' Students need alternative views offered to them, as vivid as the media programmes which grab their attention. Touch on significant topics which 'really mean something and raise serious and contentious questions.' There is the ambiguity, the uncertainty, the lack of consensus, despite scientific knowledge, about infants. What is 'correct' parenting in such a pluralistic society?

Most of my mum's friends are one-parent families. Student

The authors emphasised that knowledge is gathered from nuclear family, extended family, local community and, not to be underestimated, the media. Television in particular, including soap operas, can present alternative ideas and deal with complex, controversial topics, such as incest and baby battering, as well as fertility and birth, not toned down or simplified for young people. And students like this: it's stimulating and memorable. Documentaries, not made for youngsters, are full of up-to-date information. Schools can learn from this. If you find that students know more after the course, it might not be due to the course at all, but from their life outside of school.

I learnt the most talking to her [next door neighbour about her son]. It just sticks in your mind. Boy student

The report referred to two approaches: presenting information and knowledge, and on the other hand talking about emotions. The latter has become more widespread. Students need both. And are these courses designed to *teach* 'about parenthood' or to *prepare* youngsters

for it? The 'about parenthood' approach is educational, where knowledge and exploration, opening up issues, increasing perspectives, expanding the range of attitudes, are goals in themselves. The 'preparing them' approach is preventive, aiming to promote certain behaviour. Either way, the elements of learning include factual knowledge; depth and detail of knowledge; explanation (the why's and how's); and insight.

The authors summarised the new learning by students: what they reported after the course. There was some new learning of all types (in depth, detail and insight) about all topics. Most students gained detailed knowledge and insight rather than depth. But most knowledge remained at the pre-course level, gained from their experience of family and community. Of the minority who gained more depth of knowledge, half had shifted from a descriptive to an explanatory level, especially about ante-natal care. Most new learning took place about topics they already knew most about. It resulted from childcare and development courses which took up more hours than non-syllabus lessons.

How are teachers to view the knowledge that students already have? There are three possibilities: to see it as misconceived and seek to replace it; to add to it; or to use it as a valid resource from which everyone can learn, helping students make sense of their own family experiences. They can ask for more information, which should be given; knowledge 'can't take care of itself.'

The authors favoured the educational approach, concluding: 'The goal of influencing the parenting behaviour is, on the evidence of our study, a wildly unrealistic one.' Most information and attitudes come from outside the school, they reiterate. We might argue that none of the courses were likely to affect future behaviour: they were short (even a lesson once a week for two years is short shrift, especially if

mostly theoretical) and students had probably received no parenthood education from a very early age and throughout their school years.

No one has ever studied the long-term effects of thorough, continual parenting lessons on the quality of future parenting. We just don't know the potential of mandatory, long-term, substantial, experiential, well-taught, school-based parenthood education as a core curriculum subject.

It is not reasonable to expect one or indeed two parents to enrich a child's life to provide all the ingredients to create happy and healthy offspring/adults. Schools are therefore crucial to creating independent, well-rounded adults who are equipped to take on the challenge of parenting.
Trina Shane, social worker, school governor 2022

Chapter Twenty-two

Parenting as a job for life: a Hampshire primary school 1984 - 86

I have tried to create a sense of wonder and excitement about each person being unique and special, valued and confident, able to make decisions. Lin Poulton

A primary school in Highcliffe, an estate in the town of Winchester, was home to an impressive research project, and deserves a good look. The National Children's Bureau (NCB) decided to explore how parent education could be delivered to all ages in one small district: 'education and support for the parents of today and tomorrow as seen as a continuous process with different emphases at different stages of the life cycle.' Highcliffe had about 2,000 residents, a close-knit, stable community, but 'problem families' were sent there. There wasn't much to do, with poor transport into town.

The NCB had carried out a survey of all LEAs (1980) about their preparation for parenthood in the secondary school curriculum. Hampshire sent three reports with guidelines and content for infant, junior and secondary levels. Because Hampshire had done such progressive work in this field and offered to fund the programme via the health authority and the county council, it was chosen for the action-research. The NCB's detailed report (1987) shows its innovative and exciting work in schools and in particular at St Mark CofE primary. It is the only project I have found like this at primary level. The unanimous support by children, parents, staff and local agencies suggests that some parenting problems might be prevented or resolved if it were replicated in every school. The NCB wanted to run this action-research in three more local authorities, but there wasn't the money, despite the NCB's prestigious standing.

It appointed an exceptional development worker with a national reputation: Lin Poulton, teacher, counsellor, former family worker in Yorkshire, and innovator of Scope, an interesting family project in Southampton. St Mark school provided sex education for 10-and-11-year-olds. The head realised the value of adding personal relationships. Lin noted the content of three reports by Hampshire LEA on parenthood education for infant, junior and secondary schools. There were five subjects for junior level:

1 *Family and marriage:* Weddings in the UK and overseas; why do we live in families?; individual family problems (in confidence);
2 *Home building and home management:* Positive plans; budgeting; nutrition and diet; safety and first aid;
3 *Contraception, conception and childbirth:* The basics; healthy caring and responsible attitudes; the new baby;
4 *Child development and childcare*: Physical, mental and social development from birth to adolescence; importance of caring; personal hygiene and safety;
5 *Adolescence:* Awareness of physical, sexual, psychological and social development in adolescence in preparation for adult life; boys and girls growing up; influence of friends, siblings, parents and mass media.

The sessions

Lin had a group of eight-to-ten boys and girls, aged 10 and 11, for a weekly 45-minute *Lifeskills* session. All top juniors were invited; parents were welcomed in for discussions. Lin ran sessions for two years and aimed for children to:

- Think about what is important to them;
- Share ideas and listen to the views of others;
- Explore their attitudes to their parents, siblings and grandparents;
- Explore their attitudes to babies and young children;

- Explore their impending physical, emotional, sexual development.

The work was child-centred; therefore in small groups. It required a safe, trusting atmosphere and a contract stressing confidentiality, with the proviso that Lin could take concerns further. Children were encouraged to help and support each other. They liked being able to call Lin by her first name. 'Every session is planned to start from where the children are at.' Some examples from Lin's daily diary:

Session One: Decide on rules and boundaries of the sessions. In pairs, listen and get to know each other. Ask each other questions (e.g. favourite TV programme.) Importance of listening carefully. Right to say what you want;

Session Two: The rules in their lives that affect them. Children support each other and help to resolve problems. The difficulty of telling problems to class teacher. Learning tolerance, self-esteem, trust, confidence, self-awareness, value judgments, strengths;

Session Three: Expectations by parents, grandparents, teachers. Negotiation. Health: sleeping, eating, having breakfast. Worries about life in the school playground;

Session Four: What is the most important thing on your mind today? Children replied: grand-dad in hospital; mother pregnant; no money for Christmas presents; headaches; mother and gran quarrelling; worry about going to secondary school; fear of getting pregnant; scary reflections in the mirror after Halloween; nightmares; school work is too hard. The group was able to ease or solve these concerns. Discussion can uncover serious problems and the leader can make sure that help is offered later.

Subsequent session

- Concerns about rapid physical changes: pubic hair; breasts or not; shape; ejaculation; masturbation; crushes; respect for one's body as a 'marvellous machine';

- Difficult situations: stranger offering a lift; bullying; sexual invitations; teasing. The right to say no;
- Friendship as a mutual responsibility; caring; what makes people marry or cohabit?; what about long-term relationships?; different views of boys and girls; what is a family? Some had been bridesmaids or page boys, some at a parent's second marriage, they talked about responsibilities to weaker creatures, which led on to babies: if baby is left unfed in a cot? One child mentioned starving children in Biafra. This was an 'excellent session' which showed 'the importance of using children's own experience to further discussion.'

The value of this work can't be overestimated. As Lin wrote, 'The children seem to need this discussion to go on and on. For example, children of reconstituted families seem to need time to adjust as much as their parents and new partners do.' They want to talk about their roots, their biological parenting, needing support if they think that they caused their parents to split up. Perhaps they resemble, to their mother, the man who hurt her. Children in the group were well able to support their peers who had these sorts of concerns.

After one year of the sessions, children had an interest in their bodies; understood the need to eat and to rest; and the problems of tobacco, alcohol and too much salt, fat and sugar; could challenge adults and peers to get the space to say what they wanted; were aware of how to protect themselves from smoking, accidents, including road accidents, and sexual abuse; learnt the right to say no without feeling guilty; knew how and where to get help; understood the difference between positive and negative feelings and how to show them; how to choose the right friends. And 'they liked themselves a little bit more.'

The feedback

Gillian Pugh, principal development officer at the NCB, researched the processes, outcomes and views of all concerned. There was no money for a full-scale evaluation but Gillian observed, looked at minutes and diaries, and interviewed 15 families. She reported:

Children

Children showed great enthusiasm. She noted 'the sensitive way in which during the year they developed the capacity to support and help each other; how their confidence grew; and how they could articulate complex ideas. Thirty-one children filled in a questionnaire. 'Lin listens to us.' 'We can talk to Lin.' 'We trust her.' They liked being in a small group and not having to write things down. They were interested in babies and how they were formed, pregnancy, marriage, sex. They got over any embarrassment. There was 'unanimous support for the view that all schools should have *Lifeksills* sessions.' They now found it easier to talk to their parents. All agreed it was important to talk about pregnancy in a junior school 'so that we know about it when we're in the secondary-school.' The children had been shown a BBC film about 'growing up' and were asked what they remembered about it. Interestingly, none mentioned the childbirth scene - rather, twin babies having a bath, or a dad telling stories.

Parents

Parents were also enthusiastic. Nearly all agreed that children should learn about babies, relationships, hopes, fears, marriage and family life. 'It has opened up problems she has not been able to discuss at home.' The sessions were seen as a safety valve. Parents very much wanted the sessions to continue, but only with an 'outsider,' not a teacher, running them. The project learnt how important it was to prepare parents from the start.

School and agency staff

These were so keen that they also wanted the sessions for five-year-olds and upwards: there were so many anxious children who needed a small group. They were unanimous that this was 'the most successful and innovative part of *Job for Life*. All said it should be part of the curriculum of every school in the country.' They were also aware of the organisational and financial obstacles.

The qualities needed by a group leader were clear:

- Listening skills, with a 'third ear' to hear unspoken words;
- The ability to interpret body language;
- The ability to develop unblocking techniques;
- Group-work skills, setting framework and boundaries; nurturing trust and confidence; coping strategies for difficult situations; distancing in order to be more objective; developing confidentiality;
- Problem-solving to enable behaviour change; prioritising needs and concerns of the group; helping them to find alternative solutions; setting goals and targets;
- Empathy, 'sitting alongside' others; creating a climate of objective caring and support;
- Organisational skills: record keeping; setting aims; ensuring opportunities to validate ideas through supervision and support.

The major lessons and recommendations were:

1 Small groups, not whole classes, are essential;

2 Sessions need to have a secure place in the week, not to be cancelled which would mean the ground rules would have to be repeated, and the content of the previous session was long ago. (One-third of sessions were cancelled. To compensate, three sessions were held in the summer holidays);

3 The school needs to understand why the same room must be available for each session. (Lin had to use another space at times. With therapeutic work, consistency of the space is very important);
4 The concerns and experiences of the children are the starting point, not a pre-planned agenda;
5 Confidentiality is paramount;
6 Ground rules must be agreed;
7 There needs to be a skilled leader, preferably not a member of staff.

When Lin's time ended, there was a hard search for someone suitable to continue as leader. A health visitor agreed to do so. Lin became an advisory teacher in Hampshire. The school, now in Dorset, no longer runs the groups. PSHE lessons are for whole classes.

Any subject can be taught effectively in some intellectual form to any child at any stage of development.
Jerome Bruner

Chapter Twenty-three

Flour babies, brick babies, egg babies for teenagers

If one has children of one's own, caring deeply and effectively is a lifelong commitment. We must educate for this commitment. The study of children should be an important topic in secondary education. Practice in caring for and teaching younger children should begin in the upper elementary grades [junior level].

Nel Noddings

Flour babies

Forest Hill school in Lewisham, London, was a boys' comprehensive where the students had much in common with the disaffected class of Anne Fine's famous book *Flour Babies*. The book features a troubled teenage boy who's deeply affected when school gets him to cart around a 6lb flour baby 24 hours a day for three weeks. He resolves his grief about missing his absent father and realises that he himself can be a good father when he's ready. Forest Hill school aimed to challenge all things macho. Diane Sparkes, the English teacher, read the book to her students. They seemed to expect to have their own flour babies, 'an integral part of studying the book.' So Diane and her teenage daughter got on with making 26. She contacted not only the parents, but the other teachers of this class to encourage them all to monitor how the boys got on. To get an award, they had to keep a careful record in their Baby Book or to look after the baby reliably for two weeks. The boy who got the Best Kept Baby Book award was one who usually wrote only factually but now wrote powerfully about his experience. Another boy, who got the Best Kept Baby award, had a fairly tough reputation. It was a novel experience.

It sounds as though they gained a refreshingly new view of adults. 'This morning mum asked me how the flour baby was and if it woke up during the night. She's nearly as mad as my English teacher, Mrs Sparkes, but I guess they mean well.' Acting out the book in this way

was a stimulus which made reading more popular. Some visited the library to find more books by Anne Fine. There is anecdotal evidence that many students came to see their flour babies as real humans. 'I even tried to make my baby play computer with me but somehow he was not interested.' Although most were relieved when the project ended, some admitted they were going to miss their charges. And Diane's next Year 9 class asked 'to do flour babies, Miss!'

From parents I had a letter asking if carrying a 1.5kg flour baby to and from school is essential to a student's education. Another simply said, 'Absolutely fabulous!'
Diane Sparkes, flour baby teacher

Secondary students often claimed the experience put them off early pregnancy. But did their behaviour really change? Several schools have said that it did. Opinions vary. Dr Dorit Braun, as chief executive of Parentline, doubted it would have much effect; Sue Morrel in county Durham reckoned that even if the message got through to two or three out of 20, the project was worth doing. rXXXX reports that the original flour babies school in San Francisco saw a dramatic decrease in its once-high teenage pregnancy rate.

Parenting is something you're not trained for, yet you're expected to be able to do it.
Sue Morrel, brick baby teacher

The work illustrates that it is perfectly possible to give teenagers, as well as 10-to-11-year-olds, a memorable but simply organised, low-cost experience of some aspects of what parenthood really involves. It would be so useful to find out if and how it influenced their eventual decisions and practices about becoming and being a parent, but, as with all projects, we will never know.

If you'd like to make a flour baby, collect: a bag of flour; two large freezer bags (big enough for the flour); wide sticky tape; a baby vest, five knee-high socks; tissues or toy-stuffing, baby cardigan, hat, gloves and socks if you want. Put the bag of flour in the freezer bag, squeeze out the air and seal. Turn it upside down, put it in the second freezer bag, squeeze out the air and seal. Fold the corners in, stick down with the tape to make a parcel. Put the flour baby in the baby vest. For the arms and legs, fill four of the socks halfway with the stuffing. Tie a knot. Thread the unstuffed ends through the vest's arm- and leg-holes of the vest. Stick the ends down on the body under the vest. Stuff the fifth. sock to make a head. Tie a knot to hold in the stuffing, put the head in position. Secure in place with the tape. Draw on a face with a waterproof felt tip pen.

If you can't face making 30, you could make, say, five, so that five children look after theirs for a set number of weeks before passing them to a classmate. Or ask parents to make one for their child; or get students to make them; or make a simpler version. As the average new-born baby weighs about 7lb, I recommend using 7lb of flour for each baby. I found 5kg bags of flour in ethnic supermarkets for £3 each, or you might ask a supermarket to donate the flour.

Brick babies

Teachers at Woodham comprehensive school, Newton Aycliffe in county Durham, were concerned about the high rate of under-age sex and teenage pregnancy. Every year, one or two girls at the school became mothers. We don't know why they chose to use bricks rather than flour, but teacher Sue Morrel told the *Sunday Sun* paper that their 15-year-old boys and girls decorated the bricks with bright crepe paper, made them nappies, and fed them with a bottle. Before they took them home, they had to sign a contract promising to keep the brick 'warm, comfortable and secure' (a contract similar to the Cabbage Patch dolls which came with a birth certificate and were sold

for an adoption fee.) Parents found this a strange idea! But most supported it, once they had it explained.

This was part of a compulsory six-week course about relationships. They had to carry the bricks around for a minimum of two days. Although bricks don't cry or need feeding or changing, 'it helps the pupils realise that parenting is a 24-hour-a-day job,' said Sue. She made a recording of a baby crying; her students talked about how this made them feel. 'The crying drove us mad,' said Mark, 'I don't know how people stand it. After two minutes we were tearing our hair out.' They looked at *Home Alone* press cuttings. They discussed parents who batter their babies.

After this, I do not plan to have children in the too near future, not until I'm 35 at least! Sharon aged 15

Egg babies

Young people will always skate on ice, teenagers will always have sex, but I think this does make them stop and think a bit about what they're getting into.

So says the Californian Lynda Madaras, writer about health, childcare and parenting, who has given eggs, not flour babies, to teenagers, promising to take students whose egg survived a week, out to lunch. 'In six years of teaching these classes, I have had to buy lunch for only two egg parents. It's fascinating to watch. There are always boys who try to get girls to take care of the eggs "because it's women's work." But within a few days all these egg babies have definite personalities with crayoned features and names. Often, it's the biggest boys who take the most care. You see them at lunch, four or five boys with their egg babies resting on a strip of velvet in the centre of the table. They'll be chatting away about the various bumps and cracks the babies have narrowly missed – sounding for all the world like the congregation of young mums everywhere.'

And a telling story

Nicola Whelan, aged 18, had been to Prague, phoned home in England to say she was unhappy and coming back, then swanned off for a good time in Jersey. What she didn't do was tell her parents. For three days they were worried sick. It ended happily, but journalist Liz Marleyn asked (1994): would Nicola have thought of keeping in touch if she'd learnt empathy by caring for a flour baby? She quoted psychologist Betty Phelan: 'When education minister John Patten goes on about teaching morals, this is really what he means; then he creates a system which leaves no time or resources to do this.' 'That's why caring for flour babies should be part of the national curriculum,' concludes Liz.

Parental involvement in the form of at-home good parenting has a significant positive effect on children's achievement and adjustment, even after all the factors shaping attainment have been taken out of the equation.
Department of Education and Science 2000

Chapter Twenty-four

Parenthood education in five schools, Greater Manchester, 1995 – 96

One of the most significant attempts in the UK to prepare secondary students for parenthood took place during one academic year in Greater Manchester. Former teacher Phil Hope, Labour MP-to-be for Corby (1997-2010), who went to a London comprehensive school, wrote *Education for Parenthood: A Resource Pack for Young People* (1994), published by the Children's Society. It formed the basis for an innovative pilot project at five schools with Penny Sharland, a consultant with Phil at Framework. 'The pack contains exercises to encourage young people to discuss all aspects of parenthood, from pregnancy and childbirth to health and safety, and children's rights' in the hope that this can 'improve the quality of life for the next generation, improve the way students handle life in their own families, help their communication skills in all relationships, and establish good parenting as the foundation for other PSHE education.'

The project, initiated and funded mainly by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, attracted extra money from the Esmée Fairbairn Charitable Trust, the Department of Health, and the Children's Society. Gulbenkian wanted to discover how to implement this education 'with a view to influencing the policies of central and local government.'

Hope and Sharland produced the very useful 109-page report, *Tomorrow's Parents: Developing* P*arenthood Education in Schools* (1997), again funded by the Children's Society and Gulbenkian (still available from Abe books.) They begin with the need. 'It is now recognised that young people leave school without having thought through whether or when they will have children; that they will not have planned how to cope with being a parent – as a mother or a father;

and will often not realise who they can turn to for help.' The course was to 'help students appreciate the major life change of parenthood and how they can realise the choices, responsibilities and skills involved. It was not intended as a course in practical childcare.'

The schools taking part were in both urban and rural settings, were of large and small size, and included ethnically mixed, single sex and co-educational schools, with or without a sixth form. Nine were approached. Five agreed, with different degrees of motivation and enthusiasm (one headteacher was keen enough to help teach the course himself.) They were:

- Cardinal Langley Catholic school, Rochdale, co-ed. with sixth form; Headteacher: John Durcan. Core teaching group: Mick Curran, John Durcan, Sheila Sullivan
- Falinge Park High, suburban co-ed, high number of Asian students; Headteacher: Linda Woolley. Core teaching group: Helen Boulter, Paul Simpson, John Vose
- Littlemoss High for Boys, Tameside (now called New Droylsden academy*):* co-ed.;
  Headteacher: Ron Coe. Core teaching group: Gwyn Jones, Gary Robinson
- Mossley Hollins High, Tameside, small co-ed, rural setting;
  Headteacher: Martin Braidley. Core teaching group: Jean Madden (lead teacher), Muriel O'Brien
- North Chadderton High, Oldham, large urban co-ed. with sixth form;
  Headteacher: Jenny McClaren. Core teaching group: Chris Curran, Pauline Royle.

A substantial management committee, chaired by Richard Lane, oversaw the work. As well as Penny and Phil, the members were:

Jean Coulter / Martin Braidley (Mossley Hollins)
Chris Curran and Jenny McClaren (North Chadderton)
Mick Curran and John Durcan (Cardinal Langley)
Selwyn Hodge / Kath Sanderson (LEA Rochdale)
Gwyn Jones and Ron Coe (Littlemoss)
Kay Lord (LEA Oldham)
Simon Richey (Gulbenkian UK)
Jill Saunders (LEA Tameside)
Roger Smith / Sue Hyland (Children's Society)
John Vose / Linda Woolley (Falinge Park)
Plus observers from the Department for Education and Employment.

Two or three people from each school comprised the core group of teachers, trained together once a term and supported at least termly by Penny and Phil. They were encouraged to adapt resources to the specific needs of their schools and had a fair amount of say in how they organised the work. Although three terms were intended, some schools could fit in only two or even one, due to limited space in the curriculum, a familiar story. Teachers valued the training. 'It was extremely useful to be trained using the actual materials that we will be using in the classroom.' And, crucially, 'It's important to understand our own reactions to the materials if we want to appreciate the reactions of the students.'

Nearly 1,200 students took part, mostly aged 13-to-15 (Years 9 and 10.) They received six lessons within their Personal and Social Education (PSE) time. One school delivered the course instead to al and 16-to-17-year-olds (Year 12) for six weeks. In addition, three of its Year 12 students, all girls, chose the subject on one afternoon a week for the whole year, focusing on community activities. Another school provided a half-day workshop for Year 12 as part of their induction to the sixth form. In some schools, parenthood themes were included in English, religious education, drama, science, history, maths, foreign languages and humanities lessons. For example, drama

lessons might deal with parents' influence on children's behaviour; religious education might cover how babies are welcomed by the various faiths; in English, students might write about reasons for having children, read poems and excerpts from novels, and write a leaflet for other students; in maths, students might create spreadsheets about the costs of families. One teacher ran an after-school club about parenthood for a term, and added parenthood to her usual childcare lessons. Others included the subject in tutor groups.

Schools' schemes varied but included themes and activities such as:

Overview and general discussion of the topic / Patterns of parenting / Extended family / Parenthood poster / Children's rights or Rights and responsibilities / Parents' influence on children / Getting along together / Different types of families / Myths about pregnancy/ Resources at home / Enjoying your children / Designing a leaflet for parents and children / Influences on behaviour / Contracts for parents and young people / Marriage contracts / Parent action / Review, concluding session, evaluation.

The topics most often covered were:

Thinking ahead / Corporal punishment and child abuse / Parents' influence upon children / Motherhood and fatherhood / Reasons for, and consequences of, being a parent / What it means to be a parent / What it takes to be a parent / Legal, moral and social rights of children of different ages.

Less frequently covered were:

Resources in the community to support parents / Happy, safe and healthy homes for children / Family structure / Contraception, pregnancy and birth.

The *Resource Pack* (1994, updated in 1998) consists of five booklets, each between 25 and 40 pages, plus the *Teachers' Guide to Delivering Parenthood Education,* written with hindsight after the course ended, citing what teachers found useful. The book and the pack together will give you a comprehensive, thoughtful and useful account of the project, and how you might do it.

The pack comprises '28 self-standing, photocopiable activities, including debates; questionnaires; project work; role-plays and case studies; grids to show how each activity fits into the national curriculum and GNVQ health and social care syllabus; as well as resource material drawn from newspapers and advertising material; historical accounts; statistical data; teachers' notes, covering learning outcomes; materials to use; time allocation; suggested class groupings; and sources of further information and advice, including supplementary reading lists. The pack contains five individually bound topic sections on 'What it means to be a parent,' 'What parents need,' 'Parent-child relationships,' 'Rights and responsibilities' and 'Health and development.' with photocopiable activity sheets; resource sheets; teachers' notes; a grid guide to components; cross-curricular skills and related subjects; a list of further reading for teachers and students; and photocopiable assessment sheets.

Other methods include structured discussion; statistical analysis; creative writing; action in the community; brainstorming; parent's contract; analysing texts from newspapers; poems and literature; family charts; short excerpts from soap operas; and timelines. There is an impressive example of one girl's contract: *If I do become a mother, I promise to* …. listing 22 items. Television soap operas might well reflect home life; in this way students can consider difficult topics from a distance. Work can be done individually, in pairs, small groups, and whole classes.

The six main areas of learning are: the responsibilities that parenthood brings; the need to be prepared for parenthood; the skills and qualities that parents require; the impact of parenthood on relationships; its impact on parents' future career and education; and the students' own thoughts and feelings.

The five units, one booklet each, are:

1 What it means to be a parent;
2 What parents need;
3 Parent-child relationships;
4 Rights and responsibilities;
5 Health and development.

We give a précis of each unit. Every section lists learning outcomes; materials needed; timing of lesson; organisation; notes for teachers; and an alternative approach. Teachers are warned that many of these lessons have sensitive material and they need to act accordingly. Advice on this is given in the guide. Each section of each unit has several possible lessons.

Unit One: What it means to be a parent

a) What does parenthood involve?
b) Why do people become parents?
c) How does parenthood affect your life?

What does parenthood involve?

Students are invited to rank photos of parents doing things with children to identify key features. The photos show a wedding; kissing a child; doing a jigsaw with a child; reading a book with a child; being in the water with a child; sitting with and hugging a child; christening; dad reading the paper; parent telling a child off; baby clinic;

playground; smacking a child; feeding; being with granny; and crossing the road. Film clips can be used.

Students are invited to write an application to be a foster parent. Parenthood is for life. Students discuss in groups of four: What are the most and least important activities, and why? Have any aspects been left out? How important are mothers compared with fathers?
In pairs, they read six accounts, positive and negative:

- Woman of 64 who married at 17. No contraception. Five children. Husband worked shifts. Her mother helped. Would advise: 'Look before you leap';
- Deaf parents of two children. The parents' own parents help. Hard to help children with homework,
- Man became a father at 28; didn't realise what a change it would make despite having planned, and having enough money and his own home;
- Couple hoped a baby would bring them closer but it didn't. Now divorced;
- Single mother with brittle bones and daughter with the same; both in wheelchairs. Have to create their own support system. 'Society is not ready for us';
- Teenage girl cried to find she is pregnant. Had baby. Finds young mothers' group very good before and after having baby.

In response:

- Haikus can be written and read out. Students discuss influences on these parents, consequences and what advice they'd give them;
- They can make up a letter from a character in a novel or on TV;
- They can make a collage of pictures about the six accounts;
- They can act out an interview: a child looking for a parent; then one of an adult applying to be a parent.

Planning to be a parent should involve thinking about it, although no planning is watertight.

Why do people become parents?

The class brainstorms two lists:

- 'I would become a parent because…'
- 'I would not become a parent because…'

What differences are seen between girls and boys? Students are invited to interview someone who has had a baby. Why did they? How has it changed their life?

How does parenthood affect your life?

This session involves a questionnaire about the students' own expectations:

- Do you plan to go to university? Why?
- What job do you plan to do and why?
- What are your financial plans?
- If you want to be a parent, how old would you like to be?
- How many children do you want and why?
- What sort of relationship do you want? Married, living together, living with someone other than a partner, single, 'other,' and why?
- Who would be most responsible for the child?
- Who would spend most time with it?
- Why do you think you want to be a parent, if you do?
- What effect would parenthood have on university, work, money, time?

Or students can design their own questionnaire, working alone or in pairs. Their answers go anonymously on a big wall chart. This might best be done in single-sex groups. Then hold small-group discussion

and make a list of ten points to think about before parenthood, made into a leaflet. Students could write a 200-word article for a magazine. They can survey students in other classes.

The extended family

- Students can make a map of everyone in their family and friendship network and consider: what makes a relationship special for a child? And special for an adult?
- Excerpts from novels can be considered: e.g. *Silas Marner* and *David Copperfield;*
- Think about the effects of a baby on all family members. Write about the influence that a baby has had on you, perhaps when you had a parental role. In pairs, discuss how your baby might affect your family and friends;
- Discuss the pros and cons of the extended family. How might we compensate for the less close families of today?
- Write a story about a relationship between a child and an adult who is not the parent, or about an occasion when the whole family was there to celebrate your baby's birth.

Welcoming a child

This looks at:

- The customs and ceremonies of various religions, the meaning of rituals and the effects of racism. Students discuss in small groups and then report to the whole class;
- The class brainstorms events and customs and the reasons for them in Judaism, Sikhism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity.

Patterns of parenting

This involves:

- Sheets with facts and figures from now and in the past;

- Description of the work of children's charities;
- Students consider all sorts of families and the changes over time;
- Graphs show marriage and divorce rates over several decades; live births outside marriage; registrations of births by singe parents, joint parents and parents living at two addresses;
- Step-parents are discussed;
- Families portrayed on TV in advertisements, compared with the hard facts of family life;
- Historical photos of families are shown;
- Research is done on facts and figures from other countries;
- Elderly people can be interviewed: grandparents or residents in care homes;
- Political parties can be asked for their family policies;
- News cuttings can be read out and made into collages.

Excerpts from *Stepmothering* by Donna Smith (1990) and *The Family in Question* by Diana Gittins (1985) are useful. Students can learn that there were many widows in the past and many women died in childbirth: it's not the case that families were more stable.

