

## New book explores how schools became worse

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The contemporary relevance of a number of major critiques of schooling during the period 1960-1980 has been explored in a new book – Toxic Schooling: How Schools became Worse - written by Clive Harber, a professor of International Education at the University of Birmingham.

In the 1960s and 70s, a number of writers began to question and critique the relevance and benevolence of formal schooling. The new book examines the main ideas in a range of key texts on schooling produced during 1960-1980.

It then explores the extent to which these critiques had an effect on improving the nature of today's schooling and concludes that in the main they did not. Schools remain authoritarian and even violent and dangerous institutions.

Professor Harber provides considerable evidence to suggest that in a number of ways the situation in schools globally is worse today than it was then.

As a positive alternative to the dominant and widespread model of mass formal schooling, he argues that education must have clear idea of the sort of democratic person it hopes to cultivate.

He explains: "Somebody described as democratic would, for example, celebrate social and political diversity, work for and practice mutual respect between individuals and groups, regard all people as having equal social and political rights as human beings, respect evidence in forming their own opinions and respect the opinions of others based on evidence, be open to changing one's mind in the light of new evidence and possess a critical and analytical stance towards information. Therefore, if education, whether in something called a school or not, is to be consistent with this then there is a need to move away from the dominant, negative characteristics of formal schooling identified in the critiques of the selected educational writers from the 1960's and 70's."

Toxic Schooling is published by Educational Heretics Press and launched on 04 November 2009, at the School of Education, University of Birmingham.

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