Unit Two: What Parents Need

What it takes to be a parent: a light-hearted questionnaire looks at the qualities needed:

Scene One: A four-year-old runs across the road. Do you: ban sweets / explain how to cross / smack / shout to shock / hope she will become a ski champion?

Scene Two: Six-month-old baby is at the swimming pool for the first time. Do you: hold it tight in shallow end / leave it in a playpen and have a swim / throw it in / put on water wings and a ring and let it float next to you?

Scene Three: Six-year-old is picked on at school. Do you: teach self-defence / make it grow up not a wimp / keep it at home / talk to teacher / punch the culprit's dad on the nose?

Scene Four: One-year-old swallows a coin. Do you: shake it upside down / phone GP / phone for an ambulance / wait for it to come out?

Scene Five: Baby has done a poo. Do you: change its nappy / get your partner to / train baby to change it / bear the smell of doing nothing?

Scene Six: Which strengths are most useful, e.g. organising a shopping trip with twins / campaigning for a creche at the supermarket?

Scene Seven: What gift would you buy a two-year-old? Wooden blocks / wooden railway set / electric railway set?

Scene Eight: What would you buy with your child benefit money? Something for the baby / something for your mother who has helped you / something for yourself / write to your MP to complain about it?

Scene Nine: You have been invited to a party. Do you: take baby with you / leave it with a babysitter / leave it alone / stay at home and have a sleep?

Scene Ten: You are a new dad. What is most important? Cope with a crying baby at night / support your partner who is crying with tiredness / cry yourself?

Students draw up a list of qualities together and compose a job advert listing the qualities. They should interview a parent whose child has left home and ask: what qualities did you offer your child? In groups of three, students cite their own qualities, with examples.

Resources at home

This lesson looks at:

- Child development: what are the essential items to have? with a look at the cost of items, budgeting skills and the pressure from other people or adverts to buy non-essentials;
- The needs of disabled children, with costs;
- Students are given a limit (e.g. £250) and invited to make a list of essentials for a baby, a two-year-old, an adopted five-year-old, and a fostered ten-year-old;
- What are the needs at those ages? Physical needs, feelings, social behaviour.

Families and the benefits system

Students are invited to hold a debate about this controversial subject. A facts and figures sheet should be presented about family income and expenditure, listing items that families spend their money on. Up-to-date figures are available from the Office of National Statistics.

Who knows best?

Letters to agony aunts are used about parenting problems and issues, showing that conflicting advice can be given. Problems cited include:

- Teenage pregnancy;
- Pregnant after a one-night stand;
- Guilt of a parent about going back to work;
- Woman in her late 30s worried about having a baby with disabilities;
- A 16-year-old parent with an angry, un-cooperative partner;
- A nine-year-old unhappy because of bullying at school;
- A couple who have one child but are unable to conceive another.

Resources in the community

Students are invited to write a booklet for parents about help available locally and nationally, including Black and Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) organisations and informal support networks. Sections would be for parents-to-be or parents with a child up to four years; five-to-ten-years; 11-to-16-years; and parents with a disabled or special needs child.

- There could be a local street map showing where resources are located;
- There could be a booklet especially for young parents
- It might be possible to translate the booklets into local languages, to put them online, and publicise them in the local press;
- Speakers can be invited to the class: e.g. a health visitor or childminder;
- Students can interview a local family about resources they've used.

Parent-friendly shop award

Students are to survey local shops and interview parents using a prepared simple questionnaire with yes/no answers. They can rehearse this first in class. They will identify the most parent-friendly shop and present it with their award.

Unit 3: Parent-child relationships

This deals with the skills and knowledge needed by parents. Excerpts can be studied from writers such as Sara Maitland, Virginia Woolf and Kahlil Gilbran, and poets such as Benjamin Zephaniah, Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes. In small groups, and then the whole class, students discuss what feelings they think were being expressed and the impact feelings on relationships. They can write about one parent's relationship with a child and discuss what differences there might be between a mother's or father's relationship with their child. Other sources could be the books *Why Children?* (edited by Dowrick and

Grundberg) and *What Are Children For?* by Laurie Taylor and his son Matthew.

Parents' influence on children

Another sensitive subject: avoid criticism.

- The various styles of parenting are considered:
    1 Directive: producing submissive, dependent children;
    2 Libertarian: no clear boundaries or standards;
    3 Child centred: leading to confident, responsible children.
- Cards are made about parental behaviour and children's responses; e.g. if a parent shouts, what might be the response? The age of the child must be taken into account. Themes cover decision-making, standards, trust, respect and rights;
- Are parents expected to be perfect? They are often busy and tired. Children tend to copy parents and other adults;
- Students write a scene on this topic and perform it. How did it feel to be the parent? The child? What is the impact of tone of voice, of physical behaviour? Do mothers and fathers behave differently to their child?
- Then students write about how they think they will treat their own children. Will they do it the same ways as their parents, or differently?
- During visits, they can observe how nursery staff treat the children and how the children respond;
- They can reflect on their own childhood relationships with their parents.

Getting along together

'Teacher' means any adult who is taking the sessions. 'Parent' means any carer. This focuses on daily routines in families.

- The teacher might usefully tell the class his or her own family's morning or teatime routine, or relate childhood memories and encourage students to tell theirs;
- There are then role-plays about morning or evening routines. What is the atmosphere like? Is there a plan and a routine? Discuss in small groups;
- What skills do parents need at these times? The moral is that parents need not only to talk to their children but to be well–organised themselves and able to organise life for their children;
- How are parents to encourage good behaviour? Various methods are looked at: letting children make their own decisions; giving rewards; making threats; and meting out punishments.

Five family scenes are offered for discussion:

a) Mother and father with very stressful full-time jobs; two teenagers; grandmother;
b) Single mother; children aged three and six. Mother's mother lives down the road;
c) Single father with full-time job; two teenagers who hate school, grandmother who has no job;
d) Mother works part-time; father works full-time; five children aged 8-to-17; three-bedroom house;
e) Mother and father both work full-time, often go to evening meetings; children aged seven and nine.

The whole class makes a list of guidelines for busy parents, outlining techniques and advice on how to get along well with their children.

Taming temper tantrums

A consideration of situations which parents of young children might find difficult, some possible responses, and a discussion of which might work best.

- Invite a speaker from a local organisation;
- Give out a resource sheet listing difficult behaviours and responses. Students are asked to draw on their memories;
- The teacher might offer their own experiences;
- Which responses by parents work best? Or don't work at all? Focus on what works, rather than what is 'right' or 'wrong.'

Difficult behaviour

Students can make a long list together. What is 'difficult' behaviour? And what are all the possible parental responses?

- Ignore it. Walk away. Pretend not to see or hear it;
- Divert or distract the child;
- Do the same back to the child;
- Time out - in the room or out of it;
- Remove the danger;
- Regard it as 'normal';
- Put on reins or clothes;
- Shout;
- Hit / smack / beat / shake;
- Have a major confrontation;
- Reward; hug;
- See the funny side;
- Take sides;
- Don't take sides;
- Visualise beauty;
- Breathe to ten;
- Phone friend;
- Change own behaviour to set a good example.

Which responses can improve behaviour? Which can make it worse and why? Students make a list of 'handy hints' for parents and hear an invited speaker on the subject. They can then carry out a survey of other students' views and experiences.

Motherhood and fatherhood

Students take part in two parliamentary-style debates: *A Father's Place is in the Home* and *Mothers Should Receive a Wage for Bringing up Children*. One student chairs. Resource sheets provide facts and figures on costs of childcare and legal responsibilities. Four students talk for and against each motion. Each speaker has two minutes. This hones their presentation skills. Students ask each other for their views. The debate is followed by a vote and discussion. How would the media report the debates? What would other students at the school say when surveyed? Students are asked to consider what roles at home they imagine that they and their future co-parent will play. The financial value of a wife was reckoned, even then, to be £345 a week!

Facts and figures

This lesson looks at:

- The cost of childcare and the many domestic tasks involved;
- What roles mothers and father respectively play in the home;
- British Social Attitudes (current information available online);
- Figures on divorce and parental responsibility;
- The number of women not in paid work: why is that?

The separated child

Another highly sensitive topic. Great tact is needed.

- Newspaper articles are read out; possibly a recent story;
- What are the levels of separation?
  For one hour / one day / a few days / a few weeks /
  a few months / a few years / many years / forever;
- Who suffers?
- Who benefits? Can separation be beneficial?
- Who chooses?
- Is the separation temporary or permanent?
- How do all the players cope?
- Which situations involve separation?

Playgroup / childminder / day nursery / day school/ boarding school / parents working away / overnight stay with friend / adoption / holidays / hospital / parental separation or divorce / taken into care: fostering, children's home / death of any family member / prison;

- Read out quotes by people who have suffered from separation. Students reflect on how the suffering might be ameliorated;
- Invite an expert speaker to discuss, for example, hospital stays by child or parent; prison; adoption;
- Students can survey the experiences and opinions of childminders;
- They can search the media to see how separations, such as divorce, are covered.

They can then learn what services exist to cater for young children: the facts and figures. Who looks after under-fives? Relative, friend, neighbour, childminder, day nursery, workplace nursery, nanny, au pair, mother or father at home part-time, parent works at home, child/ren left alone. They see divorce statistics and the number of children, over decades, taken into care. Perinatal and infant mortality rates show the occurrence of very early death: what services, formal and informal, exist to help parents cope with this.

Unit 4: Rights and responsibilities

This covers children and young people's rights; parents' rights and responsibilities; and child abuse.

Babysitting

It might come as a surprise that the British Red Cross ran a training programme about babysitting and published *The Basics of Babysitting*.

- A questionnaire can be given on the rights and responsibilities of babysitters and parents;
- Students can recount their own experiences of being a babysitter, with the best and worst angles and any problems;
- What knowledge and skills are needed, compared to a parent's?

- What would make a good contract?
- Students can write a Babysitters' Charter and publicise it round the school;
- They can act out the difficulties.

Without my parents' consent

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is of interest here. There are legal, moral and societal aspects.

- Students can write to their MPs for their opinions and do a survey of the views of other people;
- They can compile a Rights Ladder: 'Without my parents' consent I can…' at the age of 21, right down to their current age;
- They can learn at what age they have the right to cross the road, choose their own clothes, leave home, have sex, smoke, drink, marry, divorce, and go to school or college.

The contract between parents

- The class brainstorms agreements in the home;
- The class considers marriage contracts and their link with parenthood. It is stressed that parenthood is a demanding role, and therefore a stable relationship with a partner is important;
- Speakers can be invited from organisations, e.g. Relate or Explore;
- The various types of marriage contracts of religions, as well as secular ceremonies, can be looked at.

Child abuse

This is an especially sensitive topic. The class should be warned. It deals with physical punishment and other maltreatment.

- The class decides on ground rules. The teacher must chair the lesson well, not expecting students to talk of their personal experiences;

- Information and statistics can be brought in from, for example, the *Ending Corporal Punishment* website;
- UK statistics, laws and behaviour can be compared with those in other countries. Which have banned all corporal punishment?
- How many British parents smack their children at what ages?
- Newspaper stories can be read out. Peter Newell's book *Children Are People Too: The Case Against Physical Punishment* might be useful;
- Parents' behaviour can be ranked as very damaging, positive, socially unacceptable or socially acceptable. Specific behaviours can be put on cards for discussion;
- Why do some parents mistreat children? What damage is done?
- What would you do if you discovered a child was being mistreated?
- The class can make a charter of children's rights.

Parent action

Stories from local or national newspapers can provide information on how parents are trying to improve the environment for their families: not smoking in the home; avoiding sugary baby food; getting traffic calmed; adding zebra crossings, and so on. (Children are more badly affected by pollution than adults.)

- Interviews, surveys, letter writing can all feature in this session;
- Students can learn and discuss what the government, local councils and industry can do to improve things;
- The class can brainstorm the lack of facilities and other problems needing action;
- They can take a walk round the area, interview children and their parents, meet local councillors, write to organisations;
- They can write down what parents can do, what they themselves can do;
- Teachers might like to consult *Children and the Environment* by Martin Rosenbaum (1993) and *Taking Children Seriously* by Rosenbaum and Newell (1991.)

Unit 5: Health and development

This covers:

- Pregnancy;
- Physical and mental growth and development;
- Play;
- Children's need for praise, encouragement and a happy, safe, healthy environment.

Myths about pregnancy

Questions and *True and False statements* are put in a box. A student picks one, reads it out and all discuss it. Students can discuss their fears, and ask their own questions.

- Invite a doctor, midwife, or voluntary group, such as the National Childbirth Trust, to speak;
- Visit a maternity unit;
- Get students to devise a questionnaire for other students;
- Discuss myths and truth about sex and contraception;
- Talk about childbirth, as well as post-natal depression which affects one in ten women, and some men;
- Get students to write about pregnancy and childbirth, with information, advice and a list of helpful organisations.

Ages and stages

Use pictures of babies and children at different ages and stages of development. How do needs vary with age?

- Make a wall display including photos of students at various ages. Stress that development is not a competition and explain why;
- Show photos of a small baby, a two-year-old, child in a wheelchair, and a young teenager. How old do students think they are?
- How do boys and girls develop differently at various ages?

- Students observe children in their own families or on TV and write about them;
- They devise one day's menu;
- They collect pictures of toys, equipment, children's clothes;
- They create a one-day diary entry: *A day in the life of* …. which can be written, or in pictures, or on video.

Taking toys seriously

The benefits and impact of toys and play, and the pressure from advertising to buy toys, especially at Christmas, are considered.

- Students are invited to bring their former toys from home; the class is encouraged to play for a time;
- Students brainstorm a list of toys. Why are they popular? Are they overpriced? What play value do they have?
- Analyse one toy together. What criteria should parents use to choose a toy? Why do children grow out of particular toys, if they do? What toys do girls and boys often prefer and why?
- Students then design a toy, visit a toy library and learn about toys throughout history. Museums such as the Museum of Childhood - now called Young V&A (Victoria and Albert) - in east London, would make good visits.

Enjoying your children

What are the students' positive memories of childhood? What is their earliest memory? Work in pairs and tell your partner. Have they had positive experiences with children?

- Make a chart of the class's memories and experiences;
- Make a list of the needs of children. How can these needs be met?
- Look at a relevant poem or piece of prose: Laurie Lee is one good source about childhood;

- Children need empathy, love, praise, encouragement, stimulation, attention, physical care, respect, the chance to talk and be listened to, security and independence;
- Read out and discuss positive accounts by parents. Put the main points on a flipchart;
- What restrictions to their lives do parents admit? Interview a few;
- Observe parents.

Happy, safe and healthy

Consider all the many elements making for a happy, safe and healthy home. Write them on a wall chart.

- Why are they important? Which are the most important?
- What financial costs are involved?
- Do students disagree about some?
- What do parents decide, and what could children decide?
- Do parents get anxious even if children are happy?
- Different ages have different needs: emotional, intellectual, spiritual, physical and social;
- Design classrooms suitable for four age-groups of children;
- Visit a venue for children (though not a children's home, due to confidentiality): a children's hospital ward, a nursery, a playgroup, a youth club. Write a report and give it to the venue.

Advice to school staff

While getting prepared to teach parenthood at your school,

- Ask yourself (perhaps with the help of the guide's self-assessment questionnaire): Am I ready to teach it?
- And is the school ready? If not, try to persuade the staff how important it is for every student, not just girls of lower ability or those on childcare courses;

- See if you can get the senior management team to take the idea on board and give it ongoing, strong support;
- Get the school governors on your side;
- Once you start, keep the project alive in the minds of staff and students through displays and assemblies;
- Make it a subject for an INSET day. Get staff to say what they wish they had been taught about parenthood at school, and what ideas they have for a course.

Planning the course

Consider:

- Who will teach it?
- Do they need more training?
- Who will co-ordinate it?
- Where will it take place? Does the venue need any changes?
- When will it take place?
- How long will it last? It is important to allow time for the introduction and the review;
- Can enough time be allocated to plan it and review it?
- What resources will be needed for the various activities?
- How does it fit in to other education in the school about relationships?
- Who else do I need to discuss it with?
- Where do I get the support I will need? And last but not least:
- Am I totally clear about the purpose of this course?

Do not promote any one 'ideal' family structure

You should avoid any hidden agenda. Students, teachers and parents will sniff this out; resistance will follow. It inhibits free discussion and free thought. Students from other types of family might reject the course, even feeling rejected and condemned by students and teachers. Promoting one model risks shades of racism, sexism and

stereotyping which could affect how students treat each other in or out of school. Make clear that families of all sorts have their problems, that one model does not necessarily always do better than another. Finally, don't hesitate to challenge students' views but ensure you always base your challenges on the values of the course:

- The uniqueness and potential of every child is to be valued;
- Every child should have individual, continuous love and security;
- Parenthood is a privilege, not a right.

Where to put the course in the curriculum

It's best within PSHE. But it can be reinforced and added to in other subjects. In schools where PSHE is already embedded, it is more likely that parenthood education will be offered. Teachers' enthusiasm in Greater Manchester developed as it went on, especially in the schools willing to experiment. The authors do not advocate using existing subject lessons solely, but to use these as an addition. Otherwise, the subject can easily become side-lined, and it is hard to monitor and evaluate. (This was the experience of the subject Health and Environment in the original national curriculum which became less visible as a subject without its own dedicated time.) However, if parenthood is included in other subjects, it is essential that:

- There is a strong PSHE department;
- Staff are keen;
- Staff like new ideas;
- They are given time to train;
- The work is well co-ordinated;
- Senior staff in PSHE and other subjects are involved.

What are the best ages to teach parenthood?

The pack was used for students aged 13-to-18. Schools found that Year 11 students (15-to-16-year-olds) were the most responsive, and thought that these were the reasons:

- They are more likely to be in conflict with their parents, with strong views on how they would like to be treated as teenagers;
- Their bodies are changing; some have sexual experience, so getting pregnant has become an issue;
- They appreciate being taught a subject about adult life and can respond in a mature way.

However, exam pressures in Year 11 might reduce the time that a school gives to PSHE.

How to teach parenthood

Learning about the subject takes place without this being obvious. Teachers are advised to provide a stimulating lesson with lots of participation, experiential, and small and large group work. 'Rigorous debate' is recommended, with genuine challenges to students, resulting in lively, high-quality discussion. With good timing, it's useful to present other views, though no single 'correct' way of parenting should be promoted. The only time the teacher must take a less neutral stand is when a student expresses an abusive or stereotyped view. Encourage students to draw up their own curriculum inspired by the pack. It is vital that teachers don't present themselves as the experts or use didactic methods, even if some students are more comfortable with that; far better to learn and discover with the students and to admit your mistakes. You can 'never be sure where a lesson might go.' Maybe it will open a can of worms. It's important to listen to what every student says and try to build on it so that their contribution feels clearly valued. Try to see

something positive in every contribution and say so. Take what students say seriously. Avoid any hint of judgment. Encourage thoughtful discussion which really absorbs the class's interest and attention. And make sure you get support for yourself from other teachers.

Should teachers talk about their own experiences?

This is encouraged, though some might not want to: they fear how the information could be used, or that they will be seen as unprofessional, or implying that their own way is best. However, when used wisely and appropriately, self-disclosure has been shown to create closer, more trusting relationships between staff and young people, who become able to see their teacher as a fuller and more empathetic human being. Teachers who don't have children can talk about their own childhood or their experience with nephews or nieces. You are warned that anything you reveal is unlikely to remain within the classroom! Another bonus of facilitating this course is for teachers to reflect on their own ways of parenting, now or in future. There is anecdotal evidence that this has helped them.

How to teach a class with very varied abilities

This has its challenges. Obviously, the material needs to be suited to the ages and various abilities of the class. In fact, the schools found that children with special needs responded very well. Tips include:

- Put written work on the board and invite discussion, rather than handing out written sheets;
- Never use jargon or language the students don't understand. Try to use their language;
- Be aware of the speed of different students. Allow those who work faster to move onto another activity, and for more academically able students to have suitably challenging tasks;
- Organise discussion in small groups, not always with whole class.

Dealing with sensitive issues

'Teachers will regularly experience lessons leading to the revelation of issues and problems that might otherwise remain hidden or confidential.' Topics which might evoke this include conception; pregnancy; abortion; separation; divorce; illness; disability; carers; child abuse; or death. You might come across others. Students could ask awkward questions relating to how they are being brought up now; the discussion could feel risky. Skilful intervention might be needed. Teachers have to be very well-prepared, completely conversant with what pastoral care is available at the school, the school's safeguarding policy, how to talk to a distressed student, and how to find support for themselves.

Mixed lessons or single-sex?

Both are recommended. It might come as a surprise that students at the boys' school were very happy with the course. But on the whole girls take it more seriously. After all, they mature earlier and, because of the way of the world, are more likely to see parenthood as motherhood. However, although the girls appreciated girls-only sessions for some topics, they wanted to include boys in others, in order to understand how the other gender ticks. Some older boys were dismissive of the work - but behaved better in mixed groups. Teachers are encouraged to challenge gender stereotypes.

How long should the course be?

A lesson should be for a whole period, though some lasted only 20 minutes with limited outcomes. A six-week course is the minimum which can make a 'measurable impact on knowledge and attitudes.' More than this was seen by the authors as 'unreasonable,' given all the demands of the curriculum. Six weeks is about the same as other topics get in PSHE, and students' interest lasts for this amount of time. However, they admit that six weeks is not long enough to deal with everything in the pack, stating that the contents are enough for a

whole year. They suggest what a 12-week course for Year 10 students could cover. They imagine a 15-lesson scheme whereby the same students receive six lessons in Year 9, six in Year 10, and three in Year 11. The content could also be added to childcare courses, which would make them unusual.

Assessment, accreditation and validation

All students were given a 'Before' and 'After' questionnaire, and logbooks to write in. Staff recorded their own observations. Students received certificates for attendance and evidence of work. But there is the danger that doing badly could be taken as proof that a student will not be a good parent. (Assessing the work of childcare students is different: they are preparing to do a paid job.) Making this an exam subject, even if that would raise its status, 'could drive educational methods to accommodate a limited set of information, away from open exploration of attitudes and opinions through open debate.' The authors suggest alternatives: officially validate the course, rather than the students. Or validate the teachers.

Covering for absent staff

If the usual teacher is away, the show can go on with another teacher, teaching assistant or learning mentor, using a simple, low-key plan, perhaps having a flipchart to brainstorm what it takes to be a parent, or making a wall display about ages and stages of childhood, with pictures and statements. Ensure you have suitable reserve staff who know in advance what to do.

Ten do's and don'ts for staff

1 Get involved in discussion. There are no right answers;

2 Be honest and personal. You will be respected for it;

3 Practice active listening; especially important for students who talk for the first time;

4 Be aware of how your own experiences affect your conduct in lessons;

5 Look after yourself;
6 Don't impose your own views;
7 Don't take the burden of children's difficulties on your own shoulders. Get support;
8 Don't pack too much into one lesson;
9 Remember that this education is about knowledge, skills and attitudes;
10 Don't try to be a role model.

Running/promoting this subject out of the classroom

Students enjoy activities in the community, such as gauging the accessibility of shops for parents with buggies; noticing the prices of family goods; carrying out surveys; visiting relevant venues; or interviewing parents. Even shy students come out of their shells. And there are more ideas:

- The subject can be included in school assemblies. One suggestion is to read out relevant poems or passages from novels about the relationship between children and their parents, with the students invited to reflect on them;
- Another idea is to arrange improvised role-plays at assemblies: e.g. the experience of a student with the family at home before coming to school, with a consideration about how all members behave;
- Displays can be created for the walls of school corridors: not personal revelations but, for example, a letter of application to be a parent; local resources; emotional bonds; tantrums; child abuse; newspaper stories; ages and stages of childhood with photos; and children's play;
- Workshops for older students will continue the impact after the course is over: whole or half-day, for example for Year 12 students, as part of their induction week or after exams;
- Publicity. This education is news while it is not offered at most schools. The pilots attracted a great deal of publicity in both the local and national press. It is a popular and good experience for

students (and staff) to be interviewed for radio or TV. It raises the status of the school and the subject, and reinforces how everyone values the work.

Parents and governors

Parents: Schools found that most parents were happy about the course, especially because in some cases their teenagers had become more understanding and had asked them questions about family life. Some said they wished they had learnt about parenting at school.

Governors: It is important for school governors to know about the course and to follow its progress. Schools found that their governors had a very mixed set of views, from enthusiasm to dismissal.

And finally, at the end of the course….

Many students were given a certificate of achievement.

Evaluation

The team took evaluation seriously, devoting enormous amounts of time and attention to all aspects, using questionnaires, interviews, a case study, meetings and self-assessment. We'll look at their findings in our chapter on evidence. Penny and Phil evaluated the work as it went along, enabling improvements. They focused on four areas:

- The impact on students and their parents;
- The impact on teachers and the school as a whole;
- The relevance and practicality of the work;
- Usefulness of planning, training and support provided to teachers.

You can imagine how delighted I was in 2020, all these years later, to be put in touch with Martin Braidley, one of the headteachers. I asked him why he had agreed to take part. His reasons are telling:

- 'I believed it to be a worthwhile venture and I was a bit of a risk-taker re curriculum;
- The governing body was very keen; it included several medical professionals who were very enthusiastic;
- Phil and Penny were very good 'salesmen' for the project. Phil, Penny and Simon Richey [from the Gulbenkian Foundation] were very positive and supportive throughout the process;
- Like many secondary schools, we had experience of teenage pregnancies and we wanted to give as much information/support as possible to our pupils. All schools will have taught the mechanics of reproduction. Some (through PSE), relationships/responsibilities. This project was taking it to a different level.'

In retirement, he reflects: 'Large oaks from little acorns grow. You have to start somewhere but the project could still be developed further, given time and adequate funding. Constant government tinkering with the curriculum means time constraints are always likely to impede new initiatives. There is certainly the basis for future work here; the basic tenets of the programme have not changed. We live in strange times. Who knows what a future secondary school curriculum will look like? The content of the programme is certainly useful for ALL young people to be exposed to.'

The final chapter

The project was disseminated, whilst in progress, through articles in local and national journals and newspapers; features on local and national TV and radio; discussion in three seminars involving students and teachers organised by the LEAs; presentations to relevant organisations at national conferences and seminars; and meetings with government ministers and key agencies, such as the department of health. The report was given a national launch at Chatham House in London, an independent policy institute, with worthies such as the Conservative Gillian Shephard, secretary of state

for education (1994 - 96), and other 'movers and shakers.' The teacher Jean Coulter and two students gave speeches.

No follow-up was carried out in later years. We have no idea what practical results came about from this dissemination or who was influenced. Penny and Phil have moved on to fresh pastures. However, Rochdale's M6 Theatre Company was commissioned by the Gulbenkian Foundation to write and perform a play for teenagers, *Forever,* by Mary Cooper, based on findings from the company's workshops and from Penny and Phil's research. Penny told me, 'It was performed to high acclaim in many schools, prisons, and even for MPs in parliament.' The play is of such interest that you'll find a full account of it in Volume Two of *Nothing More Important.*

In order to develop normally, a child requires progressively more complex joint activity with one or more adults who have an irrational emotional relationship with the child. Somebody's got to be crazy about the kid.
That's number one…. first, last and always.
Urie Bronfenbrenner

Chapter Twenty-five

L8r: 'Six Futures, You Decide' 2000

The former charity Hi8us created this interesting project *L8r* with DVDs, a booklet and use of the *L8r* website. It is all about teenagers, sex, relationships and pregnancy, guaranteed to hold attention. The materials could be used not only in schools and pupil referral units but in youth centres, drop-in centres, special projects, holiday schemes, young parents' settings, hostels, mobile buses, and community internet cafés. Outreach and detached youth workers could help young people to access it.

L8r is a drama, accessed on the web, for 12-to-16-year-olds. They watch the soapbox-type plays on DVDs, participate in discussing outcomes, and advise the characters on the internet. The seven actors, male and female teenagers of varied ethnicities, get into situations involving, amongst others things, sex and pregnancy. One film shows Katy, 16 and with a baby. She is living in a mother and baby home (no partners allowed.) She has fallen out with her family because of her relationship with Ben, and is isolated and exhausted looking after baby Chanelle. Chanelle cries a lot especially between five and seven in the evening. Where can Katy go for help?

These face-to-face activities are suggested.

What would it be like to have a baby?

Young people are invited to write in groups:

- What would it be like having a baby in a fantasy world where everything is 'perfect'?
- Then: What would it be like in the real world?
- The tutor can ask what information the young people would like to have about parenthood.

Holding the baby

Students are asked to write down or record up to twelve things they really like doing, what they plan to do, and what they hope to do by a certain age; then asked which activities they would still be able to do if they had a three-month-old baby to care for.

- Which would you have to drop or cut back on?
- How would you feel if you were unable to do the activities you did before?
- How might your friendships be affected?
- How would your plans for the coming years be affected?

What about the money?

The whole group lists all the items which Katy and Ben need to buy in the first, say, three months, including milk if they don't think Katy will breastfeed. Small groups can list the essentials and look up the prices in catalogues. The whole group then discusses if they can afford these, their options, and how they would feel with second-hand equipment.

What am I gonna do?

After watching the film where Katy gives birth, students discuss how Ben feels about becoming a dad, and how he feels when he gets to hospital and is told that Katy doesn't want to see anyone and that he has missed the birth. Why doesn't Katy want to see anyone? Ben has two jobs and is trying to stay at college. The pressure feels too much. What advice would you give them? What is all this like for Katy?

What about us?

Ben and Katy want to be a family, but Katy feels that Ben doesn't understand her, and Ben finds it hard to talk to Katy about how he's feeling. Ben wants to be a good father but doesn't know how he can

support Katy and look after the baby. Will they still be together in two years' time? What short-term options do they have?

Who can help us?

The teacher provides details of local health, social and young people's services, and encourages students to research the internet and create posters for a display.

What happens next?

Katy is depressed and doesn't want to hold the baby. She feels like she doesn't love her. She leaves. Where can she go for help? Ben is left holding the baby. What might happen then?

The 15-minute DVDs and guidebooks are now nowhere to be found on the internet. But you can borrow some from Before Becoming a Parent charity.

All children will behave perfectly, I believe, if they want to know something very much, about sex or anything else, and an adult sincerely sets out to tell them.

Kate Clanchy

Some Kids I Taught and What They Taught Me 2019

Chapter Twenty-six

Parenthood education at Manchester academy 2003

The first time that schools in Britain were used to prepare students for parenthood (then called 'mothercraft' instruction) was probably at Ducie Grove, Moss Side, Manchester in 1910. Twelve girls were given an eight-week course in 'housewifery, infant care and nursing' at a home-making centre. By coincidence, in 2003 another significant development began in the area. Ducie Grove High School was described as 'one of the worst gang-infested comprehensives in the country' (source unknown) with the highest truancy rate in Britain. 86 percent of students were from refugee or second-generation immigrant families, some from war-torn countries. Two-thirds were boys. The area was said by some to feel dangerous.

Kathy August became the first principal of the school's new existence as the Manchester academy (2003), run by the United Learning Trust (ULT.) Struck by the macho attitudes of so many boys, she found ways to change the culture, to show them that they could be both gentle and powerfully strong. A major way to do this was the Sports Leadership Award project for 14-to-16-year-olds. Children aged six-to-nine were brought in from local primary schools and the teenagers warmed to the experience of caring for them.

There were other ways to humanise the school: a nurture room run by a warm, inspirational female teacher, and an attitude of unconditional love and support throughout the school towards every student, though 'no excuses were accepted.' Many of the practices were based on those in primary schools, recognising that students had missed out on childhood. So the school was a therapeutic experience, 'not for its own sake,' Kathy was keen to point out, 'but as needed in order to educate': the kind of tough love advocated by Frank Field. Parents were brought in and a Parents Reference Group set up.

Kathy explained her philosophy to me. 'You can't learn unless your basic needs are met: safety, warmth and so on. School should represent an all-embracing ideal family with wise leaders. We developed the self-respect of students, self-control and self-management. This gave them self-esteem. If they had no shoes, I raised money; we went and bought them some. I had to permanently exclude only three students over the nine years I was there. There'd had been a very high rate before that.' Separate lessons about parenthood wouldn't be appropriate, she said, but, by its culture, the school encouraged and modelled some qualities of good parents.

Frank Field was on the board of the ULT which had run only independent schools before it ran Manchester academy. He interviewed some of the 15-year-olds and discovered that 'how to be a good parent' was near the top of their list of the school topics they wanted. So a pilot project was set up at the academy. Rather than a specific course about parenting, Field's idea was to insert aspects of parenting into existing lessons. For example, said Kathy, 'in science we will be talking about how the brain develops so that students understand how babies are not little adults. In geography we might look at how parenting is done in different countries.' Erica Greenslade, the assistant headteacher who organised the pilot, told the *Manchester Evening News* (2011), 'One of the things we are stressing is financial management and the importance of budgeting skills in running a household.' That would feature in business studies lessons. The school had no psychology course, but child development could be studied in health and social care. The importance of adult relationships and their impact on children was looked at in PHSE. Healthy eating featured in food technology.

And they were keen to evaluate. I contacted the school and the ULT to see if the promised evaluation had ever happened and to find out if parenting was still on the agenda in any form, but to no avail. There have been four heads since Kathy left, and the pilot was meant to be

temporary anyway, lasting about two years. Then I spoke to Erica, now at a school in Merseyside, and learnt that the project had been very successful, popular with students, with no difficulties in staff incorporating the subject into their existing lessons. And the reasons are significant. Erica was given enough time to explain the pilot to teachers. She and Kathy strongly believed in it and had the motivation to push the agenda. This confirms experience and advice from elsewhere. For the work to succeed, it is vital to have enthusiasm from the top, with enough time allocated to a designated, committed member of staff to get the ball rolling and maintained.

The pilot was then tried in a striking combination of other schools: four in Manchester, one taken to a school in London by Frank Field, and one to no less than Eton College, to see the impact on all social classes. How did it go? Erica unfortunately has lost the written evaluations on the computer, but remembers positive feedback from Eton who found it very helpful, having developed their own way to deliver it. I wrote to Eton twice to see if anyone remembers it and to ask if they would still be interested, but received no answer.

Erica also spent a lot of time in Birkenhead where Field was MP, taking the pilot to a girls' school and, more memorably, was involved with young families and the Tranmere Community Project, a charity which provided emotional and social education for vulnerable young people from very disadvantaged backgrounds. This was highly successful. Yet Tranmere was dissolved in 2017. I asked Erica if she'd support a dedicated course on parenting rather than embedding the subject in existing lessons. She is not opposed to that, just that it was so much more practical to do it their way because of the enormous demands on the curriculum. There would have been no time for an additional course. And she made an interesting and seldom-stated point: this work not only helps students to learn ways of parenting differently from their own childhoods, but also to appreciate what they think has been positive in their childhood so

that they can replicate it with their own children in future. Anyway, Ofsted rated the academy as outstanding (2009) and Kathy, who left in 2011, was made a dame. This is yet another example of innovative work, thriving for a spell and then disappearing from the face of the earth. Kathy has co-written an account of the school and its long-term outcomes. It would be fascinating to know how her former students are faring as parents.

Nothing in Birkenhead

A lot has happened in Manchester, but Frank Field was unable to replicate it in Birkenhead. In the early 2000s he got money from the Westminster Foundation to fund the Foundation Years Trust which he set up in the Wirral, hoping to see parenthood education taking place in schools, though that wasn't specified in the grant. Eager to visit these schools to see how the work had gone, I made futile attempts (2018) to discover which they were. Frank had lost touch with the project; the LEA didn't have a clue; the random selection of schools which I phoned had never heard of it. Eventually I learnt from the Foundation Years Trust, which had had the task of organising the work, that not a single school had taken up the offer.

'The heads of PSHE thought it was a fantastic idea,' I was told, but, (you've guessed), there was no room on the timetable. Teachers had to get students through exams; parenthood isn't an exam. The powers-that-be clearly believe that there are more important subjects. The teachers concur against their better judgement, even though, as we've seen, young people have clearly said how much they want to learn about parenting. The idea was shelved, though The Hive, a youth centre in the Wirral, wants parenting sessions for their young people who have been asking for them. The Foundation Years Trust hopes for a chance to do school-based work for the compulsory Relationships and Sex curriculum.

Chapter Twenty-seven
The Baby Borrowers 2007

An excellent insight in parenting – certainly changed pupils' ideas. All activities were relevant and fun. Variations of activities were appropriate to all ability spectrum of pupils. Teachers, Wales

In 2007, BBC Learning embarked on what must be the most extraordinary project in the history of parenthood education. Sadly, it's the same old story: this fascinating project, 'a unique social experiment,' is now unknown, and unused by any school I was able to find. I wrote to all eight schools - two each from Northern Ireland, Wales, Scotland and England which took part in the pilot (two had become a free school or an academy, so continuity was even less likely) - to ask if they still used it or any other method of parenthood education. Only one, the academy, replied: 'Unfortunately we do not use the programme but cover the subject via our citizenship curriculum, but not in the same way as the project.'

The BBC wrote a pack for schools. The pilot was 'to establish the need for such a pack; to gather teachers' opinions and use their expertise to develop a well-informed, sustainable and invaluable PSHE and citizenship resource;' and 'to gain feedback from pupils to ensure that the pack would be relevant and engaging.' Eight workshops were held, two in each of the countries, with an average of 18 pupils aged 13-to-15 in each: a total of 141. The schools were:

Northern Ireland: Laurelhill community college, Lisburn, mixed comprehensive (Year 10, ages 15 - 16);
St Mary's high school, Downpatrick, Roman Catholic girls (Year 10, ages 15 - 16);
Wales: Ysgol Eifonydd, Portmadog, mixed comprehensive (Year 10, ages 14 - 15);

Cefn Saeson comprehensive, Neath, Port Talbot, South Wales, mixed (Year 10, ages 14 – 15);
Scotland: Kirkland high school and community college, Leven, mixed comprehensive (now Levenmouth academy) (Year S1, ages 12 – 13);
Hillhead high school, Glasgow, Scotland, mixed 'opted-out' comprehensive (Years S4/S5, ages 15 – 17);
England: Childwall school and sports college, Liverpool, mixed comprehensive (Year 10, ages 14 – 15);
Ryeish Green school, Reading: mixed comprehensive (now Oakbank free school) (Year 9, ages 13 – 14.)

Because the teenage pregnancy rate in Britain was the highest in western Europe, the BBC commissioned this innovative programme to test the hypothesis that 'the most effective way for young people to understand what it's really like to be a parent is to put them in charge of a child.' The course taught students aged 12-to-17 about most aspects of parenthood: the tone was deliberately 'celebratory and honest rather than judgmental and negative.' An implicit aim was to reduce the rate of teenage pregnancy.

Unlike L8r, The Baby Borrowers used real people. The team found five heterosexual teenage couples from various parts of England, and actually managed to recruit five sets of parents to hand over their baby to a young couple for three whole days and nights. Rest assured that meanwhile, the parents stayed next-door to the houses in Norwich where the teenagers lived, could watch their baby on a screen all the time, and were free to remove it if they were worried (one couple did so when their baby was abandoned outside a neighbour's house.) Each baby was at least six-months-old and had already experienced separation from its parents in a nursery or with a childminder.

The teenage couples were aged between 16 and 19. They had been together for between four months and two-plus years. One couple

was Black; one mixed (Kosovan and Iranian); the rest White British. Some were engaged, or planning a future together. Each couple was filmed to show how they coped, not only with living together for the first time, but also caring together for three days and nights each (in this order and one straight after another) for a baby, a toddler, a pre-school child, a pre-teen child and pet, a 12-to-14-year-old, and finally a person aged 80 or more. (They found looking after the elderly person the most difficult.) For the first week they did real paid jobs, wore 'empathy bellies,' attended ante-natal classes and prepared for the baby. The whole period took four weeks, all under the watchful eyes of childcare professionals. Therapists were involved in planning the project, although some workers in this field, as well as some of the general public, might vehemently question the process.

There were eight hour-long BBC programmes showing how the couples fared. Four 20-minute DVDs were produced: *The Experiment, Relationships, Parenting,* and *Carl and Kayleigh's Story.* The *Teacher's Pack*, based on liaison with 22 PSHE experts nationally, written by Timuchin Dindher and Sally Briggs, contained meticulously detailed 60-minute lesson plans, to be followed closely or used flexibly; it was offered free of charge to every secondary school in the UK. The DVDs had English and Welsh sub-titles. They are no longer available from Ebay, BBC iPlayer, Amazon ('We don't know when or if this item will be back in stock') or anywhere else I could find, suggesting the lack of importance commercially attached to this subject (not a best seller, therefore ignored.) They are in a few libraries, but you'd have to live in, or go to, Australia or the US.

Lesson plans cover learning outcomes; pupil resources; teacher tips; timing; and ideas for homework or 'extended study.' The syllabus includes ground rules; discussion about the programme itself ('the experiment'); relationships; parenting; and a close analysis of one couple's experiences.

Topics in relationships include:

- Ground rules;
- Ups and downs;
- Pressures;
- Conflict resolution;
- Roles and responsibilities;
- Differences between people;
- What makes a good relationship?
- Constructive feedback;
- How it feels to give and receive positive feedback;
- Assertiveness / aggression / passivity;
- Appropriate responses;
- Positive affirmations (three times a day and meaning it);
- Communication;
- Children's rights;
- The positive and negative behaviour of the couples and how it might be improved.

Topics in parenting include:

- Empathy;
- Preparing for parenthood emotionally as well as physically;
- Fun;
- How the couples parent, in relation to how they were parented;
- The realities of parenting, including all the practicalities;
- What makes a good parent? ('love for each other comes before you can have love for the baby');
- Bonding;
- Health and safety;
- Identifying the emotional needs of both baby and parents;
- Observing the changes in the couples' attitudes;
- Choices, and asking how far can we choose how we feel and act;
- Pupils' own experiences of looking after a baby;

- Following the story of one couple from negative to positive (the pregnancy scare): the effects on each of them of a suspected pregnancy, their rise to challenges;
- Contraception and local services which provide it.

Methods include:

- Watching DVDs about the couples;
- Role-play scenario cards to act out;
- Forum theatre,
- Quizzes;
- Discussion;
- Agony aunt questions;
- Brainstorming words;
- Acting as counsellors;
- Making posters;
- Writing articles for the school newsletter;
- Making a video;
- Reflection and review;
- Watching a DVD where boys talk about their own parents;
- A 'relay race' with a 'strongly agree – strongly disagree' statements continuum, with students standing where they believe;
- In two teams, using flipcharts to write the good and the difficult things about parenting, with the quicker team as the winner;
- *Test Your Observational Skills* quiz about knowledge of the couples;
- Speech bubble cards to fill in with things the couples have said;
- Flipchart: draw a baby; write all the things that make a baby happy;
- Design a leaflet for a babysitter;
- Brainstorm all the types of contraception;
- Use post-it notes to give advice to the couples.

Homework ideas include:

- Making a list of all the reasons people have a baby;

- Asking a new parent what they enjoy about being a parent;
- Researching information about teenage parents from websites and teenage parent magazines;
- Reading the BBC parenting website;
- Making a video diary on mobile phones to show the life of a parent;
- Interviewing their own parents about the joys and difficulties;
- Writing *I would like to be a parent when…..*;
- Thanking their parents for things they think the parents did well;
- Noting down day-to-day choices that they make;
- Writing a play or short story about children and responsibility;
- Researching changes in parenthood over the last 30 years;
- Using magazines to make a collage of baby equipment;
- Writing a poem, song or rap from parent to baby;
- Interviewing the school nurse about her services;
- Checking websites and organisations about contraception;
- Writing a poem, song or rap on a specific aspect of parenthood;
- Writing a TV programme on good relationships;
- Writing a script for one of the couples, showing how they might get on better;
- Researching on the internet about mental health services for young people.

One lesson looks in detail at one of the couples, Carl and Kayleigh. Teachers are advised to make this a 'dynamic and moving session' to keep up the momentum. The DVD shows an interview with the couple. Pupils then take part in a quiz about them and act out parts of the interview. They are asked to ponder on the couple's future in five years' time. Then they write a timeline of their own futures. It is suggested that for homework, they choose one aspect of their future to write about and to use the internet to research the lives of 'successful' people, identifying the recipes for their 'success.'

An interesting, unexpected inclusion is the spell of caring for Jack, aged 80-plus. This enables the couples and students to examine their

prejudices about old age, and to think about older people's prejudices about them. How old do they think is 'old'? What has been their experience of prejudice at any age? Homework consists of writing a poem or rap about an old person, researching laws about age discrimination, and scanning newspapers for examples.

The *Teacher's Pack* has many appendices, with teaching aids which you can photocopy: cards; photos of Jack and the couples; press cuttings; musings on feedback; speaking and listening; relationship scenarios; quizzes; teenagers' statements; health and safety for babies and toddlers; and agony aunt material ('*Dear Shelley.*') There are photos of 'empathy bellies' which can be worn by males or females to get a feel of what it's like to be heavily pregnant. Equipment of this kind could be bought from the specialist provider EDCO (and now via Amazon.)

We will look at the feedback in chapter 38. So much imagination, logistical effort and detailed thought went into producing The Baby Borrowers that it seems a vast waste of talent and invention that it is not currently used at every school. We might want to add or amend a few things but certainly not ignore it.

It was fascinating, after writing the above, to discover that in 2000, Channel 4 Television had produced a 50-minute video: *Borrow a Baby.* Did that inspire the BBC programme? It would be a strange coincidence if not. The Channel 4 synopsis says: 'Three teenagers are given a real baby to look after. Follows the fortunes of two girls and a boy as they struggle with the routine of feeding, nappies, sleepless nights and entertaining a baby, while the anxious parents look on via CCTV monitors. Shows teenagers that the reality of having a baby is far more complex than it seems.' There were online notes for teachers ('Page Not Found' when I looked them up.) Despite many attempts, I was unable to buy a copy of the video, or even find out where I could view it.

Chapter Twenty-eight

The Play Mentor Programme: Scottish youth mentoring pre-school children 2014

The Play Mentor Programme

We decided to centre our programme around play because play is such a feel-good thing and so important for us all, no matter our age. Mary Scott Watson

This interesting project brought together teenage girls and primary school children for games and play. It was about learning how we develop as babies, toddlers, children and young people. The students at secondary school who took part studied all of that. The 12-week programme didn't aim to prepare participants to be mothers, because they wouldn't all choose to be, but aimed to help them understand the importance of play and human development, and to boost their leadership skills.

From 2014, 12 girls at four Clackmannanshire high schools – Lornshill, Alloa and Alva Academies, and Clackmannanshire Schools Support Service (itself a school) - were trained each year at their local college for one day a week, with placements in primary schools and nurseries. The programme was heavily supported by staff at the Schools Support Service, who provided a lot of the initial training and facilitated the games in which the girls would participate. Mary Scott Watson and Pamela Vannan, NHS health promotion officers in Clackmannanshire, came up with the idea, inspired by programmes in England.

While the scheme was running, Mary gave this delightful account. 'One of the great things about the programme is how much we get to play! We go away for a weekend residential at the beginning of the programme, and, as well as all the learning, we play loads of games. Towards the end of the programme, each Play Mentor leads a game session with the primary class they are working with, and their last big

task is to lead a games session for adults who use play in their work. The programme is a lot of fun but is quite strict. So you have to earn a place on the programme through successfully participating in a games session and interview. Then, to keep your place, your attendance has to be good during the programme. 2019 was the first year all 12 girls made it through! They attended our awards ceremony. We were so proud of them.'

The programme ran in partnership with Clackmannanshire Third Sector Interface, an organisation that helps place volunteers, and previously with the charities Action for Children and Aberlour Childcare Trust. I asked why it took girls only. 'Girls statistically don't seem to achieve as well as boys in the workplace, so Clackmannanshire council has made it a priority to help young women. But if we could get the funding, we would really like to run a programme with only young men as well. It would be interesting to see if it was any different from the young women's one.'

The girls then looked for volunteer opportunities in play and childcare organisations. If they were to become mothers in future, they would know and understand more about play than the average parent, would be likely to spend more time playing with their children, and be more likely to enjoy it.

We have now seen everything I could unearth from the past: projects in the UK which seem no longer to exist, or are even widely remembered. In Volume Two: *Nothing More Important: How to Prepare Children and Young People at School to be Good Parents,* we look at projects currently providing parenthood education in primary and secondary schools in the UK and US. There might be others. I discovered no way to find out. An appeal in *The Teacher*, the journal of the National Education Union, produced only one reply.

Part Four

What has been done in US schools

Chapter Twenty-nine

Education For Parenthood Project 1972

Preparation of young people for parenthood - life work in the truest sense.
W. Stanley Kruger

W. Stanley Kruger had an ambitious undertaking. As special programs director at the bureau of elementary and secondary education, Washington D.C, he was given $3m in 1972 by the federal office of education in the department of health, education and welfare for a six-year nationwide teenage program, Education for Parenthood Project (EFP). His paper (1973) describes six high-quality US programs. 'A survey of all existing programs is now being taken by the Education for Parenthood Project, with the long-range goal of developing a comprehensive curriculum model. Also emphasised is the need for an instructional technology to make the content relevant and universal for youth.' These are the six projects he discovered.

1 Gaithersburg, Maryland: 'Unusual and exemplary'

This refreshing program was mainly for students of child development - with a difference. It attracted boys as well as girls, and high flyers as well as the less academic as it was seen not only as preparation for parenthood but also for professions such as child psychiatry or teaching. Students studied in these ways for part of five days a week:

- As a nursery teacher for one period;
- As an observer of other teaching teams;
- As a researcher in child development;
- Planning for the next teaching session;
- Analysing and evaluating, with teacher and students, the week's experiences.

Other disciplines were involved. Students on courses in industrial arts, auto body, speech, drama, music and horticulture all contributed expertise to the small children and their equipment. Another unique feature was the dual role of the leader. She was both teacher of the high school child development course and the nursery teacher.

2 Mount Desert Island, Maine: 'The vision and initiative of a home economics teacher'

Jean Fernald's story illustrates the power of one determined individual to create change. She was given a grant for a child development project in the community. This led to Maine state department of education disseminating her curriculum, and to other school programs being developed in Maine. Jean prepared 12 senior high school girls at a time. This could lead to careers in both childcare and parenthood. It sure was an intensive course! Girls spent two days with formal instruction and three days in the school's nursery. This wasn't just about skills. It's gratifying to read: 'A good deal of time is given to understanding the child through his play.'

3 Los Angeles: 'The handiwork of one woman'

Kruger stresses that the development of this program in LA proved again that 'a comprehensive parenthood education course can become a reality if a dedicated person develops a sound plan, accumulates some knowledge of funding sources, and secures community support.' Sadly, there are no details of the dedicated woman's identity. The project arose from the community - local groups were involved from the start. They did publicity and helped raise money to build a day-care complex to house the child development students who enrolled on Education for Parenthood classes. The students regularly worked with 200 pre-school children in many settings: library, pediatric clinic, local schools, and nurseries.

4 Dallas: 'Most of their formal instruction occurs while they are working and interacting with the children'

This project was for younger girls: 12-to-14-year-olds. The course was taught right next to a daily playschool. 'Students therefore move from an academic setting into the practicum with unusual ease.' And they were enthusiastic about the self-knowledge they gained from close working with little children. Kruger lists what made this such a success: 'a teacher capable of relating to adolescents as well as to pre-school children; a supportive administrative structure (from central office to principal); and an attractive, colorful, light school building with flexible classroom space which seems to lend itself to doing things somewhat differently, somewhat creatively.'

5 Salt Lake City: 'Periodically, all of the city's parenthood education instructors get together to share ideas and insights'

Kruger attributes the success of this project 'to the ideas and dedication of young, exciting teachers who have the continued support of local administration.' Students spent some time over three days a week for five weeks in a nursery school. A few boys began to engage. 'That male students are interested in childcare and child development was apparent during the summer months when an EFP teacher operated an experimental nursery school. A number of area boys and girls helped to run the entire operation.'

6 Battle Creek: 'Extensive use of film adds to a broad base for discussing child growth, development and care situations'

This was on a grander scale. A Vocational Center serving five school districts offered both education for parenthood and vocational preparation for childcare aides. There were state-of-the-art facilities: one-way observation windows, closed circuit television, audio-visual equipment. We get into the realm of 'competencies,' 'performance

objectives' and 'contracts.' But students could get paid work as a result. Demand from childcare agencies exceeded supply.

Kruger contacted other programs to discover what they taught. The long list of topics that he discovered includes:

- Working with handicapped children (the term used in those days);
- Creative activities (play, toys, art, music., dance);
- Influence of family environment on child behavior;
- Community resources to aid in parenting;
- Skills required for effective work with children: learning by observation, counselling young children.

Although written in 1973, there is an all-too-familiar, contemporary ring. 'To the harried school administrator who sees parenthood education as a total addition to an already over-crowded curriculum,' Kruger argues how this subject can make important contributions:

- It prepares for paid work, as well as for parenthood;
- The practical experience helps teenagers to make realistic choices about careers;
- It enables teenagers to get work available to their age group, e.g. as a camp counsellor;
- Practical work helps teenagers understand the growth and development of themselves and their siblings, sibling interaction, and interactions with their own parents;
- It enables teenagers to understand the needs of children, individual and group activities to meet these needs, and the roles and responsibilities of the family and other institutions.

Whitfield (1979) reports that the EFP curriculum and materials were used in many secondary high schools, colleges, universities and community agencies. A central unit was a one-year elective course, *Exploring Parenthood*, for 13-to-18-year-olds. It 'increased

understanding of the self and others, leading to improved family relationships, e.g. greater tolerance of younger siblings and better communication with parents.' And there were other interesting initiatives. Seven national voluntary youth organisations, including the Salvation Army, and Boy and Girl Scouts, got three-year grants to pilot the work in non-school settings. This involved experience of child development in pre-schoolers' own homes, as well as in childcare centres, day camps, hospitals and with 'handicapped' children. A participant's comment throws a new light on outcomes: 'I had not thought of a career working with children before. This program made me aware that having children yourself is not the only way of having a close association with children.'

Kruger expressed his hope that this education will 'create within the new generation a spirit of child advocacy which will counter the many tendencies in our present society which can best be labelled anti-child,' and that 'every child in our future may proudly acclaim that he or she has *the best parents in the World*!!' (His emphasis.)

Meaning: 'A key factor in the retention of learning'

It's equally important, Kruger stresses, that the course content is full of *meaning* to the students. Here are some recommended perspectives from his respondents.

- Practical work and/or child development laboratory – real life opportunities to observe babies, interact with children and assess the value of different techniques used by childcare staff;
- Films, film strips, audio cassettes bring case studies to the classroom which would be difficult to observe in natural settings;
- Group discussion, especially about practical work;
- Checklists to help students analyse what happens in interactions, why it happens, and how behaviour might be made more constructive.

Relevant and universal: two questions

All teaching must be *relevant,* says Kruger. 'Will the approach used convey to the student a traceable, significant, logical connection between the material under study and its use in parenthood or childcare career?' As for *universality*, 'Will the approach attract, involve and benefit *all* secondary school students in the one anticipated experience and responsibility which is common to more adolescents than any other which life is likely to offer?'

Why a new effort?

Kruger explains the need for a new initiative:

- Few students study parenthood. Less than 10 percent enrol in vocational or home economics education of all types. Only two percent of males do so;
- The quality of some programs leaves much to be desired – especially where there is no practical or child lab work;
- Many vocational programs fail to draw on the total resources of the school. Resources include, for example, early childhood education, health and physical education, social studies, biology, fine arts, and counselling. All have much to contribute to a comprehensive program for every student.

'The role of the school is destined to change'

Kruger concludes by calling for improved relationships between concerned institutions. Link up the secondary work with both primary and adult education. Involve health and welfare agencies. Acknowledge the role of the parent as first educator, and the school teacher as trainer and consultant to the 'parent-teacher.' Kruger must be turning in his grave at what has become of his massive amount of fervent work. We can only hope that this obituary will give rise to new shoots.

Chapter Thirty

Educating for Parenting 1979

(later called *Educating Children for Parenting*,
then *Educating Communities for Parenting* from 2005)

When will we, like the Canadians and others, realise that $200 a year for prevention is worth so much more than $88,000 a year for a 'cure'?
Dr Myriam Miedzian, Huffington Post 2011

Education Communities for Parenting still exists today, described in Volume Two of this book. We give here its long, inspiring history.

From its start in 1979, Educating for Parenting, co-founded by Sara Park ('Sally') Scattergood, Dr Henri Parens and others, taught healthy parenting to children, teenagers, families and communities with the aim of helping to break the cycle: to reduce both the high incidence in the US of problems resulting from harmful parenting, and the high rate of teenage pregnancy: 'kids having kids.' The original curriculum was created by a multi-disciplinary team of six doctors and social workers from the Eastern Pennsylvania Psychiatric Institute, led by Dr Parens, director of its Early Child Development Program. Julie Currie and Sally, teachers at Germantown Friends school, joined them. The team realised that theory needed to be tested in classrooms. They raised funds. Monthly visits by parents and babies, 'a live laboratory experience,' began.

Dr Henri Parens and Sally Scattergood: action via concentration camp experience and Quaker values

Sally, a Quaker and an experienced early years teacher at the private Quaker Germantown Friends school in Philadelphia, was worried that parenting was not included in school curricula, despite its enormous importance. She had noticed that children receiving good parenting did better at school than others. A very special and beloved teacher,

her personal and professional qualities are noteworthy, helping to explain her success. At her death aged 100 in 2014, the family wrote: 'She will be remembered for her delight in her students and the creative joy she brought to her classroom, devising imaginative curricula that integrated science, social studies, music and theatre.'

The culmination of her career was to co-found Education for Parenting, a non-profit organisation whose aim is to teach the importance of caring, of nurturing parent-child relationships, critical thinking, and peaceful solutions to conflict. She got the idea from seeing first-hand the problems facing children and families. Nothing was taught in schools about future parenting. As a result, she helped develop a K-12 (ages 5-to-18) child development and parenting curriculum that has been adopted by schools from Alaska to Philadelphia. 'She left a trail that is worth remembering,' said a friend. And Dr Harriet Heath, founder and former director of the Parent Center at Bryn Mawr college in Pennsylvania, recalls: 'She was a master teacher, and asked amazing questions just right for the subject and the students with whom she was working.'

Sally had read writings by Dr Parens (1928 – 2022), the German-American Jewish psychiatrist, child and adult psychoanalyst and writer who survived the Holocaust and spent his life understanding and developing ways to help prevent war and violence, one way being to nurture in very young children the qualities needed for good parenting. He was known as 'the father of parenting education.' Having led the original team, he served as consultant to the early school program and ran the first parent/infant discussion groups at the school, following a traditional psychoanalytic approach. The groups were later led by others.

The start of baby and parent observation

In 1979, Sally began the pilot project, each month bringing a number of mothers and fathers at the same time with their infants into the classroom for students together aged five-to-eleven. The parents sat in a circle and interacted with their babies. Sally led the sessions, commenting on the interactions and developmental milestones.

Students observed: What were the babies doing? What was a baby doing now that she couldn't do the month before? What did the parents do to support the growing babies? How did the parents talk to and play with their baby? If they brought toys, what kinds? Students who'd been observers then joined the 'inner circle' and interacted with the infants, performing 'experiments' such as rolling a ball, or seeing if the babies could turn a page in a book. The students recorded what the babies and parents did, and asked questions. And a human development course for ages 14-to-18, also bringing parents and infants into the classroom, was taught to high school students.

Our ultimate goal is to let students experience first-hand
some of the pleasures, hardships and responsibilities
associated with caring for a baby.
Sally Scattergood

In 1984, Anita Kulick's eight-year-old daughter Jessica brought home a notice from Abington Friends School asking for volunteers for a new baby watching program. Anita applied with her new baby, Joshua. She could not have guessed that one day she would become CEO and president of Educating Communities for Parenting (ECP.) In 2001 she was asked by Sally Scattergood and the ECP chair, Dr Patricia Scully, to join ECP to help promote it into more schools, as by this time the political climate was becoming more conservative (George Bush had become president in 2001, soon creating *No Child Left Behind*.) Many schools were wary of the name Educating

Children for Parenting. They thought ECP was promoting the idea that children should become parents! That explains the change of name to Educating Communities for Parenting.

Dr Harriet Heath joins ECP (late 1970s / early 1980s)

From these early experiences, the curriculum *Education for Parenting: Learning How to Care* (1983) emerged, written by Dr Harriet Heath, the lead author, with Sally Scattergood and Sandy Meyer. 'It is brilliant, remarkable and extraordinary, and still used today,' wrote Kulick in 2019. Before joining Education for Parenting, Harriet, a developmental psychologist, had spent 20 years studying parenting and working with parents. She had developed a program for parents on humanistic rather than psychoanalytic lines, based on the writing, amongst others, of Piaget, Erikson, Bronfenbrenner and the American psychiatrist Stella Chess. Her approach encouraged parents to think through how they wanted to nurture their children.

The process was based on a caring approach. This involved planning: identifying a situation, brainstorming ways of dealing with it, and identifying which ways to use, based on knowledge of the situation and what was aimed for. There were 14 written guides that parents could use to help them decide how they could best act.

Harriet simplified this approach for school students by offering five guides which were introduced in lessons in-between the parent/infant visits. Children planned for the visit. How could they structure the classroom to make it interesting, safe, comfortable and pleasant for the parent and child? In other words, they were implementing the caring process. Caring is thinking about and providing for another, how you talk to others, how you touch them. They observed what the baby needed and could do; they could follow how the parent provided for and supported the baby. The curriculum integrated Sally Scattergood's exceptional ways of working with children, her inspired

teaching methods, particularly the questions she asked, and gave guidance to teachers on how to present the material.

The six units in the original curriculum each covered a school year's work and was suitable, with adaptations, for 5-to-13-year-olds. It detailed what it means to observe: noting; watching closely; listening; making detailed, objective, non-judgmental observations; recognising facial and bodily expressions; the sequence of events; how things change month to month and minute to minute; and how parents adapt to these changes.

A three-unit syllabus

The curriculum for five-to-eight-or-nine-year-olds was:

Unit One: Parents with their newborn visit the classroom.
This included several visits by the couple before the birth, covering healthy development of the fetus and how to prepare for its birth;

Unit Two: Parents with their baby visit the classroom.
Getting to know the baby, communication;

Unit Three: Parents with their toddler visit the classroom

A curriculum for older students aged 9-to-11-or-12 repeated these three units in more detail.

'It was an exciting program to teach,' wrote Harriet, who gave talks about it in many places, including Egypt. The manual for teachers covered all three units and enabled them to present these sessions, even if they had little time or opportunity to train. An additional handbook was produced with suggested questions that teachers could use during visits, because some had difficulty in knowing what to ask. The units had information on how the caring process could be

integrated into other subjects, such as the removal of Native Americans from their land, or how to care for the classroom pet.

Monday morning at Germantown Friends School

An article in *Studies in Education* (1985) brings the work to life, giving a vivid, breathless account of ECP at its height, written by the three staff at that time: Sally, Harriet and Sandra Meyer. It describes work on Monday mornings with five age-levels of students. It begins: 'A group of straggling toddlers, infants in strollers, and babies carried in the arms of caregivers are making the weekly journey from their nursery to the big kindergarten. It is time for the regular visits of these knee-high gremlins to their friends, the five-year-olds.' The children and their teacher have written up the babies' names, what the walking and non-walking babies might like to do, and how the children might interest them. They reflect on possible reasons why one baby cried last week. As the babies arrive, they actively care for them, one in each class, for 20 minutes.

A class of seven-year-olds is visited by one mother and her 'fussing' newborn baby. The children discuss what the baby wants. The mother gives it the breast and the class understands one meaning of crying: how babies communicate their needs. For these younger children, learning takes concrete forms.

As students mature, methods can become more abstract and complex. Nine-year-olds, complete with notebooks, observe the parent/infant discussion group led by Dr Parens, sitting in a circular group of mothers with their infants. Two toddlers, yelling at each other, try to grab the same doll. A mother gently intervenes. Mothers ask questions to Dr Parens about their babies' development and share their concerns about parenting. Back in class, the children discuss what they witnessed, how they might have dealt with the conflict, and their own experiences of sharing with siblings.

Dr Parens tells the mothers to play with their babies
because playtime is primetime, playtime is healing time.
Student aged nine

Once the parent/infant group is over, it's the turn of 11-year-olds to meet the parents, bringing toys they have tailor-made, or books for the infant they are each matched with over the eight-week course, *Learning How to Care for Infants*. They get experience of holding, feeding, changing, talking with and playing with their infant.

When my sister cries at dinner she is a royal pain,
except I know what to do most of the time to calm her down. I am able to understand her more and feel what she feels so I can figure out what she wants.
Student aged eleven

And there is a human development class for 16-to-17-year-olds. Some had been assigned a baby aged five-to-six months; others had a 10-to-11-month-old. They had all shown their baby a doll, then had hidden it under a blanket. The different responses of the babies are linked by teachers to writings by Piaget and Margaret Mahler. But it's not just academic. Students are asked how they would plan for their own baby at different ages and stages.

This ambitious, innovative undertaking across a whole school, developed by professionals who experimented to discover what worked well in classrooms, produced the curriculum *Learning About Parenting: An Ideas Book*. This gave teachers materials to use or adapt imaginatively, as they wanted, to integrate into lessons they were already delivering. As time went on, enthusiastic teachers contributed their own ideas. Children were encouraged to read to their infants. The benefits of this work were seen not only in nurturing a caring attitude, but in developing reading, writing and math skills.

The 17 members of the advisory board contributed expertise by discussing ideas with staff, and the link with mental health professionals at Pennsylvania's Medical College continued. Germantown School provided office space, supplies and administrative support. There were many attempts by Sandy Meyer at fundraising from foundations with some success, but the impression is that this was a long struggle. There were some media appearances. My enquiry to the school (2019) revealed that the program no longer operates there, though Sally is very fondly remembered. As she wrote, 'Our hope is that once students realise how much time, energy, knowledge, expense and skill are required for healthy parenting, they will think twice before getting involved in situations they will regret later. Many of the fantasies of being a parent are dispelled.' The work in social and emotional learning was often replaced in the US by departments of education feeling the need to emphasize science, technology and math, as well as a lot of practice for academic performance testing.

Stuart Harris, Myriam Miedzian & Mary Gordon visit

When sceptics visit the exciting classes, they begin to realise that Education for Parenting not only is effective in making students more sensitive to the whole field of human relations, but is itself a stimulating, worthwhile, academic subject. Scattergood et al.

Stuart Harris, an Englishman living in the US, deeply interested in parenting and well-being, visited ECP in 2001 and was *'very* impressed,' so much so that he considered moving to Philadelphia to help spread it more widely. Back in 1995 in Roanoke, Virginia, he had worked with the YMCA and Planned Parenthood to create lesson plans, based on the work of ECP, to fit in with school requirements such as English and math. Weighing the baby, for example, and learning the costs of food were parts of a math lesson. Teachers were taught how to administer the program.

In the late 1980s, Dr Myriam Miedzian watched a session at the Germantown Friends School, reinforcing what we know from other sources: the power of this work to reach youngsters heading for delinquency. She quoted the 'extraordinary metamorphoses' that she witnessed. 'When I comment to a teacher on how well one of the boys is getting along with his child, she tells me he is a troublesome boy with considerable academic and behavioral difficulties.' And she recounts her visit to a special education school - a class with seven boys and two girls aged 12-to-13. 'Kids in this class seem depressed, the most listless class I've been to,' she noted. The toddler arrived. 'All the students, bar one, woke up, came alive. There was smiling, hugging, deep disappointment when the session ended.' At the other end of the socio-economic hierarchy, she cites an elective baby care course at New York's all boys Collegiate prep school. Posh 10-to-11-year-old boys loved learning how to look after and play with babies.

Other programs where children observe babies and their parents are described in detail in Volume Two of this book. Baby visits in Germantown Friends school were the very first that we know of, observed by Mary Gordon who, as we shall see in Volume Two, then used what she learnt to found Roots of Empathy in Canada.

The programme spreads

This program is a gem. Anita Kulick

In 1984, ECP staff gave workshops for teachers at local state ('public') schools. In 1985, it was adapted in up to 20 Philadelphia state schools, all in deprived areas, and gradually in areas outside town, such as Long Island, Washington D.C., Boston, New York City, Chicago, Alaska and Los Angeles where Harriet worked with Dr Kerby Alvy, psychologist and parenting expert. Teachers were trained to deliver the program and a system of support was set up for them. Schools had some leeway. One headteacher decided that 10-

and-11-year-olds only would take part. A second let class teachers decide. A third delivered it to ages 5-to-13.

In 1987, Harriet trained educators, including Dr Dana McDermott, to deliver these sessions. Dr McDermott recalls, 'We were amazed at how much social and academic learning took place' by the children. 'Parents and teachers underestimated the powerful impact these classes would have on students' social-emotional development, their empathy and their excitement about learning.' An example of a topic they discussed was *Needs*: how not only babies, but older children too, communicate their needs and have them met. Children were seen to become kinder to each other, to include less popular classmates, and to show more respect and consideration to everyone.

> *Teachers were trained in the curriculum and they incorporated it into their daily lessons, literally turning the classroom into a living learning lab for students.*
> Anita Kulick

The program spread to other Quaker and independent schools in 1988: Abington Friends, Baldwin, Friends' Central, Friends Select, Moorestown Friends, William Penn Charter, Shipley, Springside, Wilmington Friends school and Chestnut Hill academy. But this proliferation was a struggle. Sally wrote a depressingly familiar-sounding account. 'Convincing other schools of the program's benefit was not easy. They were hesitant to initiate some of its innovative aspects, even the relatively simple teaching tool of having an infant and parent visit the classroom. Influencing the thinking of school administrators to accept the importance of such a program required long, continuing education, advocacy and support.' It is to the great credit of the staff that they persisted and got as far as they did. It maybe would be even harder these days.

Benefits for parents – mothers, fathers and couples – who visit with their baby or toddler

There's much anecdotal evidence that parents who regularly bring their baby into a classroom find it helpful. They feel useful making a contribution to the school (parents tend to feel undervalued in society); they like the interest taken in their baby by children and teachers; they have a chance to model respect and caring to the class. A few quotes from many: 'It has helped me feel good about my parenting skills.' Occasionally a couple visit, a real family affair: 'It helped my wife and me to get to know many more students in an intimate setting. It was very positive, in a prideful way, for my older son who was a student in the class.' It raises self-esteem: 'It helped me to focus on the importance of my job as a parent'; and it can improve parenting: 'It helps me to communicate and relate better with my children.'

This father made an unanswerable case. 'I wanted to bring my two-year-old son because many of the children in this school do not have fathers in their homes and I want to show them how being a father is part of being a man and that maturity includes nurturing roles. I want the boys to see that a man can bond with his child and keep involved with his child's life, and I want to show the girls that not all men leave their families and that they don't have to expect this to happen to them.' As Dr McDermott says, 'Teaching these skills early, before boys see them as female traits, is essential.'

Partnering

Another activity which students could choose or not, to give further experience of caring, was partnering. Teachers were taught how to prepare a comfortable session by planning and brainstorming, and learnt how to encourage older students to reflect afterwards. An older child was paired with a younger one. The older 'lead' partner sought out information about their child so that they could bring books to

read that would be of interest during a shared library time, or they asked questions about the activities of their younger friend when they were together. An example of planning: 'Zoey will be the lead partner. She will read to Samantha. Zoey found out that Samantha was from Mexico and liked to play jump rope. She chose a short story about a girl in a jump rope contest. She found a quiet spot in the health center of the school for them to read in. She practised reading the story before she met Samantha.'

It's touching that Sally's own grandson said that his favorite activity was partnering. There was specific matching too. For instance, an older child whose parents had divorced, might be paired with a little one going through the same. It was also a golden opportunity for older children who were not proficient in reading, to read easy books to their young partners which they would be embarrassed to look at on their own. They learnt that reading is fun, a way to get to know another child, and not something that every child gets at home. Harriet told me that partnering still operates in some Quaker schools. It's important to fully prepare the older partners about communicating well, and to help them all feel comfortable.

It is relevant here to mention the Child Development Project (late 1970s to 1980s) near San Francisco, run by Dyek Brown and funded by the Hewlett Foundation. It aimed to increase pro-social values and encourage better behaviour using co-operative, not competitive, methods. Ages were mixed. Classes regularly joined together so that the older ones could buddy the younger and choose to devote some of their free time as tutors. They were invited to do community service, such as adopting a needy family, rather than just donating toys for charity. Homework was interviewing their parents about family history. Some brought their grandparents into school to share childhood memories. Five years later, both evaluators and parents agreed that the children now behaved in more pro-social ways.

Later work and the spiral curriculum

After Harriet left ECP, a new more structured, didactic curriculum was developed using a spiral structure. Psychologist Jerome Bruner developed the spiral curriculum. You deal with the same subject year after year, enriching the material as children mature. 'A spiral curriculum can be defined as a course of study in which students will see the same topics throughout their school career, with each encounter increasing in complexity, and reinforcing previous learning.' The ECP work was later given the catchier title Baby Watch, taken from Sidwell Friends school which still runs the program and, interestingly, still brings a number of parents and babies to class at the same time, rather than just one pair.

The long-term nature of both curricula coming out of ECP is in contrast to every other program described in this book, which are all much shorter. We hypothesise that Sally's process produced far more permanent, memorable outcomes than shorter-term work. There was certainly a conviction amongst Philadelphia teachers that ECP prevented early pregnancies. 'This year we have not had one pregnancy yet,' said a teacher concerned about the previous number in 12-and-13-year-olds. Students came to realise vividly, through doing, the high levels of emotional maturity and restrictions involved in parenthood.

Students also helped look after the baby: for example, by nappy changing and feeding. Once aged 11, each student moved on and looked after a toddler every week for 12 weeks at the school's workplace nursery. This involved preparation: talking to the parents to discover all about the child; researching child development; and discussing in class how best to behave with the toddler. Later, they made a toy for their child, wrote a report for the parents, and finally received a childcare certificate.

There was a variety of courses: for teens with and without children; in one-off workshops; a ten-session series; or a year-long school-based course. Courses for youth, pregnant teens and teenage parents included:

Empowerment Zone for 5-to-19-year-olds: To understand the need for self-care and self-sufficiency, increase personal responsibility and healthy behaviors, and understand the impact of negative behavior on families and the community;

Power to Parent: Classes on child development; nurturing techniques; positive methods of discipline; stress and anger management; health and safety issues; communication; life skills; and self-esteem, to enable students to understand the importance of education for themselves and their children. The program *ECP Connect* was offered to graduates of *Power to Parent*.

'Our courses', ECP wrote when in full swing, 'are focused on helping youngsters understand that parenting is much much more than feeding and diapering – it's making sure that you are able to meet all your children's needs - cognitive, relational, social, psychological - in addition to physical.'

ECP set up the Sara Park Scattergood Endowment Fund (1997), care of the Philadelphia Foundation, to help finance the work. It seems no longer to exist. Money for work in schools had dried up. By 2011 the large number of Baby Watch courses up and down the East Coast, and in other US states, had declined dramatically. Dr Miedzian explains this partly by *No Child Left Behind* with its emphasis on academic testing, and partly by reluctance in the US to fund preventative programs. ECP therefore lost its funding.

Yet its fourth, current CEO and president, Anita Kulick, wrote that 'getting pre-parenting education into the schools is needed now more than ever. In the US, most social service funding is for intervention

and not prevention – which is short-sighted and far, far less cost effective. We could run a Baby Watch program for a fraction of the cost of intervention remedies.' Meanwhile, 'school violence is rampant in Philadelphia, with more than 30,000 serious incidents in five years. Students and teachers live in fear,' wrote Dr Miedzian in 2011.

Quakers have a long history of addressing social problems. Their contribution to our subject has been seminal. As we have seen, Germantown is a Quaker school (though few students are from Quaker homes.) The thoroughness of the work reflects Quaker values of social action and long-term commitment. The enormous contributions of Sally and Harriet, both Quakers, were based on these values, and ensured a program that has been highly effective.

Parenting is not about techniques.
Parenting is about relationships.
It's as simple as that.
Dr Gabor Maté

Chapter Thirty-one

The Caring Project: Education for Parenting - Learning How to Care (LHTC) 1980s

We had children who would not miss school on the days when parents with their children were visiting.
Dr Harriet Heath

The Caring Project was established as an informal working group by two distinguished writers, practitioners and trainers: Dr Harriet Heath from Pennsylvania and Dr Dana McDermott from Chicago. It aimed to continue and develop the work of Educating Children for Parenting, to help students become more caring: 'their first step to later becoming nurturing parents. It combined visits to schools and babies with work with parents. It recognised that if children were to learn to care, they needed more opportunities than monthly parent/infant visits. The Caring Project encompassed all components of school life, differing from ECP in its training of teachers to facilitate the visits and weave the topics into all other school subjects, rather than using outside experts. The LHTC program from 1989 to 1991 ran in inner city schools and in others with a religious affiliation.

If a main aim of parenthood education is to nurture the capacity of children and young people to become caring parents, let us see how Dr Heath pinpoints the nature of caring.

- Knowing, feeling and acting in the interest of others;
- Being concerned about, and facilitating, the growth and actualisation of others, the planet, and even oneself;
- Parenting is an example of an intense form of caring about the well-being of another, because of the closeness of the relationship, the length of time involved, and the degree of responsibility.

Few of us think deeply and in detail about what it really means to 'care.' This project did. 'Caring is more than feelings.' It's about concern for someone or something. It needs more than wanting to do something. It requires information and skills too. The subject of caring has featured in the US in fascinating ways, with different angles taken by writers like Heath, Nel Noddings and Carol Gilligan. The philosopher and educationalist Noddings argued that someone who cares has to be 'engrossed' in the person cared for, in order to understand that person's situation. But understanding is not enough and guarantees nothing. The carer has then to act according to the needs of the other. And the person cared for has to recognise and respond to the caring. Then the caring is 'complete in the other.'

Critics have argued that this represents an unequal, dependent relationship, and that the real aim of caring is to nurture independence. Some feminists reject Noddings' model because it resembles a traditional female role. And the influential psychologist Gilligan distinguishes between the ways that men and women care. Heath emphasises that although caring is a feeling, an emotion, how one lives it has to be learned. The caring role of a parent is grossly undervalued by our materialistic society. Others stress the need to care for oneself as well as for others. McDermott defines it 'as a process involving an attitude of being concerned, an awareness of situations, a knowledge of possible choices, and an ability to assess which alternative is best.' This shows how a simple word like 'caring' is understood in many ways, giving rise to controversy - food for thought when working with youngsters who can use common words such as 'care' or 'love,' not realising their complexities. You need to *show* that you care in your attitudes and actions, not just *say* you do.

Harriet's previous work with parents was based on planning, implementing and reflecting. Planning involves describing the situation, brainstorming as many ways as possible of dealing with it, and making a plan by selecting which ideas to implement, based on

knowledge of the people involved. After implementing the plan, the parents she worked with reflected on how it went. This long-tried-and-tested method was adapted for schools in this way.

Before the visit

Planning was done to prepare for the parent/infant visit. Students identified the situation, brainstormed possible ways to deal with it, and made a plan by deciding ways to implement the visit, based on:

- Knowledge of the baby involved, its age, abilities, temperament, and needs and goals for the session;
- The needs of the parent to be comfortable;
- The needs of the students to see and participate.

During the visit

- The baby was always measured, and the measurements recorded;
- The baby was shown or handed a book and a ball. What the baby did was recorded;
- Students asked the parents questions about what the baby did at home and what the parent had to do for the baby. Specific questions might be asked related to topics being studied: temperament patterns; behaviour relevant to a specific age of baby;
- All information was recorded on a chart, a long piece of paper divided into the months when the baby would be visiting across the top; topics to be recorded down the left-hand side;
- By the end of the year, students had a developmental chart about the baby.

After the visit

Students reflected on it and on the adequacy of their planning, which could inform their planning for the next visit.

After leaving Educating Children for Parenting, Harriet finalised the curriculum *Education for Parenting: Learning How to Care* (1995), reducing it to the basic three units, and introduced and supported the program in state schools in several parts of the US, including Alaska and Chicago. The curriculum was a development of that of ECP in Philadelphia. It covered care for oneself, for others and for life around us, such as pets or the environment, showing teachers how caring can be integrated in all aspects of the school curriculum. Kathi Wineman, curriculum specialist from Alaska's department of education, took an interest and provided funding for its completion. Harriet trained teachers, and set up a support system in Juneau and the Bristle Bay School District. The Clemens Foundation in Chicago also donated money. Harriet and Dana presented the curriculum at conferences for American schools abroad and other professional groups. It was chosen by the New York department of education but never funded. It's available on request from harriet.e.heath@gmail.com

Harriet remembers 'how teaching caring, how to nurture infants, is such a strong method of countering bullying. We found that it could change the tone of a school.' Students learned another way of relating. But sadly, 'we never assembled the finances to do the necessary research,' (illustrating the low priority given to this subject compared with research into, for instance, the development of armaments.) An aim of ECP and The Caring Project was to help create a more harmonious world through empathetic parenting.

It's painful to read of the demise of this work. In 2017 Harriet wrote: 'It's good to hear that someone is still working to try to get parent education into the schools. With the movement of *No Child Left Behind* pushed into the schools, our work was eliminated. I've now focused almost exclusively on working with parents. The emphasis on testing has tragically excluded many preventative programs.' Education authorities did not realize that Harriet's curriculum

facilitated a full 17 cognitive skills. Economists such as de Wahl, Heckman and Rifkin are currently promoting the teaching of caring and empathy. The Caring Project is disbanded, but Harriet and Dana, though retired, still run parent groups with an emphasis on all that it means to care. Dana plans new research on the effectiveness of parenting education programs in Chicago.

Chapter Thirty-two

New York City Child Development, Parenting and Parent Development course 1985 – 2000

Teaching parenting is one of the most useful things
I have done in my life. It gives true meaning to life.
Lou Howort

The one New York course that we know much about involved an especially inspired chap. Lou Howort, a physical education teacher, couldn't speak more warmly about his experiences of teaching parenthood. 'It's a gift to give to teens. Most of them will find what they learn to be a revelation. It will change their view of what it means to be a parent and make them better ones when their time comes.'

I'm glad I took this class. I can't tell you how much it means to me.
Sometimes I leave this class and start to cry. For one reason:
happiness from taking this class. Student

Lou, teaching health education, was shocked by the lack of knowledge by his very nice students about children, and their belief in hitting. Most were used to being hit. 'I knew I had to expand what I did in health to include child development.' After hearing a talk by the psychiatrist Dr Margaret Kind, he joined her to develop his course. He taught it to 16-to-17-year-olds for over 15 years from 1985 at the High School for the Humanities in New York City. Aimed at non-pregnant, non-parenting teenagers, it was adaptable for any group. 'Pregnant or parenting teens get a lot out of it as well.' The course could be used for a whole term, or more flexibly by using it in parts. Its 33 topics were dealt with by lesson plans, activities, and readings, covering child development; child observation; healthy child-rearing skills; motivations for having children; the stresses of parenthood; and current family life. It emphasised how parents and their roles change

with the developmental stages of their children: intellectual, emotional, social and moral. This linked the behaviour of the child with its stage of development.

Lou gives a good example. 'The understanding of language by two-year-olds is incomplete. They have many words but that doesn't mean they understand all of them or understand concepts that they form. If a two-year-old is running on the sidewalk towards the street and the parent says, "Don't get into the street - you could get hit by a car!" the child will have no concept of what it means to get hit by a car. The idea is an abstraction. If the child sees something of interest in the street such as a ball, she/he will run into the street as though deaf to the parent's words. When this happens, the parent is likely to get very angry and yell or spank it to "teach him not to do it again." But the child is incapable of understanding. So why get angry or hit the child? It's the parent's mistake to let the child get so far ahead.'

I can't really tell you how much this class made me a better person. Student

As for hitting, Lou emphasises that it will teach the child something, but not what's intended. 'It will teach the child to fear the parent. It will make the child feel angry. Later on, it will teach him to lie to the parent out of fear. The relationship between parent and child is damaged. The child's anger will be acted out in asocial ways later in life. The parent will never understand why the child is distant from her or behaves in self-destructive ways. Understanding developmental levels gives parents the power to make rational decisions about how to treat their children. This will help break the cycle of child abuse and all it can lead to.'

Dr Kind visited the sessions yearly to talk about baby battering. She described mothers with whom she worked hitting their babies when they dropped their bottle. By the end of the course, most students agreed with Lou and Dr Kind that hitting was not the answer.

Lou's child-centred attitude can be seen by the stress he laid on the 'need for teachers to positively model the curriculum's conviction that children are entitled to be treated with dignity, respect and understanding.' Students learnt not just about child development, but also about themselves. 'This is a very powerful curriculum and it always made me feel that the outcomes justified my existence.' By 1990, the New York City Board of Education published his curriculum which was then used in 33 high schools as an elective course over one semester (15-to-18 weeks.)

> *As I was learning about child development,*
> *I was understanding why my parents are the way they are.* Student

I tried to find out if this course is still offered in New York schools, but to no avail. There was a curriculum manual written by Dr Harriet Heath, but never funded. Lou's program was halted and the pilots discontinued in the first part of the 21st century, no doubt as a result of *No Child Left Behind*. Lou, now retired and loving being a grandfather, wrote: 'I'm sure your book will be of great use to anyone who wants to know more about understanding children – parents, teachers, aunts, uncles, grandparents etc. Very exciting. To my knowledge, no city or state in the US has mandated a child development and parenting course. With all the emphasis on reading and math testing here, I doubt if that will happen any time soon.'

New York City public schools: The Law (2000)

There have been at least two large-scale school-based parenting programs in New York in the last 50 years. A full course was piloted throughout New York City in the 1980s. With economic changes, they reduced in scale but were stopped suddenly with the recession, with no research available. But in July 2000, a paper, *Parenting Education,* was published by the university of the State of New York's state education department, written by its office of elementary,

middle, secondary and continuing education. It sounds as though the department really took the idea on board, with a great number of people of all sorts involved in the process. Here are excerpts:

Is instruction in parenting education required for all students?
Yes. Section 100.5(a)(vi) of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education requires all students entering eighth grade in fall 2001 and thereafter to achieve parenting education standards before they graduate from high school.

Who may teach parenting education?
Education Law 804(b)(1993) authorises schools to include, as an integral part of family and consumer sciences or health education, instruction regarding child development, and parental skills and responsibilities. Such instruction must be taught only by teachers certified to teach family and consumer sciences (FACS) or health education.

Can it be taught in middle schools?
School districts have the flexibility to organise and integrate it according to available resources and to meet the needs of their students and communities. Age appropriateness and cultural sensitivity should be considered in introducing it at any age.

How many weeks of instruction are required?
The regulations don't prescribe a unit of study. The state education department is preparing a *Parenting Education Resources Guide*. Drs Harriet Heath and Dana McDermott contributed materials and guidance based on their long experience. Schools must allocate sufficient time for instruction to ensure students achieve standards in it.

Can it be taught as a separate course?
Yes. It can be integrated into health education or FACS [Family and Consumer Sciences] or be offered as a separate course taught only by health

education or FACS certified teachers. School districts often develop separate courses to meet the unique needs of their student population.

What information is currently available about it?
The state education department is gathering information, suggestions and recommendations from educators, administrators and the greater school community about implementing parent education. Information will be posted on www.nyed.gov [website unavailable by 2024]

How can school staff, administrators, parents, families, students and community members become involved in it?
At the State level, all of these have been invited for focus groups and other activities to develop guidance that will help schools to implement it. At the District level, several school districts are conducting a paper enquiry and/or student focus groups. There have been a few pilots. For information about ongoing state initiatives, call the New York state parenting education project office.

Will the state education department develop a curriculum guide for it?
No. But it will provide a resource guide (ready by the fall 2001) and related training and support to help schools develop local curricula.

What funding can be used?
[Ah, maybe here's the rub.] None is allocated. There are no state dollars specifically targeted for it. School districts must use their existing resources or state aid dollars targeted for implementing learning standards.

How will it be assessed?
There is no state assessment. The guide will discuss local assessment.

I asked the department in 2020 what has happened to these excellent intentions, but received no reply.

Chapter Thirty-three
Teen Choices 1990

Most of the things we talk about are not new to them. They may have some knowledge but we feel, even if it reinforces something they already know, it's good.
Jessica Lawrence

One of the most effective ways to teach parenthood is probably the use of life-like baby dolls. A remarkable scheme was run for two years by Jessica Lawrence, an English woman in her mid-30s living in the US. It was a 'golden time' in New York state, she remembers, with many well-funded health programs. Under the aegis of Albany Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), she got funding (1990) from New York state health department and the YWCA to invent a way to prevent unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases for girls aged 12-to-13 attending two middle schools in Albany city. They were at risk of sexual exploitation and pregnancy. Why this age group? The YWCA said, 'Studies have shown that pregnancy prevention programs are most effective when introduced before the high school years of 15-plus.'

The girls, all from very poor, single parent homes, often with drug abuse in the family and pregnant older sisters, attended Jessica's after-school sessions twice a week at school on a voluntary basis for 10 to 12 weeks. The aim was to 'defer and deter motherhood, that there is more to life than motherhood, and to empower the girls to negotiate contraception,' Jessica told me. About 30 girls, mostly Black, came along every Monday and Wednesday each year. Everything – the course, snacks, trips – was free of charge. Every other weekend, depending on attendance, there was an outing treat on a Saturday afternoon to venues chosen by the girls.

A big incentive was hot food. Fast food chains donated pizzas, hamburgers and coca cola, attracting about 16 girls each time. 'This was about 50 percent of their reasons for coming!' Jessica said. And they had a good time in other ways. With a background in the arts, Jessica used role-play. It caused hysterical laughter. The girls learnt how to stop boys taking advantage of them. Sessions covered topics such as decision-making; reproduction; contraception; nutrition; substance misuse; communication; career planning; AIDs prevention; dating; and date rape. The girls' self-esteem grew. Invited speakers, some Black, included female plumbers, lorry drivers, teachers, professors and attorneys, to show the girls what is possible for women.

The girls' mothers, who had been asked to sign permission slips, were keen, and encouraged their daughters to come, determined they should learn to get out of poverty. One mother could even occasionally be seen dragging her girl along. (This was in contrast with Jessica's UK experience. She found that British parents tend to show less interest and to be less helpful.) Parents were regularly informed about what the girls were learning. One-to-one and group meetings with parents were offered throughout the school year.

Because of the shortage of childcare, Jessica's own toddler also attended in a high chair, with the girls competing to look after her. After six months, there was money for an assistant. Two were appointed, one at a time: students from counselling or social work courses, nearer to the girls' ages than Jessica, and a good laugh was had by all. There were educational visits to clinics and hospitals. The course ended with an experiential Parent Simulation Day and a certificate, enabling the girls to apply for babysitting or childcare jobs.

But the most vivid and innovative activities were the weekend overnight stays at the YWCA. Jessica rented latex dolls of the sort used to educate medical students: one for each of the 12 girls who

came. The dolls were very realistic; could urinate and cry, and were carried around for the entire weekend. Every three or four hours during the night, Jessica woke the girls to change nappies and sort out bedding. Unexpectedly, some grew very attached to their dolls and were upset when they had to hand them back. Jessica did wonder whether this might have led to pregnancies. But she didn't hear of a single pregnancy over the two years - very impressive, given the high rate before the project.

The experience was a wake-up call about the harder realities of having a baby. Jessica understood that pregnancy could be very attractive for the girls who might get attention only when pregnant: they would enjoy this so much that they might become pregnant again. Her one regret is that boys did not come, though the YWCA leaflet said: 'Mixed sessions are offered to boys. Efforts are being made to expand the program to serve more male youths.'

As well as her background in nursing and adult education, Jessica had taught poetry, storytelling, crafts, painting, drama, and movement in schools for youngsters aged 4-to-16. Once back in the UK, she added puppetry, and invited *Theatre in Education* actors to her work. The knowledge, skills and experience in the arts by people teaching parenthood can greatly enhance the variety and interest of these courses.

Jessica's personal qualities were listed in a reference from the Albany program director. She has 'a wonderful rapport with the young adult population. It was obvious that she is highly capable of energising and engaging the teens, while clearly providing expert information on the issue of concern' - this, in addition to the many administrative duties she had to complete. There was national coverage via the radio and newspapers. It is no surprise that the program expanded into other schools and 'has been well received in the community.'

Chapter Thirty-four
Dads Make A Difference 1993

All of us have a stake in forging
stronger bonds between fathers and their children.
Barack Obama

Dads Make A Difference (DMAD), set up in 1993 by four agencies in Minnesota, was another example of a thriving, successful program with a national and international presence, funded by charitable foundations, with Jan Hayne as the executive director.

Its mission was to 'promote the positive involvement of fathers and to educate youth about responsible parenting.' It also set out to teach the challenges of parenting 'too soon.' Under its umbrella were two programs. The original course was taught in school by trained male and female teen peer educators, because young people's focus groups had said that teens were more likely to listen to their older peers than to teachers. (In Britain, the charity Straight Talking used similar methods, though its peer educators were all parents.)

The R Factor: Building Resilience in Young Adults course was taught by teachers to 16-to-20-year-olds in several venues, including schools and youth detention centres. Participants were encouraged to 'think purposefully about their partners and timelines for parenting, and to take an in-depth look at the impact of fathers' absence.' It is of interest that men have had a strong presence on DMAD's board.

It is a wise father that knows his own child. Anon

The original course included a two-day training for the teen peer educators and four one-hour lessons taught to younger youth in

middle school and community settings. DMAD trained 3,119 teens over its 25-year history, half white, half those of color. Seven percent were pregnant and/or parenting during the course. Trained peer educators then reached nearly 80,000 youngsters with the four-hour lesson curriculum. We list the topics of the four lessons.

Lesson One: Thinking about risk

You will learn:

- About risk and protective factors;
- Examples of positive and negative risks;
- About the importance of fathers from teens and adults in the DMAD video.

Lesson Two: Families and relationships

You will learn:

- What it means to be a responsible father;
- How families are diverse;
- The roles that fathers and mothers play in families;
- How the media portray fathers;
- The importance of co-parenting;
- Qualities of healthy/unhealthy relationships.

Lesson Three: Being a responsible father.

You will learn:

- How to establish paternity;
- How paternity benefits the father, mother and child;
- How a parent pays child support;
- How family members can support each other.

Lesson Four: Making decisions for the future

You will learn:

- How our attitudes can impact on our relationships;
- How risks can alter your future;
- How you are responsible for your choices;
- How to visualise a positive future.

The course also dealt in detail with the benefits for father, mother and child if the father's paternity is made legal.

A man who behaves responsibly for his child….

- Waits to make a baby until he is prepared emotionally and financially to support his child;
- Actively shares with the child's mother in the continuing emotional and physical care of their child;
- Shares with the child's mother in the continuing financial support of their child.

'Co-parenting is when both mother and father, whether living together or not, collaborate as a team, using their strengths and skills to raise healthy, well-adjusted children.'

'Parenting: the most important job you'll ever do'

The *R Factor* curriculum, a six-to-ten-week series of lessons, included statistics, articles on attachment, and experiential activities such as building trust. Case studies were used to simulate family groups. Videos and curricula were on sale via the DMAD website.

DMAD's funding was reduced by 2018 to a small-scale enterprise 'doing one or two trainings for teen peer educators each school year,' a tragically huge decrease. In 2019, it closed down completely. However, Jan Hayne is still willing to consult and share with interested people, and could put together a curriculum binder. You can reach her at jan@dadsmakeadifference.org As of 2024, the DMAD website is still available.

Chapter Thirty-five

Prepare Tomorrow's Parents (PTP) 2005

(formerly called The Parenting Project 1992)

The most important job in the world comes with no training. PTP

Beyond preventing premature pregnancy, research shows that parent-preparing programs develop caring and empathy, reduce violence and bullying, and improve mental health. Julia Steiny, Education News

The mission of The Parenting Project (later called Prepare Tomorrow's Parents), was 'to galvanise a national movement to prepare young people for parenthood,' to act as a resource network, a clearinghouse with information about the many US and international programs, and to advocate for their use. It believed that 'parenting, empathy and nurturing skills must be taught in schools and other settings to all young people from pre-kindergarten and elementary grades through high school as an essential part of the overall curriculum. This is long overdue in our schools and the need becomes more compelling each year,' with rising levels of abuse, neglect and violence in north American homes, and a rise in teenage murders by young men who will become parents. 'Our dream is that when all children receive consistent age-appropriate parenting preparation from pre-kindergarten to high school, our society will become a kinder, safer place for all of us.'

Most people parent the way they were parented. Why not bring parenting education to school at an age when their attitudes and expectations are in formation? PTP

It's always interesting to discover the personal motivation of founders. Suzy Garfinkle Chevrier was born to young parents who didn't have much of a clue. As a mother herself, she found childcare

books misleading. 'I got a baby who never slept. The books don't talk about the healthy baby who never sleeps. Those generalisations are part of what leads to child abuse. That, and the assumption in our culture that parenting will just come naturally. I have always wondered how parents who've had fewer opportunities than me to prepare, and fewer resources, can possibly manage.'

Dr Myriam Miedzian, a campaigner against male violence, also has her story. The Holocaust killed 135 members of her family. Her father was gentle and sensitive. She realised that fathers like him can help prevent sons from becoming violent. Her heartfelt book *Boys Will Be Boys: Breaking the Link Between Masculinity and Violence* came out in 1991. In 1994 Suzy read *When Boys and Babies Meet*, the chapter in that book which describes 'this remarkable program – Educating Children for Parenting,' and wrote to Dr Miedzian from Florida, expressing interest in starting an organisation to advocate the teaching of child-rearing in schools. They didn't waste time. The following year, The Parenting Project was born. In 2005, it changed its name to Prepare Tomorrow's Parents.

The board directors included at various times:

- Keith F Backer (attorney at law)
- Joan Barbuto (Connecticut Coalition for Parent Education)
- Jack Cuffari (Branding and Communication consultant)
- Gary Ferdman, vice president, fundraising (Business Leaders for Sensible Priorities)
- Suzy Garfinkle, founder and president
- Stuart Harris (president, Education Innovation Partners)
- Carol Lewke, vice president, Public Information (Chicago Learns)
- Dorrie Maxwell, treasurer
- Dana McDermott PhD, secretary (DePaul university)
- Myriam Miedzian PhD (social philosopher, author)

- Mimi Plevin-Foust, vice president, Marketing (Wide Time Productions)
- Janet Pozmantier (Parents Under Construction, c/o Childbuilders)
- Judith Schiffer (professor, principal, teacher)
- Marilyn Swierk, vice president, Programming (American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences.)

Andrea M Schuver was the executive director. The interesting advisory board boasted these people at various times:

- Kerby T Alvy PhD, Center for the Improvement of Child Caring
- Rabbi Balfour Brickner, Stephen Wise Free Synagogue
- Christine Cassel MD, dean, School of Medicine, Oregon university
- James P Comer MD, Yale university Child Study Center
- Rebecca Doggett, educational consultant
- Jonah Edelman, executive director, Stand for Children
- Mary Gordon, founder and director, Roots of Empathy
- Kathryn Grody, performing artist
- Harriet E Heath PhD, Bryn Mawr College, Parenting Educator
- Stuart I Harris, Greater Roanoke Valley Character Coalition
- Lou Howort, New York City health teacher and trainer
- Mary M Jurmain, Realityworks, Inc
- Edward Kennedy, US senator
- Patrick Kennedy, US congressman
- Margaret R Kind MD, child psychiatrist
- Jonathan Kozol, author
- Mary Landrieu, US senator
- Pat Loncto, NY State Health Education Leadership Team
- Patty Murray, US senator
- Mandy Patinkin, performing artist
- David Popenoe PhD, National Marriage Project, Rutgers university
- Alvin F Poussaint MD, Harvard Medical School, author
- Deborah Prothrow Stith MD, Harvard School of Public Health
- Kyle D Pruett MD, Yale university Child Study Center, author

- Jacquelynn Puriefoy-Brinkley, president and CEO, Educating Children for Parenting
- Tom Roderick, Educators for Social Responsibility, NY area
- Belinda Rollins, president, Parenting Coalition International
- Christopher Sarson, television producer, Parenting Works
- Judith Schiffer, professor of education, principal
- Mary B Schroer, former Michigan State representative
- Jane Schulze, PhD, Coalition for Parenting Education in Schools
- Louise McIntosh Slaughter, US Congresswoman, New York
- John Vasconcellos, California State Senator, retired
- Bernice Weissbourd, founder and president, Family Focus
- Jack C Westman MD, university of Wisconsin Medical School
- Robert Wexler, US congressman
- Peter Yarrow, Peter, Paul and Mary group, co-founder of Don't Laugh at Me project
- Darlene E Yoquelet, Family and Consumer Sciences, teacher, Garland, Texas
- Edward Zigler PhD, Yale university, director, the Bush Center in Child Development and Social Policy.

And there was a huge number of donors, mostly individuals.

PTP offered seven services:

- A free phone number (888-PARENTS) to facilitate information exchange, referrals and assistance;
- A website with extensive resources for advocates and educators;
- Distribution of materials, such as the guide and video;
- Special events and media appearances to increase public awareness;
- Identifying, networking with and promoting programs and classes that offer effective parenting education for children and teenagers;
- International clearing house of instructional materials;
- Education of officials about the importance of parent education for children and teens.

The amount it achieved is staggering. From media appearances, to establishing the *Prepare Tomorrow's Parents Month* on Father's Day from 2002 (this is still going), to a multi-disciplinary summit meeting producing a report, information on the theory and rationale of this work, materials for teaching, and a free comprehensive 182-page advocacy guide on how to bring this education into schools. Its 13-minute video argues the case. The guide, *Preparing Tomorrow's Parents Today* (2002), gives an excellent account of the need for parent education, how to advocate for it, and details of many programs for children and teenagers, as well as information about related programs such as conflict resolution, anti-bullying and other methods of violence prevention. PTP was a two-way process. 'Please keep in touch. Please let us know your progress, your frustrations and your success. We are here for you.'

PTP carried out a nationwide survey in 1999 of the views of 1,000 adults about relationships education and parenting preparation in schools. At elementary school level, 69 percent favoured or strongly favoured it. At middle school level, many more did, and at high-school level, 82 percent, with only seven percent opposed.

> *We, who are part of PTP, believe the essence of parenting – the ability to empathise with and nurture others – forms the basis for a child's character development, and cannot be left to chance.*
> Dr Dana McDermott 2008

Its paper, *The Need to Prepare Children and Teens for Parenting,* available on their website, makes a full, unanswerable case: the levels of poor or harmful parenting in the US; escalating violence; the 'epidemic' of US teen pregnancy; the need for empathy and its frequent absence in childrearing; the ignorance of some parents about what's needed for healthy emotional development; the effects of poor parenting on mental health; the problems of latchkey and carer children; the rate of absent fathers; and the reduction in extended family networks. It

concludes: 'Schools are the only institutions capable of the widespread implementation of parenting education. Our aim is to have parenting education included as an essential part of the elementary and secondary school curriculum, and in youth programs.'

Over a three-year period, Prepare Tomorrow's Parents gave me the confidence, know-how and energy to implement an ambitious state-wide mandate with little funding. PTP has truly been the 'wind beneath our wings.'
Pat Loncto, instruction developer/project co-ordinator
New York State Parenting Education

As with some other US projects, Prepare Tomorrow's Parents has sadly been in hiatus for a number of years. Its excellent website still offers a unique, comprehensive wealth of ideas and experience. Articles include:

- The need for parenting education in middle and high schools;
- Parenting education addresses: children's abuse and neglect/cycles of violence/the critical need for empathy, the need for early sensitive care/mental health/latchkey children/our schools and youth programs/the need for parental involvement;
- The length of time recommended for parenting education to have impact;
- The theoretical background perspectives informing parenting education: what is involved in parenting?, theory from an historical perspective;
- From theory to practice: some successful methods of parent education;
- Parenting education and standards: supporting materials and research;
- Roles and responsibilities of parents;
- Reference list (bibliography);
- Suggested parenting education topics for children and teens;
- Partnering: an experience in caring;

- Defining a Dad: paternity and child support;
- Parenting and nurturing activities; lessons for home, school and youth programs;
- What students, parents, and teachers say about programs: Baby Think It Over; Child Development; Parenting and Parent Development; Educating Children for Parenting; Education for Parenting – Learning To Care; Parents Under Construction;
- Sample press release;
- What Experts Say: quotes a paragraph each by 34 distinguished people arguing the case.

The length of parenting education and its impact

A highlight deals with the length of time recommended for parenting education to be effective. Schools offered my charity in London, Before Becoming a Parent, weekly sessions for two terms at most, and more recently, with the clampdown on educational freedom, six lessons or just one. Programs for primary children, involving observation of parent and baby, cover at most only one school year. Little seems to have been written about how long school-based parenting education needs to last to have an impact into adulthood.

Several writers emphasise the need for intensive long-term work with parents. Tom Luster and June Youatt (1989) conclude in their paper *The Effects of Pre-Parenthood Education on High School Students*: 'The results of this study suggest that pre-parenthood education is one service that shows considerable promise. However, given what we know about intervention programs generally, we would hope that pre-parenthood education would be viewed as part of a series of services for parents and parents-to-be, rather than a one-time "inoculation" against poor parenting. It seems highly unlikely that a one-semester course in high school can provide all the information and support that young people need, but it seems to provide a push in the right direction.'

I learnt that having children is a big deal! I don't think I will ever consider bringing a life to this earth until I'm ready. Middle school student

Many PTP board members have retired or died. Finally, the board decided to close PTP. Suzy Garfinkle hoped to get funding to update and maintain its website to continue as a precious resource with its wealth of information: www.preparetomorrowsparents.org Thankfully it is now available in perpetuity, in memory of Suzy's late father, Sandy Garfinkle, the inspiration and first funder for PTP. (The website says: 'Prepare Tomorrow's Parents has closed for business and disbanded its board of directors. The information remains here for archival purposes. The individuals and organizations listed have been neither verified or updated since 2009.'**)**

You can also watch its YouTube video (31 minutes), featuring many of the people and projects in both volumes of this book: Suzy Garfinkle, Mary Gordon, Harriet Heath, Lou Howort, Mary Jurmain, Myriam Miedzian, Alvin Poussaint, Janet Pozmantier, and Marilyn Swierk; Baby Watch, Parents Under Construction, lifelike baby dolls, Roots of Empathy, Learning How to Care, Family and Consumer Sciences lesson, and partnering.

Prepare Tomorrow's Parents Month takes place every year (11 - 22 May 2024), encouraging parents, teachers and other formal or informal educators to discuss good parenting with teenagers, 'so that they understand the implications of abuse, neglect and family dysfunction on children and how they can be kind, effective and prepared parents in future.' It is held in the month between Mother's and Fathers' Day.

It would be wonderful if new people could come forward to revive PTP as an international motivator, advocate and resource. Please contact me if you might be interested and I can put people in touch with each other: roskane@btinternet.com

Part Five

The Resistance and the Evidence

Chapter Thirty-six

The Resistance: Why isn't parenting a core curriculum subject?

The current upsurge of child development courses in schools should perhaps be viewed with considerable apprehension. Dr Eveleen Thorne 1977

Motivations: why *are* people interested?

I want to do the parenthood classes again next year. It helps me with all my relationships with the kids, not just the ones I'm teaching. Teacher

The motivation of people pushing for school-based parenthood, child development and childcare education is varied. Some, like Sir Keith Joseph and the Christian family men - Conservative MP Sir Iain Duncan Smith and the late professor Richard Whitfield - were motivated by a traditional belief in stable marriage and the family. (Whitfield was explicitly opposed to deliberate single parenthood.) Former Labour MP Frank Field's background in the Child Poverty Action Group and as welfare minister has led him to see education about good parenting, 'from primary school onwards,' as one building block to more successful adult lives by improving 'life chances' and avoiding poverty. (Frank is now Baron Field of Birkenhead CH.)

The WAVE Trust, set up by the Quaker George Hosking, has a mission to counteract violence and create a safer world by improving the quality of parenting. Criminologists know that this could help reduce crime and anti-social behaviour. Mental health professionals believe in a therapeutic approach to children, and that school-based parenthood education and better parenting will lead to better emotional well-being: this was the stand of Dr Mia Kellmer Pringle, a distinguished educational and clinical psychologist (and former primary school teacher), awarded a CBE after her long stint as first director of the NCB, a committed developer of research-based

policies on behalf of all children and their welfare. Some teachers see parenthood education as a way to engage students because it is a such a popular subject, at the top of the list of many young people. People in public life, such as Conservative MP Andrea Leadsom, take a keen, active interest, wholly or partly due to their own difficult experiences of early parenthood. Advocates vary in the emphasis they put on what is taught and how, whether child development, the practicalities of parenting, an understanding through neuroscience, or direct experience with virtual babies and actual toddlers.

But teaching parenthood is hardly a vote catcher, such as housing or the NHS, so we wouldn't expect most politicians to press for it: their main aim is to be re-elected. Highly principled statesmen and women, such as George Lansbury, willing to go to prison for their beliefs, are few and far between. It is not surprising if our topic does not come high up, or anywhere, in election manifestos.

Kate Middleton, the duchess of Sussex, has been inspired to press for early intervention by her own experience as a parent, her valuing of motherhood and her appreciation of its challenges. And it is probably not too cynical to guess that governments' interest in teaching parenthood to school students over the decades has a lot to do with saving money by reducing social problems and the need for expensive and often fruitless attempts to address them.

Despite this medley of influential and powerful advocates, it is extraordinary that one of the most important and challenging roles that anyone can have, is still more or less skated over in nearly every school in England, despite the promise of a passing smidgeon about it from September 2020 (deferred till 2021-22 due to Covid.) No one denies, as far as I know, that the quality of parenting has a massive effect on the emotional development of children, and that the emotional state of the adults, who these children will become, has an enormous effect on the fabric of society. Nearly every child and

teenager goes to school. We have them there for about 39 weeks a year. We know that many parents don't do a good enough job, despite, usually, trying to do the best they can.

We have a bottomless pit of studies and statistics on the psychological and physical health, social and financial costs of a poor emotional start in life from conception onwards. People of every age are losing their lives in all sorts of ways as a result of their bad start or that of others. We know that imaginative methods have been developed, tried and tested, to interest and inform children and young people about the meaning of good parenthood and demonstrate it to them through experiential activities. And we have seen how many experts, mainly in the UK and US, have practised, researched and recommended such learning for decades. Let's look in detail, then, at the possible reasons for its mystifying absence in schools.

A subject not mentioned

There is widespread indifference and even denial of the plight of the contemporary young mother and her children.
Andrea Pound, NEWPIN (New Parent Infant Network) 1994

Professor Whitfield has cited the reluctance until 1960 to discuss this subject, the resistance of many adults and the lack of suitable people to teach it. Childcare courses are elective and taken by only a few girls. Education for parenthood is certainly not top of the list on the national agenda. At a conference (2018) about the proposed new compulsory Relationships and Sex curriculum, the speaker showed a slide of five-year-olds and a list of the situations which they could face up to the age of 20. Pregnancy and parenthood were not on the list, despite the PSHE Association having produced a syllabus about the subject and despite the UK still having the highest incidence of teenage pregnancy in western Europe. (The lowest percent of teenage mothers are in Scandinavia, Switzerland, Andorra and San Marino.)

It would make sense for every teacher at every level to receive some training in how to integrate preparation for parenthood into their subject. However, given the many reasons for resistance, this is unlikely in the near future. One wonders whether any teacher training course, anywhere, features the delivery of parenthood education.

Family life: a domain too intimate to be talked about

Do we go too far in asserting that the way parents bring up their children is solely their own concern? Mia Kellmer Pringle

There is a view in some quarters that the sensitive subject of family life is, and should remain, private, that the nuclear family with its two children and firmly locked front door, its car with four seats, can look after itself, and that a few children's centres, family hubs and a Troubled Families programme are all that's needed to mop up the worst excesses of the lumpenproletariat. The powers-that-be don't look too closely at the emotional woes of the upper and middle-classes and how their methods of upbringing and education can also lead to breakdown, depression, suicide and domestic violence, or to adults who are maybe not in crisis but who are wounded and unable to give adequately, in emotional terms, to their children.

Paranoia and fears

Though surveys show that most parents support parenthood education in schools, some might fear it. Will their children be encouraged to question, or even criticise, their parents? Teachers wonder if parents will make a fuss and cause more problems for the staff, or harm the reputation of the school. Will they complain about schools overstepping their boundaries in telling children how they should parent? Might they stage protests (or even take schools to court) and make teachers' lives even harder? Parents from different cultures and religions might suspect that what is taught contradicts their own beliefs and practices.

And some educationalists are afraid of what might be taught and by whom: subversive brainwashing by left/liberal, permissive teachers? There can be reservations about sex education (will it lead to more sex?) and the controversial subject of abortion. Will learning about babies and observing them in the classroom make students want to have one? Will this education lead to promiscuity, venereal diseases, more babies born to teens and unmarried people? One teacher said, 'It worries me sometimes that we perhaps make them aware of it so much that they think it would be nice to have a baby and then they start working on it.' Another fears that pupils 'might see producing a baby as the wonderful end, whereas of course it is the beginning of many years of care.' And suppose this parenthood subject causes distress to students? How will we deal with it? Are there enough resources, in or out of school, to give enough of the right support?

As the American Nel Noddings commented (2006): 'Although every sensitive person recognises the importance of parenting, many fear that teaching about parenting in public [state] schools may offend those who wish to keep public and private domains sharply separated, upset some minorities whose parenting styles may not be favored, and raise issues about gay/lesbian families. Why open ourselves to controversy when there are so many safe (if boring) topics to teach?'

A few experts have called parenthood education 'suspect and inappropriate,' fearing there might be political motivation to promote a particular type of family. Alfie Kohn (1991) suggests that there can be fears of producing gullible, spineless young people, too caring to fit into a heartless, competitive, selfish society. American psychologists David Harman and Orville Brim (*Learning to be Parents* 1980) are worried: parenting education might have an unintended consequence. 'Not having children of their own, participants may instead compare information provided by the program with their own experience as children being reared. This can lead to varieties of reactions – from positive to hostile – towards their own parents

which could impact on their relationships at home. Extreme care must be exercised in planning the content' to help avoid this.

Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education): 'Raising standards, improving lives'

Ofsted was created by the Conservative government in 1992. The controversial Sir Michael Wilshaw, Ofsted chief inspector (2012-16) asked, on a visit to a nursery school, whether the children would be sitting at desks. He had been the first head of the (to some people) infamous Mossbourne academy in Hackney: there's purposely no staff room; teachers have to keep their classroom doors open all the time. 'We don't want maverick teachers doing their own thing,' a loyal senior teacher told me, one who encouraged his students to think they were better than their next-door neighbours who didn't go to Mossbourne. I met a keen, talented teacher who left the school due to the regime. She's not the only one. So many staff leave that supply teachers have to be hired. Ex-staff recall the bullying and shouting.

Before Ofsted, school inspectors from the local authority suggested improvements and supported staff. This seems a thing of the past. ('We felt they were on our side,' a retired teacher told me.) Although I know Ofsted inspectors who are also nice people, Ofsted represents some of the inhuman ways in which human beings treat each other. There have been suicides as a result (see Volume Two of this book.) It is not even as though the inspectors are always well qualified for the job. More than one level-headed teacher has expressed their low opinion of the state of some of the inspectors' knowledge and insight. Staff tick boxes and put on a performance which can have little relation to what really goes on. Authenticity flies out of the window. I even heard that schools might tell some of their 'problem' students to be absent on the day that Ofsted is due.

A case which suggests that Ofsted inspectors do not necessarily have a clue about reality is the suicide in June 2020 of Year 10 student Zain Pervez in Ilford, north-east London. He had been bullied for a long time by his peers. 'Having known that he was suicidal months ago, the school failed to take appropriate action,' said his cousin. Several former students and relatives of current students came forward to complain about the level of bullying, as well as racism, neither addressed effectively. The chair of governors denied this and must have been pleased when good old Ofsted reported (2019) that 'pupils know what to do if they have concerns, including on the rare occasions when bullying occurs.' But it seems that pupils also know that concerns would be feebly dealt with and swept under the carpet, maybe to protect the school's reputation, or maybe because the school leaders don't know how to prevent bullying.

Some parents research Ofsted reports (which must be published on each school's website), impressed or otherwise by the final judgement ('Inadequate,' 'Requires Improvement,' 'Good' or 'Outstanding') to decide where to apply. A teacher said to me, 'Doesn't every school want to be Outstanding?' I thought she might be joking, but she wasn't. If that is the aim of every headteacher, and if schools are terrified of a poor report forcing them, for example, to become an academy (regardless of the wishes of staff, governors and parents), it's little surprise that they are prepared to bow and scrape to Ofsted masters and mistresses whom they might not value as professional colleagues but who hold every morsel of power over them. Those not able or willing to bow and scrape have the choice of leaving the profession. Many do. No wonder it can be hard to recruit a good headteacher these days. There's a new breed of driven, relentless, ambitious heads wedded to the 'Outstanding' dream and often attaining it. Ofsted judgements don't show whether students are getting what they need emotionally; more likely, their academic achievements are used to bring glory to the senior management team.

So it's to be expected that if Ofsted does not prioritise PSHE or say that every school has to prepare every student for good parenthood, schools don't have time, motivation or money to do so. I asked a music primary teacher how she was affected by Ofsted. 'They don't take any interest in music, so I'm OK,' she replied.

Ofsted has a PSHE and Citizenship / Relationships, Sex and Health Education national subject lead, Roary Pownall, a former primary headteacher. 'He has especial interest in the development of pupils' character,' says the Ofsted website. Despite a heavy workload, he agreed, in a most friendly, respectful way, to answer my questions:

Q Can you kindly help me by providing any information about any primary, secondary or independent school you know of which has a particular interest in parenthood education? Is there a headteacher or PSHE lead with this interest?

A *I am sorry but Ofsted no longer recommends schools as 'case studies' and so I can't suggest to you one you would wish to visit.*

Q Have you witnessed any of these programmes in schools?
Seeds of Empathy for under five-year-olds / Roots of Empathy/ B.A.S.E®Babywatching / Flour babies / Virtual babies to take home / Parenting education through drama / Teens and Toddlers (Power2) / Placements in early years settings / Talks and discussion at parenthood lessons at school by parents, professionals and voluntary organisations / Visits by students to relevant settings e.g. maternity unit, playgroup / Straight Talking Peer Educators / Any other programme.

If so, what is your opinion of any of them?

A *I personally have not witnessed any of the above programmes and am not aware of any evidence we have as to their effectiveness. My apologies.*

Q Do you think that the content about parenting in the Relationships, and the Relationships and Sex, guidance is adequate for students' adequate, long-term knowledge and memorised understanding?

A *Ofsted does not have a view on whether the content in the RSHE guidance is sufficient or insufficient.*

Q Given that:

- most students will become parents;
- the quality of parenting is so crucial for healthy development of all kinds;
- most young children are fascinated by parents and babies visiting the classroom;
- many male and female teenagers state their wish to learn about parenting (rf.. research by Frank Field and others) and greatly enjoy parenthood education in some UK and US schools,

do you agree that parenthood education needs to be a core curriculum subject for every male and female student at primary and secondary level in every type of school?

A *We also do not have a view on whether parenthood education needs to be a core curriculum subject. The RSHE guidance and the national curriculum is set by statute and written by the department for education.*

Q Do you have any other thoughts or feedback about parenthood education in schools?

A Roary explained how Ofsted's role was purely to '*judge whether schools are following what they are required to do,'* their overall effectiveness. And *'the inspection timescale does not allow inspectors time to forensically investigate each and every component in each of these [RSHE] elements, to the detail that each member of the public would wish.'*

Although governments say that 'all schools should make provision for personal, social, health and economic education,' only 75% of PSHE in its fullest sense is a statutory subject. Each school can decide to offer what it thinks its students need, apart from the compulsory Relationships (primary level) or Relationships and Sex (secondary) syllabus. If the government, through Ofsted, does not require something to be taught, schools often reduce or ditch 'soft' subjects like the arts or the non-statutory elements of PHSE: there is little or no time for anything that Ofsted is not interested in measuring, or that can't lead to top exam results.

Might change be on its way? Amanda Spielman, chief Ofsted inspector from 2018 till 31 December 2023, said that 'broadening minds, enriching communities and advancing civilisation is still exactly what is needed from our schools' (2021.) Under her new framework, Ofsted will no longer give grades for lessons and individual teaching, but 'form a judgement about the curriculum.'

Peter Campling: *The Inspectors Call*

Headteachers live in fear of Ofsted and its power to raise or besmirch the school's reputation. Peter Campling was head of Deptford Green secondary school in south London, then became an actor and playwright. I heard of his play *The Inspectors Call* and phoned the school to contact him. 'He left under a cloud.' That sounded interesting. His acclaimed play had quite an impact, performed at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival (2016), giving a vivid portrayal of the possible effects of Ofsted, the head dying of a heart attack.

'A comic and very moving tragedy' *Morning Star;*
'Passionately political, highly recommended!' *Schools Week;*
Nominated for the Off-West End Best New Play Award 2015;
'Outstanding theatre exploring the relationship between schools and Ofsted' *Everything-Theatre.co.uk.*

One review said: 'Peter Campling pulls no punches in his new play exposing critical fissures in the education system of England and Wales. We're at Ardley Green Community School, somewhere in the heart of an area with enough social and economic challenges without having those of an increasingly results-driven education system layered on top. But rules are rules – the system exists to be complied with. Falling foul of an inspection will see budgets fall and heads roll. In Peter Campling's comic yet moving tale, *The Inspectors Call,* it's quite clear what the author thinks of the education system in England and Wales. Headmaster George Smith ("call me George, everyone does") is the focus for Campling's ire with the way the system has become over-focused on the quantitative (and, at times, pretty meaningless) grade averages to the detriment of providing an environment in which children can learn about themselves, what they excel at and what it takes to make a contribution to our increasingly fragmented society.'

Relationships and Sex: compulsory!

In a survey for the Youth Parliament in 2008, three-quarters of young people thought that sex and relationships education was poor, very poor or average.
Ofsted, who found relationships teaching in schools 'patchy' 2010

Justine Greening, Conservative MP for Putney, was secretary of state for education for 18 short months (2016-18.) During that time, the new Relationships and Sex curriculum was drafted. It was due to be compulsory in every secondary school, state and private, in England from September 2020: 'Relationships' in all primaries, with 'Sex' added for secondaries. But despite a government public consultation in which several individuals and groups pressed for the inclusion of parenthood education, there is little about it. Out of 68 learning items, only 12 concern the family and long-term relationships, with very little specifically about good parenting. A missed opportunity: it's essential, when teaching parenthood, to deal in some depth and detail what it's about. Being good at 'relationships' does not automatically make you a

good parent. You can be good at adult peer relationships but poor at those with children, just as you can relate excellently to children but poorly to your peer group. Deep understanding, specific to good parenting, and skills based on that understanding, are needed. These are not mentioned.

The PSHE Association must be congratulated for its long, hard, passionate campaigning since its inception in 2006 to make full PSHE a core subject: a work in progress. It is worth asking not only why thorough parenthood education is not embedded in the curriculum, but why PSHE is of low status - and some of it not compulsory at all.

Not an exam subject, so why bother?
Lends no credit to the school

As Sir Anthony Seldon, the educationalist and opponent of 'factory schools,' wrote, 'Children are encouraged to develop an attitude that if it is not in the exam, it doesn't matter. Intellectual curiosity is stifled and young people's deep cultural, moral and social faculties are marginalised by a system in which all must come second to developing improving test and exam numbers.' Parenthood education is seen as ephemeral, not a serious matter of concern, nor worthy of an exam except in 'Childcare' for girls whose low-paid labour will be needed in future to enable mothers to go to work. As there are no parenthood exams, there's no chance for the school's website to shine with top results. The GCSE in childcare is chosen mostly by girls and those of 'low academic ability.' And some people believe that parenthood is the last thing on teenagers' minds, so teaching it is inappropriate and a waste of time.

Parenthood's not a career, so why bother?

Ofsted says schools have to run sessions about careers. So they do. Parenthood isn't listed as a 'career': it carries too low a status in the UK. A list of high-flying careers by former students, on the other hand, is something that could bring money, status and glory to the school's

reputation and morale. Have you ever seen a photo of a happy mother or father with a happy child displayed in the school foyer, showing an ex-pupil who has made a successful 'career' of being a good parent? And looking after kids is still thought of as women's business. It makes you wonder if it would feature more in the curriculum if men usually do it.

Schools often want their bright girl students to aim high and enter professions and careers which can be publicised. They don't expect top pupils to be thinking about babies: rather about A* grades and Oxford or Cambridge university. And when these young women do reproduce, they will be able to afford to buy a lot of childcare, so won't have to spend too much time with their children. As for boys, schools assume they don't want to know, or that fathers will leave childcare to childminders, nannies, nurseries or their wives. There's therefore no point teaching parenthood to bright students. It won't mean anything to them. It's too soon, they'd be bored, they're too young. Even if they are interested, they'll forget it by the time they have babies. 'I wasn't taught it: why should they?' But as Nel Noddings points out (2006), most school topics are forgotten once students leave, and the knowledge is never used. Well-taught, experiential parenthood education, on the other hand, is probably far less likely to be forgotten than most topics.

Funding

Schools are suffering from significant cuts in their funding, having to sack teaching assistants, not fill teaching vacancies, and ask parents to pay for essential materials (while the growing number of academy chains pay their top people six-figure salaries.) Schools worry that a course delivered by an outside organisation would be yet another impossible financial burden. But even when the charity Before Becoming a Parent (B4BP) offers our course for free (having been given grants for work in schools or prisons), we rarely get anywhere, so it's not just about money.

I have been struck by the difficulties of getting funding for this work. It was a struggle, but possible until 2019, to raise enough money from trusts and foundations for the charity Carefree Kids to provide play therapy to help heal the emotional problems of children, often suffering from inadequate, ineffective, poor or harmful parenting. Raising money for preventative work, on the other hand, seems less attractive to funders; B4BP has been much less successful. It's hard to know why: maybe it's because you can measure results of play therapy far more easily than the results of early parenthood education. The desire for 'evidence' prevents the work from ever getting done!

Who decides curricula? Boarding school survivors?

How can we begin, as adults, to develop emotional maturity to enable us to give our children a sense of positive survival in a hostile world if, for the most part, we are unaware of the emotional starvation of our own imperfect childhood?
Anne Jenkins, founder of NEWPIN (New Parent Infant Network)

Could one reason for the relative absence of our subject be the personal backgrounds of the people on high who decide the curriculum? Psychotherapist and boarding-school survivor Nick Duffell and others have written eloquently about the effects on young children of being sent away: a deliberate breaking of attachment between child and parents, sometimes at the tender age of seven, sometimes with parents at work thousands of miles away. Children are conditioned to believe that they are on their own, have to solve their problems by themselves, not show weakness or admit mistakes. Many boarders proceed to Oxford or Cambridge universities and thence to the high ranks of the civil service and parliament where they, and they alone, often as 'streamliners' at a young age, have power to decide what school students learn. Frightening, eh?

It is not surprising that their lack of life experience and empathy, denial of softer feelings, 'emotional starvation,' 'imperfect

childhoods,' limited level of emotional understanding or curiosity, and low awareness or appreciation of the importance of attachment between children and parents, mean that they favour hard core subjects of English, maths, and science which will equip students, they imagine, to compete well in the international market for the sake of the national economy and big business. Arts are marginal, human relationships and supportive communities secondary. Policy-makers are paid by, and loyal to, the prevailing political system with its domination by commercial interests. Children should be groomed to be compliant, able and willing to fit into a world where profit counts; schools promote competition, individual ambition and achievement. Learning how to be a good parent is irrelevant to getting into a top university or having a 'good' career. The spirit of Thatcher reigns supreme. George Bush's *No Child Left Behind* inspired Tony Blair, subjecting countless primary children to daily compulsory English and maths lessons, every morning, all morning, whether or not taught in interesting, imaginative ways.

During the Second World War, the people who decided to evacuate children from London to unknown families in the countryside without their parents, were men who themselves had been separated from their parents to go to boarding school and were unaware of the harm caused. They chose not to listen to the most distinguished psychological experts of the time, such as John Bowlby and Donald Winnicott, who publicly warned of the emotional havoc that this evacuation would cause, and which has been shown to have occurred.

This concerns every social class

Poor parenting is found in every social class. Oliver James, in his book *They F*** You Up,* describes the nature of pathological parenting in one of the most hallowed families: young, sensitive Prince Charles's unfortunate treatment, in some ways, by his dad who himself had a troubled background. The London borough of Richmond, one of the

richest parts of the UK, has higher than average rates of mental health problems amongst its youth. Virginia Axline's classic book *Dibs in Search of Self* gives a poignant account of how two high-ranking professional parents made a hopeless job of bringing up their little boy. Are posh parents likely to advocate preparation for parenthood for their kids? It's the exceptional upper-class person who makes a strong case for change, and it's a hopeful sign that the young royals are speaking up for better parenting and mental health.

Whenever there's a stiff upper lip, there's a trembling lower lip.
Deborah Levy

No evidence that it works

Then there's the difficulty of proving that this work is effective. It is simple enough to provide evidence that, say, 74 percent of children given play therapy for x months or years become happier, less aggressive, concentrate better in class or make friends more easily, in the short-term at least. You ask children, parents, school staff; you do 'Before' and 'After' questionnaires: the results are pretty impressive. But proving that our work leads to better parenting by longitudinal research over ten or more years: who would fund it? Many preventative programmes are said to have good effects and save future money. But collecting direct evidence can be extremely difficult. So schools and those in power can claim there's no evidence that parenthood education has much effect in years to come. No researchers have done the thorough, long-term studies needed.

The scepticism of some academics

In their paper to the 10th International Conference on Health Education in London, *Preparation for Parenthood: A Critique of the Concept* (1979), Elizabeth Perkins and Beverley Morris argue: 'The term "preparation for parenthood" appears frequently in the media as a panacea for curing disturbances in family life and more extensive

social ills. It has perhaps too readily been assumed that "good" parenting is a skill that can be taught.'

They acknowledge that few parents predict the effect of a baby on the couple's relationship when a triangle is created. 'Admitting another member to an intimate relationship increases emotional disturbance when the mother is still undergoing hormonal change.' They cite the level of sacrifice, loss of privacy, restriction of social life, messier home, anxiety about the quality of one's parenting, number of small decisions, and the 'demands of the baby's unfolding personality,' not to mention the baby's crying and the characteristics of this particular baby: the unknown physical and temperamental traits, genetic lottery, its match or not with its parents. 'It seems doubtful that complete preparation for this demanding new role is possible.' However, they do advocate teaching about the experience of parenthood and giving information, so that school students can choose how to parent, and whether to do so at all. Students can be trained to carry out parenting tasks and roles.

They believe that pregnancy seems the obvious time to prepare for parenthood, but that ante-natal education (which they criticise for focusing on physical aspects: 'parentcraft') is limited. And anyway, memory is poor during late pregnancy, so parents don't remember what they are taught. The best time to teach is after the birth. Even so, at ante-natal, bring in new parents to describe the support available and tell it like it is: e.g. you don't automatically find your new baby loveable or beautiful; it might cry incessantly without apparent physical cause. All well and good, but very many pregnant couples don't come, either ante-natally or post-natally.

The authors discuss the role of schools. They are sceptical that teaching about the difficulties of unplanned, premature parenthood can be effective. Although you do have a captive audience, 'you can't make a horse drink.' Scottish psychiatrist Dr Gordon Prince's study

Teenagers Today (Mind/Schools Council 1978) is cited: two hundred 12-to-16-year-olds said they wanted help with relationships, especially those with their parents. Prince believed that the developmental tasks of adolescence were enough for them, without adding stuff about their future parenting.

School–based parenting education could raise unrealistic expectations: after all, about one in ten partnerships are infertile. As the Non-Parents Association in the US says: parents and the media put pressure on girls to be mothers, 'a dream of domestic bliss and consumerism.' Teaching straight child development, however, doesn't assume that students will become parents and, as long as it doesn't teach parenting skills, 'warrants a place in the school curriculum' with an academic base and might possibly be of practical use one day, unlike some other school subjects. Child development courses (of theoretical and practical use) must be distinguished from childcare courses which might be a waste of time, as ideas and practices change.

Child development can include discussion of values and attitudes, the wide range of childrearing practices, and positive attitudes to change. Don't prepare students in a specific way. They now come from small families with less experience of living closely with all ages. Few see small babies, so they could be shocked by the tantrums of their future offspring. They mix only with their own age group at school, so should visit pre-schools, playgroups and shopping centres to observe, participate, and learn how to react.

In the US, Harman and Brim, too, have reservations, as we have seen. Experts in parent education between 1960 and 1980 'at least to some degree, have been influenced by the growing realisation that schools are inadequate vehicles for the attainment of some important goals, such as the education of future parents.' But there is regret. 'This becomes more acute in view of the fact that children and youth are

spending increasing amounts of their time in peer rather than family settings, thus being denied much of the input necessary to formulate their future parental roles.'

They ask to what extent teenagers are able to absorb education that deals with roles and activities which, in the main, are only vaguely anticipated. There are no real-life situations to discuss. Can school change ideas that students get from their families? Do people learn better as teenagers or adults? But teens at school are a captive audience, and new parents have a high drop-out rate from parenting classes which tend to be attended mainly by the white middle-class. There's no easy answer.

This book doesn't claim that *complete* preparation is possible, but does hold that anything contributing to any degree towards better parenting is invaluable, and that we can't afford to neglect it. It also argues the need for a vast variety of support for parents to choose, to reinforce what they learnt at school, now that they have the real thing on their lap and the long haul of parenthood ahead.

Pain, guilt, shame, or just lack of interest

There is, no doubt, discomfort amongst some educationalists and policy makers at the mention of difficulties in family life. Some of those in power are certain to have painful unresolved feelings about their own childhood, whether or not they were sent to boarding school. It could be that most have not healed through, for example, psychotherapy. They might not want to dwell on the trauma, failings, hurts and emotional deprivations of their early years, nor want to risk the guilt of feeling critical of their parents. They might never have delved deeply into their reason for working in the world of education. Was there, for example, an unconscious wish to resolve their conflicts about the relationship between adults and children?

And what about discomfort with the experiences of their own marriage and parenthood? Some might feel guilty or ashamed, preferring not to think of such matters, let alone press for youngsters to learn about what parenting could or should be like. (I heard of a husband who left home when his first daughter arrived. He returned, but did the same when twin daughters were born. His occupation? Family court judge. I have changed details of children to protect confidentiality.) Some well-educated, well-heeled adults have children who are in emotional distress, perhaps with a psychiatric diagnosis, depression, anxiety, drug abuse, eating disorder, self-harm, suicidal thoughts or an actual suicide. This can happen in the happiest-seeming families. There are no guarantees when it comes to raising children. Sometimes the reasons for children's despair are obvious. But they can be subtle, hard to fathom, and never fully understood.

Unsuccessful attempts to have a baby are painful in the extreme: infertility, sub-fertility, failed IVF treatment, miscarriage, prematurity, sudden infant death. Then there is loss of a child or loss of contact, bitter marital separation, or a child with severe special needs. Many parents never seek, or receive, thorough help to deal with any of these. It is understandable if they avoid having to ruminate about them, avoid making policies to enable youngsters to know about parenthood, or if they avoid teaching it. Other adults, child-free whether straight or gay, in a relationship or not, have little or no interest in parenting - their own offspring or anyone else's. They are preoccupied with other things, and might not necessarily think that the lack of parenthood education matters.

Parenthood is a topic which can offer educational material which pupils of all abilities find relevant and motivating, and can contribute to the development of skills in several important areas.
Frank Verdon 1980

Parenting comes naturally – or does it?

Why do we assume that the light of nature is sufficient for parents to know what the needs of children are and how these are best met? Mia Kellmer Pringle

As Dr Myriam Miedzian pointed out, 'There exists a mistaken and highly dangerous assumption that good child-rearing is instinctive: mothers just naturally know what to do and what is best for their children. The increasing research on the history of childhood is enough to cure anyone of such fantasies.' There's supposed to be a maternal (and possibly paternal) 'instinct.' Most, or even 'all', parents, love their children and do their best, people say. They know what is best for their child: we can just leave it to them to do it in their own way. They know what they are doing. So that's all right, isn't it?

There's an oft-quoted cliché that 'children are resilient.' Even if they suffer trauma or deprivation, they will somehow come through in the good old British way, stiff upper lip and all. Maybe adults believe this because they can't bear to imagine what it is like to be a suffering child who gets no help to deal with its pain. There is denial that we are injuring our children ('I was beaten as a child but …')

How do teachers feel about it: too much too soon?

Some teachers and parents don't believe that schools are there for soft subjects like parenting: that's the job of the parents; others, that parenting education is irrelevant to children and teenagers, not of interest to them (even though it usually is.) A teacher said: 'For me, the big question is: how much imagination has a 15-or-16-year-old got? How realistically can they see themselves as parents? They can't see beyond where they are now, having a boy or girlfriend.' They can't look that far ahead, don't want to, and would forget it anyway. Curriculum time is under great pressure. PSHE could be put to better use. But Elizabeth Hartley-Brewer (1998) points out that parenthood is not that far away for many students, citing the 46,299 babies born

to 11-to-19-year-olds in 1997. 'Learning about it might lead students to be more careful, or delay pregnancy. Most parents don't go to parenting classes, so school is the only chance. And adolescents dwell on their family experiences. By gaining insight, they will be helped to make sense of their immediate world in a constructive manner, potentially reducing resentment, rebellion, and even depression.' They can apply their new skills to younger siblings, or when they babysit. And schools don't teach only subjects that will be used immediately. 'Understanding takes time to develop.'

Whitfield and colleagues reckon that teachers often have only 'a superficial understanding of human development.' Teachers might worry that their students' time in playgroups could damage exam results. But don't bring exams in parenting into it, says Whitfield. 'Exams are likely to encourage the tendency to teach as if there is only one way to parent.' He quotes an English teacher who believed that 'the notion that any school subject could prepare pupils for parenthood was untenable, and criticised the Family and Child course for its "idealisation" of parenthood and family life.' Another was more scathing: 'I just don't agree with it at all. I didn't do it at school and it didn't do me any harm. It's just a bandwagon. Someone's making some money.'

Although Whitfield argues that 'preparation for parenthood is a misguided enterprise because of the variety of ways to parent and the variability of babies,' he believes that education in child development and the variety of ways to parent 'can be useful both for children and expectant parents. If this is worth doing, it means a shift of resources: it's a question of value, not cost effectiveness.'

> *Rather daunting on opening the OU package. Extremely intrigued when I read the section titles, but thought that I had bitten off more than I could chew!* Teacher, about Education for Family Life

Alison Orton's insightful article *Parentcraft: A Teacher's View*, based on her experience, notes that many teachers have no parenting experience to draw on. Some might have no interest in having children, certainly not for years. 'There are many young teachers having to teach parentcraft before they feel ready to do so.' It is hardly surprising if there is not a rush of teachers coming forward. Older teachers might have put all their energy into education over a lifetime and not wanted, or been able to have, children. Their main involvement in parenthood has been to deal, possibly reluctantly, with parents of their students: not always rewarding. Teaching good parenting could be the last thing they want to do. Teachers who do want to teach it 'may have to overcome anti-attitudes from colleagues, particularly traditional subject teachers who feel parentcraft to be of no value on the timetable.' Teachers don't necessarily know more about good parenting than the average adult and might feel at a disadvantage when it comes to teaching it. It's understandable if they say, 'This is not what I came into teaching for.'

Orton was writing before 1980. 'There are County Advisers who still make known their reservations about the subject, and Her Majesty's Inspectors who feel the ground is "dangerous" and much of the syllabus should not be taught, particularly about fetal development. Also there are Careers Officers who visit schools and comment to children that the subject is of no value to industry. We must also challenge employers who have been known to laugh when a pupil has listed parentcraft as an examination pass. Indeed, the introduction of such a subject into a school timetable has strong emotional overtones.' How far have things moved on?

This is an intimate and, in some ways, a scary subject. Talking with teenagers about sex and contraception (which are bound to come up if parenting is fully dealt with) is not something that many teachers feel comfortable about. They might have problems of their own, or lack experience and up-to-date information. Their own childhood

could have left them too embarrassed to discuss sex. Some have a rigid professional defence, needing safe subjects and a firm distance between students and themselves. Unless barriers come down, and the usual teacher-student relationship is tempered by more equality, openness and self-disclosure, schools are unlikely to teach it well, so it would make little memorable impact. Taught well, it threatens the hierarchies in the school, hierarchies that mirror the inequality and power dynamics in society, and which attempt to prepare students to accept the status quo, once they are adults.

Therefore, it's questionable how many teachers would feel happy teaching parenthood (though some do, or would, love it.). And some might judge or envy the teachers who do so and who thereby build friendly relationships with recalcitrant students. Nel Noddings wrote about the 'mask of professionalism' (1996): teacher training insists on detachment, distance and cool appraisal. 'Concern for rational and professional functioning keeps emotion out of education, as it is supposed that real professionals do not allow themselves to feel controlled by their emotions. They fear that emotions will impair their professional judgement and that professionals must learn to protect themselves against the burnout that might result from feeling too much for one's students.'

Often, teachers imagine they might not be respected if, for example, young people know their first name, let alone use it. At a ceremony to celebrate teenage winners of a poetry competition, I gave a name badge to each winner and offered one to a senior teacher. She insisted I change her first name to 'Ms …' And many teachers deliberately live some distance from their school, not wanting to see their students out of hours. While these attitudes persist, it could be a challenge to find enough staff of a different mould with the qualities and lack of defensiveness needed to teach our subject in the most effective ways.

Enthusiasts moving on

A headteacher keen on parenthood education, who fosters it in the school, eventually moves elsewhere or retires; the successor might have other priorities. Primary class teachers or secondary subject teachers similarly can find that once they leave, the work that they nurtured, ends - work that might all have hinged on the dedication of one person. There is no guarantee that it will continue, however successful and popular it has been at the school, especially when there is no enduring policy or written commitment to preparation for parenthood for every student.

Struggling with something new - yet again!

If schools have resources to add only one program, it should be teaching parenting. Dr Dana McDermott

Parenthood is a pioneering subject. Despite the many resources to help teach it, few schools are aware of them: they don't know what to do. It's hard work getting to grips with something new. There are such frequent changes to the national curriculum that yet another fresh burden is one too many. Schools are bombarded with new demands of all kinds. It's easier to stick to the ways you know, traditional subjects taught in a traditional manner. A teacher might like the idea of parenthood education but, not knowing how to teach it, lacks the time, heart or encouragement to learn how, or how to incorporate it into his or her own subject.

Certainly, teaching parenthood fully and well involves hard work: preparing lessons; getting resources; liaising with people who know about it for training, support and supervision; getting money for expensive life-like baby dolls, and learning how to programme them; making flour babies; identifying suitable film clips; inviting reliable parents with babies; getting visitors from voluntary and statutory organisations to lessons; arranging visits to early years settings; organising and overseeing placements in nurseries; finding

opportunities for students to showcase their learning; ensuring emotional support for the ones who need it. A lot of meticulous administration is necessary for a successful course. Which headteacher will allow the time when the subject, dealt with thoroughly, is not compulsory and has low status? Yet parenthood is arguably the most important school subject if we are serious about good mental health and a safe society.

An expert writes …

Nel Noddings explains in her article, *Can We Teach Parenting in Our Schools?* (2014), why she thinks that parenthood is neglected:

- The school curriculum was designed for men in public life. 'Because parenting was construed largely as mothering, it was left to be taught and learned at home';
- 'The curriculum reflects a strong commitment to the separation of public and private life.' Home economics courses, taken by girls, don't count for college credit. 'Many observers regard the absence of these courses as signs of progress for women.' Traditional work by women, including childcare, is demeaned. Students are educated for the public world;
- Schools emphasise advancing equality across racial and socio-economic groups, but is the aim of getting every student to college desirable? Forcing an academic career might increase inequality 'by depriving many of studies through which they might profit, and opportunities to develop their real talents';
- Having all students take the same academic courses makes it easier to rank and compare them, but non-academic students tend to come bottom, and wealthy parents encourage their kids to do well to get into college. 'By teaching something about parenting, schools might contribute a bit to the reduction of inequality';
- There is a fear that students will be indoctrinated to believe a particular view of parenting. 'Many people seem to prefer that

schools teach only those topics that can be taught in a straightforward, behavioral-objectives mode';

- Some believe that only students from deprived backgrounds need to learn parenting at school, but how do we decide which ones? So, they say, best not to have a course. Nel recommends including material about parenting across the curriculum for every student.

Trying to get into schools?

If, as an outside body, you decide you'd like to offer parenting sessions in schools, the experience of Before Becoming a Parent charity could be of interest. What happens when you make every attempt to engage a school? Most of our offers to secondary schools come to little or nothing, even when we offer the course for free. In 2006 things were different; we describe our work that year in Volume Two of this book. By 2014 everything was more problematic. The climate had changed. One school, where the PSHE teacher was keen, eventually allowed us to do something, but only after-school; due to the hierarchy, it was not her decision. Another school, where we delivered four lessons during a Drop Down Day free of charge, ignored our request to research and evaluate the outcomes a few months later. We met with another school's drama teacher, introduced through a personal contact. She wanted to work with us; we started to prepare. Next day she apologised: her line manager said 'no', she had to stick to her existing curriculum, the manager claiming that the school covered the topic anyway.

We took advice from a widely respected man with a thorough knowledge of the London borough of Newham who recommended four schools. We wrote a personal letter to the head of each, saying that this man had suggested we contact them and that we had funding to do the work. There was not a single reply. We followed up each school, eventually negotiating one session's work at one which had decided, due to curriculum pressures, to abolish weekly PSHE lessons, replacing them by occasional Rise Up Days.

We heard of another Newham secondary school which seemed a likely candidate. It runs Philosophy for Children, Teens and Toddlers (see Volume Two), and makes good use of the arts. It was encouraging and unusual when our letter to the head resulted, within a few days, in an invitation to meet her staff. At a positive meeting (2018), the heads of KS3 (ages 11-to-14) and KS4 (ages 15-to-16) appeared to want us. However, they had no powers about either funding or timetabling. We all had to wait until they had discussed it with the decision makers. We eventually got a 'no.'

Our attempts to find schools to run B.A.S.E.®Babywatching sessions didn't fare much better. The two primaries where we were able to deliver them were found, again, through personal contact. At a yoga retreat, I happened to meet the music teacher from a Lambeth school. She seemed sure her school would have us, and it did. The other school, in Waltham Forest, agreed because a member of our steering group had worked there and knew the nursery staff. Later, we took advice from a respected primary head in Tower Hamlets who recommended eight schools. Again, we wrote personal letters, saying that our contact had recommended them. Not one replied. There were similar experiences in the London borough of Redbridge.

We know that schools are constantly contacted by outside bodies- the emails pile up - and have no time to reply, especially to people they don't know. We have sympathy for their unrealistic workloads and stress levels. So we post a letter, more visible than an email, though at some schools, letters to the head are opened by office staff who decide whether or not to pass them on.

Religion and objections

How do deeply religious teachers view parenthood education? It's not part of the religious education curriculum. The Conservative MP Esther McVey said that 'parents know what is best for their children'

when Muslim parents in Birmingham protested about their children learning about gay relationships at primary school and wanted the right to withdraw them from lessons (June 2019.) In the US, Christian evangelical groups are known to oppose any school-based education which might contradict or challenge what they want their children to believe and how they want them to live. Some teachers and parents believe that without religion, you can't teach moral values. Others, such as humanists, vehemently disagree.

Objections from the right ….. and from the left

Some on the political right see family life as a private affair, avoiding anything that smacks of the 'nanny state.' Those on the far right are likely to be especially opposed. Families must get on with their own ways of doing things. It is intrusive to poke our noses into intimate business behind those locked front doors. Any parenting education should bolster the traditional family structure; there's a danger that left-wing or permissive teachers might give young people the wrong ideas. School must never challenge parental authority. Yet some on the right are all behind it, believing that it might help to reduce single parenthood and dysfunctional parenting, and thereby reduce crime.

There is reluctance amongst some on the left to risk seeming to blame parents for social and psychological problems, as though it is anti-working-class to admit that there are some not very good working-class parents. Austerity, poor housing, unemployment and benefit cuts are to blame, implying that once these things change for the better, parenting will automatically become good-enough. Obviously, poverty and so on makes it vastly harder to be the best parent you can be. But they are far from the only causes. And there is all the difference in the world between blaming and sympathetically explaining. As it's been said, 'There's nothing to be feared from the truth.' The truth is that some parents in dire economic situations do not parent well enough. In some cases, this could improve if they

lived in better material circumstances; for others, it would make little or no difference. And it is not anti-feminist to admit that some mothers are doing, for whatever understandable reasons, on the whole, a poor job, however well-intentioned. The important thing is to understand why, see what can be done about it, and prevent their children repeating history, whatever social class they belong to.

Although it's been shown that parents living in poverty are more likely to have insecurely attached children, there's evidence that even with little money, there are very good parents and that this can prevent future problems. The Sutton Trust, dedicated to social mobility, found that 'boys growing up in poverty are two-and-a-half times less likely to display behaviour problems at school if they have secure attachments with parents in the early years.' Parenting UK reported (2010) that '25 percent of the best parenting is in the poorest households.' And we know that some parents with pots of money have no clue about attachment, producing emotionally damaged children, even if their kids never appear in court.

> *Children who end up doing well, despite adversity, have usually had at least one stable, committed relationship with a supportive parent, caregiver or other adult.*
> Children in Scotland magazine 2018

Some on the left might see family life education as a bourgeois invention: what's important is the revolution. However, others on the left see this education as important, supportive of working-class youngsters in particular, and have a sympathetic attitude to troubled teenagers, wishing to prepare them well for their future life.

Opposition from feminists

The preparation for parenthood curriculum might contribute to the creation or maintenance of the deprivation that it sets out to oppose. Lesley Smith

A detailed critique comes from Lesley Smith in her thesis *The Politics of Preparation for Parenthood* (1989) which can be read for free via EThOS. As part of the team at Aston university's three-year study, she discovered that samples of working-class girls who'd done a two-year course, knew no more than girls who hadn't, and that they all had a pretty good idea about parenting. She concluded what was being done in schools 'seems to be about validating and maintaining inequality. It communicates deficiency and blame, and confirms notions of the ideal family and exclusive mothering. It insures against any social movement which might lead to real change.' Mothers are 'objects of blame for social and economic problems. At a time of economic recession, preparation for parenthood seems to work ideologically, providing a PR service for the state by alleging that inadequate mothers, and not state policies, are the cause of problems in society.' It might confirm women's anxieties and erode their confidence. Women tend to collude, reducing any chance of militant action.

However, she does see childhood as important, and makes suggestions. 'Any curriculum which focuses on childhood should avoid uncritical reference to the stereotyped Western family and ideals in childcare and parenting; indeed, should include the potential for revealing the effects of these ideals. Future child-related studies would benefit also from taking a broad perspective, observing a number of dimensions of childhood, including explorations of the influence of gender, race and class; historical and world-wide dimensions; and a dimension concerned with the marginalisation of certain groups - for example, travellers' children, school refusers, the disabled, homosexuals, and any other group stigmatised as being deviant, different or "special." Such a course could be group and enquiry-based and draw initially on the personal experiences of participants. Such a course, *Dimensions of Childhood,* was devised during a curriculum development project at the Institute of Education, London (Smith 1988.) It would be useful to monitor this curriculum in use, and evaluate its processes and outcomes in relation to feminist concerns.'

Dr Thorne's U-turn

One should indeed be very wary of anything which appears to offer a (reasonably) simple answer to problems. Eveleen Thorne

Why Education for Parenthood? asks Dr Eveleen Thorne's article in *Home Economics* journal (1977). Eveleen, ironically, initiated one of the first UK childcare courses in schools. But now, as a principal lecturer in sociology, she questions their value and the need for them. 'Childcare or mothercraft classes have been part of the curriculum in many schools for quite a few years, and we have all come to accept the idea that if we educate today's teenagers for parenthood, then they will become better parents.' But the need, she rather strangely argues, is 'virtually obsolescent,' given the dramatic fall in the birth rate, especially in the poorer classes, and the availability of knowledge from sources other than school. 'A willingness to search for information and evaluate it, may be far more relevant to the pupils' development than factual courses in child rearing.' The 'less able' F pupils who take the courses 'often have more than their fair share of responsibility in this field, frequently more than their teachers. It may be more apposite for them to learn that life is not totally circumscribed by childcare and family responsibilities.'

She wonders whether the 'sudden popularity' of the courses is connected to the current lack of jobs which society thinks should go to men, pushing women back into the home, persuading them that they we are 'indispensable to their children.' Bowlby is misinterpreted; mothers feel guilty if they go out to work. She cites Michael Rutter and Nicola Madge (1976) who suggest that adult's emotional distress is due more to marital problems than to childhood experiences. 'Some attempts to interrupt the cycle of deprivation, particularly in schools, are quite misguided.' It may well be that the very pupils engaged in these programmes are the ones most likely to be drawn towards an early marriage by the emotional appeals of a

happy family and a 'personalised object' in the form of a baby. Yet it is these pupils who perhaps need to delay this experience in view of their maturity level, if they are to be successful parents.

She criticises the content of certain courses (some are badly thought out, e.g. passing round a real baby to be bathed, or teaching about difficult births) and the lack of real-world life experience of some teachers. 'The class bias of recruitment to the profession is well documented.' Do the courses help self-awareness? No, in that they don't question the 'mono-role' of mothers, nor talk enough about family problems. And anyway, paid employment is closer than parenthood for most pupils, and more enduring for both men and women. She would want a course to teach how to talk, make enquiries, explain problems, rather than learn about a baby's routine or undertake practical work. 'It is not better to do than to talk.' It's ironic that teachers say these courses show the importance of early language development, yet don't require students to discuss the topic at length. Moreover, fashions in childcare keep changing. She'd prefer a mixed class on 'women's rights and the causes and consequences of the division of labour.' She refers to the 'ease of teaching' child development courses and their 'instant appeal,' as though teachers are being used by society to support current ideology. (As we have seen, teaching parenthood thoroughly, rather than purely child development, is in many ways anything but easy, even if fun.)

The British attitude to children: do we hate them?

Children in Britain are amongst the least happy in the 'developed' world. UNICEF's study (2013) showed their well-being ranked 16th out of 29 of the richest countries. (In 2007 the UK was the worst of 21.) A tiny percentage of the mental health budget is spent on child and adolescent mental health services, despite the mushrooming problems. When Sir Al Aynsley-Green was a paediatrician, it was not thought that babies felt pain. He and his colleague were instrumental

in changing that belief. His book *The British Betrayal of Childhood* (2019) gives a refreshingly outspoken account of his hopeless battles, as the first children's commissioner in England, to get the establishment to listen to the needs and rights of children and young people. Countries such as Holland (top for well-being), Norway, Denmark and Finland do so much better. Their violent crime rates are far lower than those in the UK. and the US.

Given all the factors above, it is not surprising that those deciding the curriculum, and those teaching it, don't prioritise preparation for parenting, despite the evidence that most children and young people, boys as well as girls, say positive things about lessons involving babies and parents. Why are those running government and schools so reluctant to give students what they enjoy and find of such interest? What does it say about our attitude to the happiness of children and teenagers that we impose tests, dry information, exam pressures, irrelevance and boredom on them for so much of the school day for so many years? Why do we force four-year-olds to take tests when some other countries start formal teaching only from the age of seven - and with several better outcomes at 18?

And from the US

It was interesting to come across work by Bettye [sic] Caldwell and Betty Pagan from the university of Arkansas (1979) who identified ten reasons for resistance, and offered some positive responses:

- 'Parenting is an instinct, so no need to teach it';
- 'It violates parents' right to teach their own kids about parenting';
- 'There is no need, as kids aren't interested.' The two Bettys retort that adolescents are egocentric (as well as idealistic and altruistic,) interested only in themselves anyway and that preparation for parenthood 'meets the needs of the self much more completely' than courses in things like history or English;

- 'We don't know what to teach.' The Bettys believe that more than child development is needed - there is so much to address: the responsibility of parents' communication with kids; the effects of kids on a marriage; the commitment necessary. Supervised interaction with young children should be included;
- 'We have no one who can teach it.' But teachers of home economics, psychology, sociology and drama have much to offer;
- 'We can't add another course without throwing something away.' The patient reply? 'You do have a problem, but I'm sure you can work it out';
- 'Practical experience ruins other classes.' Not if you offer childcare opportunities on school premises. 'When people make the commitment, they can always work out ways';
- 'There are no good materials' or 'They are too dear.' But during the 1970s, there has been an 'explosion' of materials;
- 'There's no need. We already teach it.' Yes, 'some very creative secondary school training in preparation for parenthood has been going on in this country for 40 years' [i.e. since about 1939], mostly in home economics classes. Learn from it and build on it;
- 'It waters down learning. The students can't read and write!' But language skills can be improved by studying parenthood.

The authors studied a special school, Little Rock in Arkansas, where the 'family-like spread of ages available in the same school can make possible many opportunities to learn about parenting and skills,' with courses varied to meet the students' needs. They conclude that every community needs one person with authority to spur the establishment of a committee to plan a parent education program and to include all professionals, parents and students. Despite the 'foot dragging, timidity, inertia and anxiety,' there was also in the 1970s a 'zeitgeist that indicates a national readiness for such a venture.'

Let Goleman sum up

Daniel Goleman, in his acclaimed book *Emotional Intelligence* (1995), cites many of the points above. He wants schools to become caring communities, based on emotional literacy which should 'begin early, be age-appropriate, run through the school years, and intertwine efforts at school, at home and in the community. Even though much of this fits neatly into existing parts of the school day, these programs are a major change in any curriculum. It would be naive not to anticipate hurdles in getting such programs into schools.

'Many parents may feel that the topic is too personal a domain for the schools, that such things are best left to parents. Teachers may be reluctant to yield yet another part of the school day to topics that seem so unrelated to the academic basics; some teachers may be too uncomfortable with the topics to teach them, and all will need special training to do so. Some children, too, will resist, especially to the extent that these classes are out of synch with their actual concerns, or feel like intrusive impositions on their privacy. And then there is the dilemma of maintaining high quality, and ensuring that slick education marketers do not peddle ineptly designed emotional-competence programs that repeat the disasters of, say, ill-conceived courses on drugs or teen pregnancy.'

To counterbalance some of all the objections in this chapter, we now present evidence, evaluation and feedback about programmes that have been delivered in UK and US schools in the past.

School should be a joyful place.
Scottish Children's Parliament 2022

Curiosity killed the cat.
Poster on wall of London primary school 2005

Chapter Thirty-seven

Problems doing research

Regardless of how much detail these boys and girls remember by the time they become parents, the class has made them aware of the enormous importance that early childhood development has, both in terms of the quality of the child's life when he or she becomes an adult, and in terms of social consequences. Taking the course has imbued them with a deep sense of the importance of parenting.
Dr Myriam Miedzian about Educating Communities for Parenting

CROSS WITH CARE

Advice to pedestrians on road-crossing poles

Modern life demands that the value of any project one does has to be proven by something called 'evidence.' My experience of researching the effectiveness of a preventative treatment for miscarriage has made me wary of accepting without question the results of any piece of research, even when done, as in the case I mention, at huge expense of time and money by a body as esteemed as the UK's Medical Research Council (MRC.) They got it wrong but the results, published in the prestigious journal *The Lancet*, claiming that this treatment didn't make much difference, might well have resulted in late miscarriages which could have been prevented. I learnt how wrong it was only because I was writing a very detailed book about the subject and had to delve meticulously into all the research.

Most people who read research results don't have the time or motivation to go into the background in such detail, and can be forgiven for assuming that results represent the truth. Even the doctor at the MRC in Oxford, who organised the research, admitted that I had a point. A friend who has examined studies of animal

research has found comparable serious design faults. As we shall see in Volume Two, the company that makes virtual baby dolls claims that the randomised controlled trial, also reported in *The Lancet,* purporting to show that the dolls lead to more teenage pregnancies, was based on faulty premises. And in scientific research, 'over the last number of years, scientists have replicated a number of established, high-profile experiments and produced different results.' (London School of Economics brochure.)

There has been controversy about many other interventions: homeopathy and psychotherapy, to cite just two. People who have been cured of physical illness by the former when nothing else has worked, and healed from psychological problems by the latter, must take a dim view of studies claiming to show they have no effect. The government's pet form of cheap help, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), with its six or 20 sessions maximum, is cited as effective, but how long do the effects last? Can you say that something 'works' if it's only for a short time? We could take Freud's advice and exercise 'benevolent scepticism.'

And then there are the 'hard' outcomes and the 'soft.' Hard, measurable, short-term: you can list school attendance, rates of exclusion from school, police involvement and court appearances, pregnancy rates, exam results. Longer-term: you could measure rates of domestic violence or child protection, and see if money spent on early interventions has helped. But it's harder to measure what is 'soft.' How reliable and realistic is it to rate, for example, the happiness of a child or a parent? Isn't that the chief criterion we are thinking of in preparing youngsters for parenthood?

Many research reports indicate that there have been improvements, but often they don't say how great these improvements are. They might be statistically significant compared with a control group, but how significant? Just a little? A lot? We are not always told when

the research was carried out: immediately after the course ended? In six or twelve-months' time? Nor does the evidence state how long the benefits, if they exist, lasted. A few months? A few years? Until the students become parents? It is interesting to learn of the organisation CLOSER, founded in 2012 ('The home of longitudinal research') and of the Centre for Longitudinal Studies at University College, London, with its four major national studies.

Most research in the field of parenthood education relies on what students say or write about the impact of the course. One headteacher stated, 'In my experience, pupil questionnaires are often unreliable but need to be seen to be done. Many are used as empirical evidence when they perhaps should be treated with caution unless it is a very large sample.' Maybe some students write what they think their teachers want to read. Others might not want to admit that the course had an effect. And their answers could bear no relation to the future - whether the course has any lasting effects on their behaviour as parents. All we can rely on is what we can observe. Sometimes this work can be seen to improve, in the present, some students in certain ways: less aggression, more empathy and so on. But unless we can prove that these changes persist into parenthood, we can't claim any genuinely long-term benefits. We can only assume and hope.

As Kenneth David wrote about personal and social education: 'We need to distinguish between short-term and long-term effects. Ideally, we would like to know something about the long-term effectiveness of the programme but this may not be possible in, for example, education for parenthood' where 'it cannot be known until the students have brought up families, by which time the programme may be dated, and replaced by something different.' And what about the 'sleeper effect'? That is, there is 'little or no apparent effect for some time, but behaviour and attitude changes may appear later.'

Is it not extraordinary that no one seems interested in evidence of the outcomes of teaching, for example, quadratic equations or the past tense? These lessons lurch on regardless, decade after decade, many students bored or disaffected, the subjects irrelevant to their lives now or in future. If, however, you want to try something that interests them, that might improve the lives of babies, children and parents, and help society become happier and safer, you most likely have to show 'evidence' that it works in order to get funding, address conferences, or get your work publicised.

It is not just hard results that should be of interest. We need to know *how* the project has been done and *why* it went well: a more creative, exciting approach. As Terry Powley and Dave Evans (1979) put it: 'An evaluation should not be restricted to an assessment of how far the objectives of the programme have been achieved. It should also attempt to describe and define the processes by which the programme has led to certain outcomes. This part of the evaluation is concerned with the clarification of these processes – the complex range of components, styles, people and procedures that constituted the process - and with the identification of those aspects of the process which have made the programme more or less successful. The action-researcher is concerned with the process because he seeks to understand the relationship between the programme services and their effect on people and institutions. This attention to the process also allows the research design to be responsive to the achievements of the programme which lie outside the originally stated intentions.

'This last point is important, because if the design of the research programme is aimed merely at assessing whether the original objectives have been achieved, then it is likely not to highlight, or even notice at all, other things that may have been achieved but which were not anticipated at the beginning of the project. It may be that these achievements are, in the event, considerable and highly valued – the researcher must be able to pick up on these, point them out to

other people involved, encourage consideration of whether the unexpected outcomes are acceptable and valued or not, and try to discover why the outcomes were unexpected and how the results of actions may be better predicted in future.' So, for example, a lesson to teach the effects of hitting children might not result in changed stated opinions but might mean that a student becomes kinder to a younger sibling, just one of infinite possibilities which can make the teaching of parenthood even more interesting.

Graham Allen was Labour MP for Nottingham North until 2017. As we've seen, there are so many social problems in Nottingham North, including a high rate of teenage pregnancy, that he was instrumental not only in producing the excellent document *Early Intervention: Good Parents, Great Kids, Better Citizens* with Iain Duncan Smith (2008) but in creating early intervention measures in his city. He then founded the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF 2013) whose emphasis was all on evidence. In 2023, it merged with another organisation and is now called Foundations: The What Works Centre for Children and Families. (The EIF, by the way, told me in 2018 that they knew of no projects which teach teenagers about parenthood.)

Funders increasingly want evidence that a project will work or has worked – understandable, since no one wants to waste their money. But the difficulties of proving that the courses advocated in this book will produce better parents! The only way is to carry out longitudinal research, with a control group, into a significant number of individuals. Assessing students' knowledge, attitudes and behaviour, even two or three years after the course, is beset with problems: getting permission and access from schools and parents; asking female students if they became pregnant (some might have had secret terminations, or aren't sure at the moment if they are pregnant.) Asking male students if they have made any girls pregnant could be equally unwelcome; asking both if they have used contraception consistently might well produce inaccurate replies.

Doing even longer-term research, to see the effects of a course once students are in their late teens, 20s or 30s, would be more of a nightmare. Ten years on, for example, after they have left education, you would need to find lots of students with whom you worked, assuming that many of them, by the age of 28, will have become parents. This is fraught with difficulties. Some will have moved, gone abroad, be in prison or hospital, changed their name, become very ill, died. Some would be impossible to locate or would not reply. Others, or their partners, would refuse an interview or questionnaire.

You would devise methods to gauge whether the course had effects on teenage pregnancy rates; on the decision to become a parent or not; on the ways they parent; and their experiences of parenthood. Again, you would need a similar-sized control group – classes from the same year at the same schools who did not take the course - to find out what happened to them and if they are less good parents than the first lot. That would be an enormous project, taking huge amounts of time, effort and funding and the services of professional researchers who know what they are doing, in order to present a respectable case which would be taken seriously. You would need substantial numbers in both groups to show statistical significance.

As the school inspectors pointed out in their report (1979), 'It is extremely difficult to judge the effect of teaching personal development. Most of the evidence needed to determine responses is intangible and long-term, and may be expected to emerge in attitudes and judgments over a lifetime.'

I once asked the Mental Health Foundation if they would fund our school-based course about parenting and the longitudinal research needed to show outcomes. Their peer reviewers found the idea 'interesting' but, they said, even if it were discovered that those who had done our course were better parents than the controls, that might not be due to the course but to other factors. So, is there any point in

anyone doing this type of research on any topic? It seems that you can't win.

In 2018, I contacted the Gulbenkian Foundation, which had part-funded the project in Greater Manchester (chapter 24), to ask if they would fund research into its outcomes. The students who took part in Hope and Sharland's course (1995/6) would be in their 30s. Almost certainly, most would have children. Wouldn't it be interesting and useful to try to meet some of them to find out what they remembered and what effects, if any, they thought the course had on their parenting? The request was rejected. I contacted the five schools and the *Manchester Evening News,* hoping they could publicise my wish to interview the former students: there were no replies. Whether the course had long-lasting effects will, sadly, never be known.

All sorts of projects do get funding for longitudinal research, sometimes over decades. I wonder what it says about the importance placed by academics and funders on good parenting that no long-term studies, to my knowledge, have been done to find out how students fare who have been on a course, once they are parents.

Dr Adam Tomison does cite one longitudinal piece of research. It studied the results of Australia's *Perry Preschool Project* (1960s) where three-to-four-year-olds learnt about problem-solving, choice, decision-making, responsibility and daily routine. They were, impressively, followed up till the age of 27, which Tomison knows is 'unique in the field.' Researchers ascertained that by 27, over half the 58 children had 'better life outcomes' compared with a control group, with 'better social competence' in several areas. The study showed financial savings: 'For every dollar tax-payers spent on the preschool program, there was a subsequent saving of over seven dollars.'

In the absence of similar research, all we can do is to look at relatively short-term evaluations. And there is also simple feedback. This is by

students, teachers and parents about projects that have been tried or still exist. We'll find a vast amount of positive feedback. There are also useful reflections by researchers on good practice.

Several projects have mentioned another way of looking at outcomes. Rather than expecting students to remember everything they were taught, it's enough for them to have had an introduction to the knowledge which is out there so that they can use resources, once they are parents, to be more aware of what sort of adult relationships lead to good parenting, and to know something about the infant brain and neuro-development, so that they can remember how critical it is to care for themselves and their infant, before they even conceive.

Professor Michael Rutter (*The Family in Society* 1974) has argued that both small-scale and large-scale evaluations are necessary. 'You need intensive, detailed, well-controlled small-scale studies to ask: Did the project do what it set out to do? Should it be applied more widely?' And you need large-scale studies too, though these can be problematic. For example, evaluations of the huge, innovative *Head Start* programme in the US, co-founded by the late professor Urie Bronfenbrenner, came to different conclusions at different times.

Short-term intervention

Then there is the question of whether interventions which are only brief, can have lasting outcomes. Educate Tomorrow's Parents quotes four such projects reporting impressive results, all through randomised controlled trials.

- M Black et al (2006) studied a home-based project for teenage mothers. Effects could be seen after only two visits, and increased over time. There were no second births among mothers who attended eight sessions;
- William Doherty and Martha Erickson (2006) found that a 'relatively brief' group project during 'the transition to parenthood'

enhanced the quality of father-child relationships and increased the men's involvement with their children;

- Spoth, Clair et al (2006) found a 'significant' reduction in drug abuse after a school-based project, one year, then five-and-a-half-years later, 'with a 65 percent life-time reduction in abuse compared with the controls.' The length of the course isn't stated;
- Of parents who watched a five-to-ten-minute video, 83 percent said they planned to change their discipline methods; nine percent said they planned to do less spanking. (Seth Sholer, Julia Hudnut-Beumler et al 2010.) We don't know if they did what they intended!

Nothing to measure?

There's also the question of value. If there are no measurable outcomes, is an intervention worthless? I once provided weekly play therapy for two years for a boy at primary school. He had mild brain damage, showed no interest in classroom work and had few friends. Yet in the playroom he became joyously alive, immensely creative with the arts and crafts materials, and developed a warm relationship with me, albeit with few words. His class teacher could not believe how differently he behaved in the therapy room. I have no idea if our sessions led to any outward changes in his later life. Probably not. But I suspect that the positive experience is stored for life somewhere in his mind. Was it a waste of time? If you meet an adult, 20 years in the future, telling you that your course helped them to be a good parent, is that 'evidence,' even if there was never a longitudinal randomised controlled trial to prove the worth of your course?

Don't hesitate to ask questions, comrade,
Don't be persuaded, but prove for yourself.
What you don't learn yourself, you don't know.
Check up the bill for it's you who must pay it,
Point with your finger to every item;
Say that you want it explained…
Bertolt Brecht, In Praise of Learning

Chapter Thirty-eight

Evidence, evaluation and feedback: UK projects

Parenthood education in five schools: Pilot project in Greater Manchester 1995 - 96

If you don't treat yourself good, you won't treat your kids good.
Student after the course

Evaluation of the course's impact was an essential element. 'Before' and 'After' questionnaires were administered to all who took part: nearly 1,200 students. Students kept logbooks; some were interviewed. Their parents were given a questionnaire and invited for interview. Teachers who delivered the course were given an evaluation logbook to record the lessons and their impact.

The key finding: 'The inclusion of parenthood in the curriculum of a school, particularly if it is taught alongside other personal and social issues, can have a positive influence on the young people's thinking about their roles and responsibilities as future parents.'

It is not clear how many students completed the 'After' questionnaire and whether they were the keenest and most positive. Only 631 students (just over half) replied to the question: 'How much has this lesson changed your views or opinions about parenthood?' An impressive 60 percent replied 'Some', 'A Lot,' or 'A Great Deal.' Good news, but it says nothing about any long-term impact. The evaluation was done straight after the course ended.

There were some small, though statistically significant, changes in knowledge and attitudes of those students who gave data. One of the biggest changes: about ten percent felt 'prepared for parenthood' before the course, and about 20 percent said they felt prepared 'a lot'

after it. Most changes, if they occurred at all, were slight. It could well be that trying to gauge changes in 'knowledge, attitudes and skills' by a lengthy, subjective questionnaire is not an accurate way to evaluate. Only long-term research could discover if changes lasted into young adulthood and resulted in the desired outcome: better parenting. As Philip Hope said, 'Project limitations mean we are unable at this stage to put in place any long-term evaluation, but this would be important for any future development.'

What I find most telling in the evaluation are comments by parents and teachers. Of the 79 parents who completed a questionnaire, 58 percent said they wished they had been taught parenthood at school (27 percent didn't know if they wished that; only 15 percent didn't wish they had had it.) As for teachers, their many positive, heart-warming comments would come as no surprise to people who have tried this work. For example,

- Pupils very enthusiastic about role-play;
- Deep discussion about the role of violence; some very thoughtful answers;
- Pupils keen/raring to go. Was constantly surprised at their keenness;
- Shy pupils beginning to talk more. Comment from one: 'I feel happy at the end of this lesson.'

Much of the less positive feedback referred to lack of time. Six lessons were clearly not enough:

- Took more time than expected;
- Lesson could have been developed with more time; many other issues involved;
- We consistently over-ran;
- They had lots of ideas but shortage of time necessarily cut down on discussion;

- Seriously, time was a factor. Did not manage to complete all that was on the sheet;
- Lack of time meant we did not discuss all the relevant questions;
- Needed longer.

This teacher summed up, echoing one of the key messages of this book: 'Generally the exercises were well received and enthusiastically completed, but I feel an ongoing programme through Years 9, 10 and 11 will eventually be more beneficial and hopefully have a greater effect on the future thinking of our pupils.'

No evaluation report is complete without a few of the students' comments. Some found it boring or a waste of time, ('It was just the activity sheets where you had to answer questions, so it didn't change my point of view'), but the following represent the vast majority:

- It changed my views a lot: no one ever tells you what it's all about;
- It showed how a parent's behaviour changes a child's life;
- I'd think twice about smacking a child;
- I'm starting to think it's too much like hard work for me;
- I can now see the need for an extended family;
- It was great fun.

Despite the evaporation of the work after the pilot ended, and the lack of long-term evaluation due to lack of funding, the enormous amount of time, thought and meticulous effort by Hope and Sharland is luckily not wasted. We can still learn from, and use, the documents they left behind: the *Teacher's Pack* - the write-up of the course - and the *Teacher's Guide*.

The Baby Borrowers 2007

This programme should be used because it can change a lot of people's minds at this age! Student aged 17

Like the Greater Manchester work, *The Baby Borrowers* was an action-research project. The workshops in the eight schools were to 'establish the need' for the pack written by the BBC; to gather teachers' opinions; use their expertise to develop a PSHE and citizenship resource; and to get feedback from students to ensure that the pack was engaging and relevant. We look at feedback, rather than outcomes. Outcomes seem never to have been measured.

Fay Horrocks, head of drama and sex education at Childwall College, was a great fan. She wrote: 'The project is like a breath of fresh air, stimulating and engaging. The lesson plans are a fantastic tool. It covers a vast age range and kept pupils fully engaged, gaining excellent knowledge and understanding. It was inclusive - even self-conscious pupils joined in. It would be an asset to any PSHE, SRE or citizenship course.'

Feedback from staff and pupils was carefully reported. Both rated the curriculum 'excellent' or, much less often, just 'good' or 'OK.' A full 100 percent of pupils (13-to-16-year-olds) said they had learnt something of value. 'I enjoyed watching the DVD the most, because it gives you an insight of how hard it would be for young couples to bring up a baby.'

Teachers rated the written lesson plans as 'excellent' (50 percent), 'good' (30 percent) and 'OK' (20 percent.) Interestingly, unlike in Manchester, some teachers seemed to want lessons to be shorter (they were one to one-and-a-half hours each), but we don't know why. So the BBC amended the pack to make the lessons 'snappy and succinct.' All the teachers rated the course overall as 'excellent' (70

percent) or 'good' (30 percent.) Early changes added more learning styles - audio, visual and kinaesthetic - as well as more drama and group activities.

Ideal for the classroom. Teacher

What the students liked most was 'being able to watch people their own age cope with real life babies, to talk about the programme, and debate the surrounding topics.' It is telling that at first the least popular lesson required students to write a lot. This was later amended to include activities such as drama.

Showing the DVD of the young couples caring for a baby seems an extremely vivid way to teach. The most popular lesson featured the star couple, Carl and Kayleigh. 100 percent of students said they had learnt something valuable. Most wanted more lessons, especially to see how the other couples coped.

Throughout this century, but especially since 2010, school has become an increasingly uncongenial experience for children. In one recent survey, 39% of 11-to-14-year-olds said that they disliked school, a figure that rose to 52% for 15-to-16-year-olds.
Letter in The Guardian, 2 July 2023
by Michael Pyke, Campaign for State Education

Chapter Thirty-nine

Evidence, evaluation and feedback: US projects

Prepare Tomorrow's Parents

The PTP website includes Dr Dana McDermott's list of research findings, many about parent education in general, not specifically in schools, but which are relevant to work with school students too. Here are those specific to school-based work:

- Maurice Elias and John Clabby's experience (1987) led to a 'practical procedural guide showing how school-based social competence programs can improve children's self-control and social awareness, along with their skills in group participation and interpersonal decision-making, helping to prepare them for their role as socially competent, responsible, and productive citizens.' The model 'provides school-based practitioners and practitioners-in-training with a framework for designing, implementing and evaluating social competency programs. The curricular interventions are designed for use at all grade levels and with a diverse student population.' They later (1992) emphasise the importance of students' communication and co-operative work with others, expressing their own opinions, understanding others' beliefs and needs, and negotiation skills - all part of good parenting;

- Rodney Tulloch and Clayton Omvig (1989) studied Kentucky high school students after their one semester [15-week] parenting course and found, apart from their wanting to delay parenthood till an older age, little change: hardly surprising given the course's brevity. As several experts have emphasised, parenting education in schools needs to last for many years;

- Tom Luster and June Youatt (1989) found that reality-based methods, such as students interacting with young children,

choosing age-appropriate toys at a store, and/or observing patterns of parent-child interaction in natural settings, made for successful parenthood education;

- Peter Jaffe et al (1992) found short-term benefits of their one-off 'large-scale primary prevention program for wife assault and dating violence' for all students at four high schools, with a large group presentation, followed by professionally facilitated classroom discussion. Five or six weeks later, they found 'significant positive attitude, knowledge, and behavioral intention changes. The majority of these were maintained at delayed follow-up.' As with other studies, we don't know how long the 'delay' was, nor whether the changes persisted into adult life and parenting behaviour through this one-off event.

New York City: child development, parenting and parent development course from 1985

My life has been changed by it. Student

The teacher Lou Howort told me, 'The vast majority of my students loved this class. It was elective and always filled to capacity. The outcomes it produced justified my existence.' Dr Myriam Miedzian visited the class and looked at a set of evaluations. 'With one exception they ranged from positive to ebullient. The one exception said he did learn not to hit your kid.' Examples of students' feedback included:

- What I like most about this course was the discussion on emotional damages and child's self-esteem;
- Now I know why I act furiously toward people sometimes without me knowing why and the reason I sometimes wake up in the night crying and hurting emotionally;

- How to be careful so you do not destroy your child's self-esteem., so that in future, your child can have security in him or herself.

Parents also gave feedback. 'I really wanted to meet you. My kid's learned so much in your class. We talk about it all the time at home.' This can improve family relationships. Dr Miedzian listed the benefits, and some predicted outcomes:

- Students are likely to become better parents;
- The course opens them up emotionally, putting them in touch with their childhood pain;
- This is especially valuable for boys who have been taught to repress softer feelings;
- They will be more likely to seek professional help if needed, rather than acting out their problems;
- It enables them to understand and help their siblings;
- They can share knowledge with their parents;
- They become better babysitters, with new ways to communicate with children;
- Regardless of how much detail they remember by the time they become parents, the class has made them aware of the enormous importance of early childhood development. Taking the course has imbued them with a deep sense of the importance of parenting.

And she quotes Sally Scattergood: 'Teaching it makes it important.'

No formal evaluation was ever done, but it would be surprising if at least some students did not carry at least some of what they learnt with Lou for the rest of their lives.

Teen Choices 1990

As we have seen, the YWCA reported that 'studies have shown that pregnancy prevention programs are most effective when introduced before the high school years.' It is probably very significant that during the three years of her work, Jessica heard of no pregnancies amongst the 90 'at risk' 12-to-14-year-old girls she taught. It is possible that pregnancies were not reported, or were secretly terminated. But given the excellent relationships she seems to have formed with both the girls and their mothers, that seems unlikely. Midway through the program, Jessica told the local newspaper, 'I've seen changes in their attitudes and the way they talk about the subjects.' The lack of reported pregnancies suggests that her model of working was highly effective in preventing very early pregnancy in a vulnerable group of young teenage girls.

Educating Children for Parenting 1992

Frank Masterpasqua (1992) evaluated the early work with ten-to-eleven-year-olds in seven schools in Pennsylvania and New York. McDermott reports that children in ECP classes had 'a significantly larger number of solutions to parent-child problems' than a control group. They also had more solutions about positive caring for young children. They were less likely than before the classes to see physical punishment as a good idea. Other evaluations (1996 and 1998) found similar outcomes: 'Many students had increased powers of observation and questioning.'

Then Masterpasqua did an especially interesting piece of research (1998.) He looked at students at Silver Springs Martin Luther School in Pennsylvania, a school catering for young people who need residential education due to significant emotional and behavioural problems. It would be fair to predict that without a lot of input, they would, on average, be more likely to repeat the poor parenting that

they might had themselves, and to have violent futures. It was a small study over two years: 21 in the treatment group, and 20 controls. But the conclusion was plain. 'The ECP curriculum had a very beneficial effect on students' learning, knowledge and interpersonal problem-solving. Therefore, it can be viewed as an essential first step in improving the next generation of parenting.'

Specifically, the Silver Springs students:

- Monthly participated in, and were first-hand witnesses to, a caring and compassionate relationship between a parent and young child. They formed a real connection with both baby and mother, most developing a strong sense of responsibility for 'their' baby and gaining a lot from this relationship;
- Came up with solutions to common parent-child conflicts;
- Became more sensitive to developmental differences between young children;
- Understood child development and early parenting.

However, there were caveats. They didn't do very well in changing their attitude to punishment; and if the ECP program wanted to make a real impact on their views and feelings about relationships, said the researcher, it would need to be intensified and adapted to meet the special needs of these students. They would need therapeutic discussion, and individual and group therapy, to address the feelings that the program evoked.

The Caring Project: Education for Parenting - Learning How to Care 1994

It scares the kids to death knowing that parents go through that much responsibility. It teaches them that having a baby isn't fun or a joke.
Student aged 12

The curriculum by Dr Harriet Heath, *Education for Parenting: Learning How to Care,* was evaluated (1994), having been used for 474 students in two Chicago state schools. In one, a sample of 10-to-12-year-olds were found to be more accurate in observing and describing babies and their needs after the course than before. Dr Dana McDermott cites a telling example. Beforehand, most students gave, 'Give her a bottle and put her to bed,' as their recommended solution to problems. After the course, delivered once a month for nine school months, they were more likely to give more appropriate answers, based on a new appreciation of, for example, the natural curiosity of infants. At the other school, the students were interviewed and their journals studied.

Carol Coohey and Murphy reported that students were now more likely to understand the need for safety and the tremendous responsibilities of parents.

> *In some schools the themes of care have become so pervasive after our training and program that it affected school philosophy and policies in dramatic ways where some schools created a comprehensive caring school model.*
> Dr Dana McDermott

Through involvement in these programs, teachers agreed that parenthood education should be part of the curriculum of a truly caring school. The caring approach should be the basis for classroom discipline; relations between parents and their children; relationships between parents and teachers; and between parents, schools and the community.

Dr McDermott's work in Chicago schools (late 1990s) showed again that the headteacher's support is vital. The longitudinal research was interrupted when the work was cut due to academic priorities, but teachers' and students' feedback leaves no doubt again about the beneficial effects of regular visits by parents and their infants:

- Children become more sensitive to the needs of others;
- They understand their own need to depend on others;
- They are more willing to share their thoughts and feelings;
- They are more aware of each other as individuals with differences;
- Their observation skills improve;
- They show more appreciation of what parents/adults do for them;
- They learn what hard work it is to look after a baby;
- They realise that babies need love and care and to be kept safe;
- They learn that babies need to satisfy their curiosity;
- They learn that all babies are different;
- Students said they would have liked more F to see more fathers.

Dads Make A Difference 2000

I have been able to realise what I want to find in a husband and the way I desire my future husband to be toward me and his children. Student

Educators and parents need to make the case more strongly that students, in learning content of meaning and interest to them in terms of life skills, will simultaneously learn other skills, like critical thinking, that can be generalised to traditional academic subjects as well. Dr Dana McDermott

Independent evaluation has been positive: in 2001 and 2002 it measured knowledge and attitudes of the Teen Teachers before and just after training, then one year later, then two years later. DMAD also measured knowledge and attitudes of middle school students before and just after they were trained by the Teen Teachers, then six-weeks later. All 'received important benefits.' An unusual feature of this evaluation was a small control group of middle school students who did not attend the course.

Teen Teachers

The project had a significant impact on the Teen Teachers, as well as on those whom they taught. DMAD trained 173 students aged, on

average, 16-and-a-half. There were some fascinating outcomes. Teenagers who took the training, but didn't go on to be Teen Teachers, benefited as much as those who did. Nearly all said that the training had prepared them well to teach confidently, though some felt nervous. The training dealt with knowledge (paternity and child support), attitudes (to paternity and fatherhood), and skills (leadership and decision-making.) After training, there were higher scores of between two-to-twelve percent on all four items. Some were 'significant,' others 'significant and meaningful,' though it's not clear what 'meaningful' meant.

How did the work impact on the Teen Teachers? There was evidence that they benefited permanently even more than the younger students whom they taught. For her thesis (2000), Jan Hayne studied 15 Teen Teachers aged 17-to-22. She discovered how much the role increased their confidence, communication, decision-making/problem-solving skills, relationships, life-planning, self-esteem, sense of belonging, and belief in the importance of fathers. And they said they had fun.

The more times they taught, the better they scored over time on leadership, and knowledge of paternity and support. By year two, time had erased some of the influence of their training about, for example, decision-making and attitudes to fatherhood. However, they now had enhanced knowledge about paternity and support benefits. Apparently, age and the type of area where the teens lived (urban, suburban or rural) had no significant influence on attitudes.

The researchers admit that 'some attributes of a seasoned teacher are difficult to measure with a written survey.' Getting respondents of any age to provide a truly accurate picture of their understanding by filling in a questionnaire is an imperfect method. Focus groups are more likely to yield deeper comments, but they comprise only a small percentage of students, and possibly only the more articulate ones.

Follow-up after one year, when Teen Teachers were on average aged 17, showed that on some topics, their knowledge and attitudes were enhanced by up to 12 percent.

After two years, desired attitudes remained strong, though factual knowledge, about paternity and child support for example, had decreased. But 'the majority of Teen Peer Educators take steps to prevent becoming a parent too soon.' Teens were asked about their sexual behaviour and use of contraception. At the time of training, 21 percent had had intercourse. This had risen to 68 percent two years later. But the number using birth control had changed significantly: from 69 percent to 93.

What of the life situations of the Teen Teachers? At the time of training, one was a parent, with no paternity established and no child support in place. Two years later, four were parents, all of whom had established paternity; three had child support in place.

Middle school students (average age 13)

At five schools, 434 students were surveyed in 23 classrooms. The assessment before the course showed that in some areas, they were very knowledgeable, but in others, had 'serious misconceptions.' There were significant changes after the course (e.g. 95 percent now said that sex was 'a risk'), and after six weeks they had retained the gains in their knowledge and attitudes.

In the four subject areas, covered during nine sessions, students learnt about decision-making, and said things like this:

- It has shown me some new ways to handle conflict with my father and the value of safe sex. *Male student*
- DMAD made me realise how permanent and expensive parenthood is. *Female student.*

And about the importance of fathers:

- I feel closer to my dad; he's more important to me. *Male student*
- What I learnt from DMAD is don't have sex too early and don't be a dad who leaves. *Male student.*

Students gave the thumbs up about older teenagers teaching them: 74 percent agreed that having Teen Teachers made it easier for them to talk openly and ask questions. What were the best things?

- 33 percent said they related better to Teen Teachers than to adult teachers;
- 14 percent cited more fun;
- 11 percent reckoned the Teen Teachers 'knew about it as they were living it.'

The worst things?

- Teen Teachers are not as organised or experienced as adult teachers (20 percent);
- They don't know as much about life or having kids (14 percent);
- But 33 percent gave no 'worst things.' 'Nothing. I liked it.'

When asked who should teach, they replied: Teen Teachers (41 percent), adults (six percent), both (36 percent), and 'It doesn't matter' (17 percent.)

They were asked: 'What are the most important things you learnt?'

- Dads are important (24 percent);
- Wait to have a child (20 percent);
- Wait to have sex (15 percent);
- 74 percent agreed that the DMAD class would help them in the future.

The researchers summarised their findings about middle school students like this: 'DMAD makes strong, short-term changes in students' knowledge and attitudes about dads, parenting and paternity. They strongly indicate they value Teen Teachers involvement in DMAD.' The comparison with the small control group (21 students) showed dramatic differences after the course. For example, whereas 70 percent who had taken the course (376 students) reported desirable attitudes about too early parenthood, paternity and dads, only 40 percent of the control group did. Other areas of knowledge and attitudes all showed a difference: 23 percent of the course students, compared to six percent of the controls.

The research included focus groups with middle school students, with some interesting views expressed:

- Slightly older teens, especially if they are parents, would make an impact on younger teens;
- Middle school students look up to high school ones, listening to them more than to an authority figure;
- Methods recommended by students: short, music-oriented videos with real children in them; plays or skits by teens about teen situations; small group discussions; and wallet cards with factual information;
- And they said: 'Don't use comic books, posters or brochures.'

Communities do well to remember that how well students do often depends on how well schools and communities combine efforts to support them.
Dr Dana McDermott

Part Six
Schools

Chapter Forty
What should schools be for?

The School Boy

I love to rise in a summer morn,
When the birds sing on every tree;
The distant huntsman winds his horn,
And the skylark sings with me.
O! what sweet company.

But to go to school in a summer morn,
O! it drives all joy away;
Under a cruel eye outworn,
The little ones spend the day,
In sighing and dismay…… William Blake

The most cynical view of schools equates them to prisons. Critics write of 'the uninspired monotony, nothing more than a regiment of training. After a lifetime of having the stars beaten out of our eyes, we numbly file off to work.' The main role of schools, it is said, is to prepare the equivalent of cannon (computer?!) fodder to become a docile, efficient workforce, enabling the country to compete in the world market. And schools are convenient for parents, so that they can go to work without having to find and pay for childcare.

It seems to me that the main aims of every school for every age group need to be two-fold:

- The nurture of the emotional well-being of all students, their parents, carers, and members of staff at all levels;
- The study of the world, its current problems and possibilities, and how to work towards ensuring a decent, peaceful life for every person in every country; students becoming international citizens.

Imagine a future when each student looks forward to school, enjoys it, finds it interesting, relevant to their life, develops positive relationships with peers and adults. Why can't school stimulate and satisfy their curiosity? If it does, they'll talk about what they learn with their mates, maybe at home, will remember it - or at least some of it. Education will be both an end in itself: enjoyment, and a means to an end: permanent enrichment, competence as adults, a better world.

Emotional well-being

The first step towards healing the wounds that tear our society apart is giving kids supportive communities at school.
Connecticut Coalition for Child Development Education

How about every school resembling a therapeutic community? But not only for students: for all its workforce, and its parents, carers and extended family members as well. Everyone on the staff, from cleaner to caretaker to headteacher to chair of governors could, with support, model good parenting. This proposal is simple in concept, radical and addresses the crises in both mental health and education. Nearly every child goes to school and college for at least 13 years (though home education is increasingly popular, for very varied reasons.) Given the high levels of unmet emotional need – 40 percent of children are said to be insecurely attached to parent figures, with high levels of parental desperation about family life – it is madness to continue as we are. With emphasis on the heart, 'good-enough' academic learning will automatically follow, just as plants grow well in the right soil. Youth workers, family workers, mentors and therapists need to be freely available for those students, parents, carers and staff who need something extra. There are countless ways in which any school can become a haven of good emotional health, and no shortage of talented educationalists (past and present), therapists and artists of all kinds who have spent years developing, practising and writing about their specific contribution.

What do people need to know, in order to live happily? And do schools help them to learn it? Are there 'lovable schools where children, teachers and families all feel well,' as the child-centred Italian educationalist Loris Malaguzzi advocated? 'The entire school experience should promote both personal development and well-being,' wrote Alasdair Macdonald (2008.) Does it?

There are many groups critical of how schools operate: More Than A Score coalition; Let Kids be Kids; Freedom to Learn Forum; Rethinking Education; and Curiouser & Co., to name a few. Some create new models: see the film *School Circles*, directed by Marianne Osorio and Charlie Shread at the Institute of Imagination: an independent documentary exploring the practice of democratic schools in the Netherlands, showing students, teachers and staff members coming together to discuss proposals, mediate conflicts and make decisions about their school life. These schools challenge mainstream education, and challenge democracy as we know it. They put into practice *Sociocracy*, a method for collective organisation based on a 'systems perspective,' in which decisions are made by hearing all voices and getting everyone's consent. *School Circles* connects the theory of *Sociocracy* to its practice within schools, taking us to new possibilities of organising ourselves and our communities. Watch for free on YouTube *Schooling the World:* the effects of modern education on indigenous peoples. And the British Educational Research Association has run events with talks like *How Does It Feel to be an Alternative Educator in the Mainstream?* and *Disrupting Teacherly Conduct.*

Nel Noddings wrote of the overwhelming needs of students from traumatic backgrounds which cannot be met by schools as they are: schools should house doctors, dentists, social workers, childcare, and parenting advice. 'People who are poor, perhaps homeless, without dependable transport, cannot afford to run all over town seeking such services, and often don't know where to begin.' And students should not have to struggle with academic courses that don't suit them.

Our school was a haven from the horrors outside.
Malala Yusafzai, girl shot by Taliban; given Nobel peace prize

There are attempts by many schools to nurture positive feelings and ways of life. For example, St Mary's Catholic Secondary academy in Blackpool piloted an *Acts of Kindness* week in 2012. Pupils wrote letters to prisoners of conscience, held a Fairtrade café, and told others about kind things they did ('I told my mum she wasn't fat.') Others offer *Philosophy for Children* lessons, or provide nurture groups for children needing extra pastoral attention. These and other projects are all to be welcomed. But this book argues that caring ways of living, of relating, of parenting, need to be permanent, central themes of any school, not add-ons, squeezed into one week, or one lesson a week, or a module merely for one term or one year.

This collapse in trust begins for many people with an issue that seldom features in political analysis, but that is likely to play a major role in alienation: the nature of schooling. School, the first sustained contact with both the state and the professional classes, is for many people a humiliating and oppressive experience.
George Monbiot, Out of the Wreckage 2017

Schools need to be demonstrably ***on the side*** of all students, including those who risk exclusion, through a whole-school system based on empathy, understanding, addressing the emotional and intellectual needs and interests of individual students by unstressed, un-bullied school staff who are not constantly afraid of a punitive, frightening inspection body breathing down their necks.

Stop Press 2023: The Radical Youth Space for Educations (RYSE), based in Stroud, Gloucestershire, calls for an end to a competitive, exam-oriented school system, and for globally-conscious, collective education that can lead to a better world. See their website.

Positive things about schools

If you are going to create a new society, it is in the schools that you must begin.
R F Mackenzie, State School 1973

Some recent authors claim that things in the world aren't too bad really: look at all the progress that's been made. Yes, we have certainly come a long way, in some ways and in some countries. No more little kids up chimneys. Gays can marry. Many countries no longer behead criminals, and so on. Think of your own pet bits of progress. Yet every charity and campaign is replete with shocking statistics of what is still appallingly bad, such as levels of abuse and neglect of children.

When I started this book, it was going to be just about teaching good parenting in school. It then dawned on me that it needed to describe the context in which that teaching has to happen. The context is the crises in both education and mental health.

And then the whining schoolboy with his satchel
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school.
William Shakespeare, As You Like It

So there are at least two elephants in the room. Distinguished experts such as Sir Ken Robinson have passionately spoken out about them, but they're hard to shift. There can be many positives. School might be important as the only secure, predictable place for children from chaotic families or localities. There's the voluntary input of committed staff in the fields of arts, sports, trips, gardening and so on outside of school hours. There's the genuine enjoyment of some lessons by some students and teachers. A few extraordinary mainstream or special schools, such as, respectively, Gallions primary and Ian Mikardo high school in east London, find it possible to operate in exciting, artistic, therapeutic ways (retaining talented staff)

thanks to determined, brave, inspirational headteachers, despite the demands of the national curriculum for local authority schools, and the ever-present shadow of Ofsted.

Outside the classroom: playing, growing, cooking

Children need lots of play outside: it develops their social skills, confidence, resilience, and they are more ready to learn after they have played, says Play England. The recent rise in forest schools is encouraging: people are realising the importance for learning of free play in natural surroundings. Yet children play out less and less where they live, and most schooling takes place within four walls.

The largely forgotten, inspirational Scottish headteacher and writer, R F Mackenzie (1910 - 87), wrote at length about the huge benefits he found of sending secondary students to live in the wild with their teachers. English teacher Francis Gilbert reports in his book *I'm a Teacher, Get Me Out of Here!* on his week in north Wales at a residential centre with his challenging inner-city pupils. 'The kids fell in love with it immediately. For the first time ever, I felt totally liberated with the kids. I could be myself and not worry. I dropped all pretence of being a teacher, stopped shushing them and telling them off, because there appeared to be no need. The change that occurred in the kids over the week was remarkable.' It is within that sort of relationship that preparing students for parenthood can best be achieved.

Alan Titchmarsh urges schools to include gardening. 'The curriculum should cater for at least several periods each week, outdoors, even in inner-city schools. You can do it. There are green spaces. We know it's good for them, they let off steam. Gardening is therapy. They are the future custodians of the landscape. We need to get them familiar with it.' The secondary teacher Jamie Feilden introduced his disaffected students to lambs in the playground, leading to remarkable changes as they cared for the animals. His charity, Jamie's Farm, runs

five-day residential courses ('Farming, Family and Therapy') on farms, with significant improvements in confidence and self-esteem, and a decrease in school exclusions.

The Kids Cookery School, based in Acton, west London, provided classes especially for underprivileged children for 25 years until it had to close post-pandemic. But why should cookery be at a special venue for a minority? When all children and teenagers can grow healthy food, cook it and serve it up, they learn important life skills of many kinds, including parenting.

Residential, important school journeys have become less frequent as school staff fear accidents. Many children at my daughter's school could not go because their parents could not afford even the subsidised fee. Children who had exciting summer holidays, such as Disneyland in Florida, went on the school journey as well. Children who had no summer holiday of any sort, did not.

Until the school day is based on enjoyable, interesting activities which enable and challenge every child to develop socially and emotionally, learning genuinely useful things, instead of being imprisoned in classrooms, fed academic data which will have no place in the lives of most of them, we do them a tragic disservice.

But when every class contains (or fails to contain) two or three children with diagnosable mental health problems, plus several more in emotional distress; when rates of school exclusion soar; when teachers go off sick due to behaviour they don't know how to deal with; when traditional methods (such as making a disruptive child sit outside the head's office) don't work, we can safely confirm that there is a crisis in schools. Is this any wonder, given counter-productive educational pressures, and most schools' lack of a thorough, deep understanding of emotional health, and effective ways to promote it?

Political parties have suggestions. The Green Party says no to Ofsted, testing, academies and a narrow curriculum, but is unlikely to have the political power to effect this. 'Old' Labour, with its 2019 education policy, *From Cradle to Grave,* would have abolished Ofsted and SATS but got no chance. The National Education Union is critical of the status quo - but could it unite all its members for effective boycotting? Even some Conservative councils, such as the Isle of Wight's, oppose academies with their 125-year land leases. The Green Paper on school-based mental health services (2017) doesn't allow for anything like the quantity or quality of resources needed.

It has seemed to me that the final test of any civilisation is, what type of husbands and wives and fathers and mothers does it turn out? Besides the austere simplicity of such a question, every other achievement of civilization – art, philosophy, literature, and material living – pales into insignificance.
Dr Lin Yutang , The Importance of Living

Scant attention is paid at most schools to healing the emotional wounds of the many children from unhappy homes. Almost nothing substantial is done to begin to address the emotional pains of parents who are finding parenthood terribly hard to cope with, and who have had little or no experience themselves of being parented well enough. (The Family Hub pilots in 75 English LEAs, 2003 – 2005, are making attempts. In addition, a NEWPIN centre everywhere would make a huge difference for some very distraught parents.)

The effects of living in a dangerous district without enough money, and the anti-social behaviour this inevitably causes by some young people, are not fully addressed or mitigated by schools. Nor do schools seem to fully acknowledge the nature of teenagers - their sleep patterns are not taken into account when the school times are decided: an early start doesn't suit many of them. Their brains are not fully developed till their mid-20s. They have not developed logical, rational thinking and they take risks.

We read (*Metro* (3.4.18) about teachers 'in fear of kids aged just four. Staff regularly face attempts by children to strangle them and gouge their eyes, some troubled youngsters lashing out up to seven times every day, the NASUWT teaching union's conference was told.' This was not even in inner-city London. It was in Shropshire. Teachers and parents call for more special needs money: but it has been cut.

A former primary teacher said: 'I had to launch straight into a lesson, not even time to say hello. When the bell went, I had to stop the lesson, even if the kids hadn't finished what they were writing. It was a deprived area. Some kids were in a poor emotional state. If an adult comes to work upset, the first thing they'd do is to chat to someone. We expect kids to just get on with their work.'

As the WAVE Trust reports, 'Teachers, teaching assistants, learning mentors and everyone in a school need to model good relationships for them to be embedded in the culture of the school.' I'd specify by 'everyone': governors, senior management team, office staff, caretakers, cleaners, dinner staff., breakfast and tea time club staff….

The most important word in the study of adult and child development is not success or achievement but relationships. All future parents must get this information.
Dr Dana McDermott 2008

Most schools are not like good families or democratic communities. Do the parents all know and support each other? Do the staff enjoy each other's company, and know the parents? Is there an inclusive ethos, a lack of cliques? Some do have a happy welcoming atmosphere, especially if they're small, but most are not sufficiently child-centred. Some have harsh climates, and top-heavy senior management teams killing off any hope of democracy. There is even 'internal exclusion': 'sin bins', a foretaste of prison cells. Students are sent home, often for petty reasons. Witnesses in suburban areas of a near-silent class of 30 young children undergoing uninspiring English

or maths lessons every morning could be excused for thinking there is no problem in our schools. The sight suggests that a well-behaved workforce is indeed being fostered. But what happens to their creative potential? Their ability to express emotions and develop empathy? To think for themselves and act in future to make the world a better place? To question whether education is all about going to 'uni' in order to get a 'good' job (whatever 'good' means)?

To think only of themselves or their own family, with an addictive desire to work hard to acquire a never-ending collection of expensive new things with built-in obsolescence: this was the Thatcher and Blair dream. It is not getting us very far. Some teenagers leave school unable to speak articulately. Universities give brochures to new undergraduates about how to strike up conversation with their room-mates. Cyberbullying, the rise in alcoholism in young people: the list goes on and on. But we could begin to change things now. Schools operating as therapeutic communities can prepare children and young people about parenthood, involve their parents, and improve everyone's well-being. We know how to do it.

Certainly there are the complications and fiascos of academies forced on unwilling teachers, governors and parents; of 'free' schools; of more faith schools; of the class-apartheid of private education. Cuts in public and educational spending don't exactly help. But all this need not limit what we do at school - ***now*** - to promote the mental health of everyone. We have the most golden of opportunities. Thirteen years of school, each year comprising over 1,000 hours, is a lot of time for a thorough grounding in emotional health. It could help mitigate the effects of poor care at home, and the threats, influences and temptations of the cynical, commercial world with its sole interest in getting young people's money. Tragically, much or even most of the time in those 190 days a year is taken up with demands from above to impose curricula far less relevant than parenthood and well-being.

Innovative schools worldwide

Schools can inspire and learn from each other. Jennifer Lachs (2017) describes five of 'the most innovative schools in the world,' e.g.

- **Egalia Pre-school in Stockholm** aims to avoid any type of discrimination in terms of age, skill, class, race, disability or gender, avoiding any preconceived roles. A teacher might change the story to let the princess save the prince. Says the head: 'It is important that the children learn the basis of democracy both in practice and theory in order to be good world citizens who do not discriminate. A good self-belief is the basis for learning and development.'

- **The Green School in Bali** makes it its mission to educate students - from kindergarten to high school - about sustainability: cooking, gardening, combined with subjects such as maths and languages. Teachers come from all over the world. It is turning into a community. Despite high fees and lack of diversity, it aims to act as a model for Bali and the world. Indeed, Ban Ki-Moon, UN Secretary General (2007-16), said it was the most 'unique and impressive school' he had ever visited.

- High tech workers in the Silicon Valley choose to send their children to the Steiner **Waldorf School.** It has hardly any technology, more a 'renaissance education,' using creativity, arts, games, projects and exploration. Said the outreach teacher, 'What do you remember as a child in the classroom? It is usually field trips, getting your hands dirty in a lab, or a beautiful story. Those are the things that stay with you 50 years later.' Kids can learn the technical stuff quite easily later in life.

Talented pioneers have created schools with emotional health as the prime aim. In contrast, Baker's Education Act 1988 forced schools to compete, like private ones, in order to attract pupils. Eloquent

educationists have cited the deadening effect of formal teaching. The therapeutic, educational legacy of people like Homer Lane, A S Neill, David Wills, Tony Weaver, George Lyward, John Aitkenhead, Alex Bloom, Louise Michel, Bob Mackenzie, Michael Duane, John Holt, Gerry German, Albert Rowe and Chris Searle is largely forgotten but has much to teach us: lots has been written up. Neill's Summerhill survives as a private school: 103-years-old (2024.) The rest have gone.

But heads or class teachers who do something radical and child-centred in the state system are usually sacrificed, despite their pupils striking in protest, as they did in support of Mackenzie and Duane. The perceptive John Holt gave up trying to change US schools, spending his last years advocating home education. Pioneers in other fields similarly get squeezed out. Excellent therapeutic communities such as the Henderson Hospital for 'sociopaths,' and the mini-prison, Barlinnie Special Unit in Glasgow, which Jimmy Boyle wrote about (*A Sense of Freedom*, 1985), have closed. It's amazing that Grendon therapeutic prison in England, opened in 1962, still exists.

> *Except for a handful, children fail to develop more than a tiny part of the tremendous capacity for learning, understanding and creating with which they were born and of which they made full use during the first two or three years of their lives. Why do they fail? They fail because they are afraid, bored and confused.*
>
> John Holt, How Children Fail 1964

If not now, when?

Many educational and mental health experts have urged schools to spend enough time on emotional literacy and on modelling respectful, empathetic behaviour by staff. Amitai Etzioni, for instance, says that schools have a 'central role in cultivating character by inculcating self-discipline and empathy, which in turn enables true commitment to civic and moral values.' Daniel Goleman admits that no school

programme is an answer to every problem, 'but given the crises we find ourselves and our children facing, and given the quantum of hope held out by courses in emotional literacy, we must ask ourselves: Shouldn't we be teaching these most essential skills for life to every child – now more than ever? And if not now, when?' Other countries do it better. Finland is the most often quoted: highly qualified, well-paid teachers and no league tables. We have seen the idealism and action in Scotland and its inclusion of parenthood education; it urges its staff to model respect to pupils.

We will not find the solution to problems of violence, alienation, ignorance and unhappiness in increasing our security, imposing more tests, punishing schools for their failure to produce 100 percent proficiency, or demanding that teachers are knowledgeable in the subjects they teach. Instead, we must allow teachers and students to interact as whole persons, and we must develop policies that treat the school as a whole community. Nel Noddings

A final plea: 'Be realistic: demand the impossible'

The teaching profession, which understands the toxicity of much of the present legislation and curricula which the government forces it to implement, has suffered enormously. How about those three words: unity is strength? Whatever differences between teachers of class, religion, academic level, trade union membership and so on, would it not be possible for headteachers to unite, become leaders of a profession of 'refusniks,' tell Ofsted and the government where to go, and work together to release both students and themselves from the current madness? After all, the government could not sack the lot. An emotionally healthy school would be much more fun, disruptive children more likely to flourish, academic results would be good enough, and teachers could look forward to Monday. We might even find fewer kids in the street throwing acid at the faces of strangers.

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