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**EXPLORING EDUCATION SYSTEMS:  
TOWARDS A TYPOLOGY FOR FUTURE LEARNING**

In recent years there has been increasing interest in creating diversity of educational provision to meet the full range of needs presented by learners. This is both a reflection, and a partial consequence, of the three central agendas for schooling in many countries standards, choice and inclusion, and the growth in information communication technologies and associated systems. The complexity of available 'school' types makes it increasingly difficult for individuals to explore the differences between the educational programmes on offer.

The purpose of this paper is to map the different forms of provision into a typology that will provide theorists, practitioners, users and policy-makers with a clear set of descriptors to explore current structures and to consider future developments. Nine types of education programme are categorized.

The paper takes the three distinct alternative education types, identified by Raywid, as a starting point for this Educational Programmes Typology. It also draws upon the work of Aron, in which the characteristics of alternative education are outlined according to their relationship to other education systems, their target population, primary purpose, operational setting, educational focus, administrative entity, credentials offered and funding sources.

The paper broadens Raywid's and Aron's typologies so as to include the identifiers for the full range of education programmes offered to learners, not just those who typically have additional needs. Six additional educational programme types are presented, which describe current provision within open entry, selective entry, special educational, home learning and adult learning settings. Type K is proposed as representing a possible educational system of the future. This reflects social and cultural developments, the evolution of information communication technologies and other technologies, and our changing understandings of learning theories and practices.

Since the 1970s, there has been an increasing drive in create a diversity of educational provision that will meet the full range of needs presented' by learners. In many countries, such as the UK, USA and Australia, this is both a reflection and a partial consequence of the three central agendas for schooling standards, choice and inclusion. In some countries, such as Japan, there has been an understanding that students need to have reduced pressure placed upon them. Across the world, countries from Indonesia to Germany to Canada have increasingly engaged in information communication technologies and associated e-learning systems. The complexity of provision on offer makes it increasingly difficult for individuals to understand the differences between these educational

programmes, and to look across cultural boundaries and identify overlaps in systemic practices. This paper is premised on the need for an accessible vocabulary to explore current learning programmes across contexts and to assist us in thinking about programmes we wish to create for the future. Such an approach, by its nature, ignores those social and cultural factors that make each education system and learning context unique, but it encourages us to focus on the commonalities, providing opportunities for cross-cultural understanding and reflection. This paper aims to devise a model that unpacks the diversity of provision, to help people think about the different forms that are currently available. However, as Edmund Leach (1964) argued, complex models are not effective tools for thinking about and describing social structures. The aim of this paper, therefore, is to create a flexible and manageable typology that will provide theorists, practitioners, users and policy-makers with a simple, clear set of descriptors for exploring current educational structures and considering future developments at all stages of the learning process.

Educational typologies: surprisingly, there have been few attempts to develop a typology of this sort. Attempts to do so have been focused in two ways. Firstly, there have been a number of typologies devised which have concentrated on forms of educational systems across countries (Turner, 1960; Hopper, 1968; Allmendinger, 1989; von Below, 2002) [5]. Secondly, there have been a number of typologies that have focused upon specific aspects of education such as independent learning (Moore, 1973), special education teaching environments (Happonen, 1998), multicultural education (Burnett, 1994) [6], alternative education (Raywid, 1994; Aron, 2003), 'moving schools' (Ainscow, 1995), the role of teaching assistants (Trevor, 2005), pedagogy (Alexander, 1996), instructional methods (Molenda, 2002) [10] and the nature of activities that generate knowledge (Habermas, 1971). Across these typologies it is evident that there are overlapping approaches to categorization. All of them include concern with one or more of the following:

- ways in which education is thought about and the main aims of the process;
- who chooses, funds and administers the curriculum that is intended to be learned;
- what is taught to the learners and what is the approach used;
- where the education site is situated;
- how learners are selected and funded for different education sites;
- who the learners are and when they attend;
- how the system is organized;
- what roles people fulfill within the system.

Alternative education programmes. Of particular relevance to this paper are the typologies developed in relation to alternative education programmes (see Raywid, 1994; Aron, 2003), as these programmes would be a key part of

the broader typology' proposed in this paper. 'These typologies have attempted to define the central characteristics of alternative programmes in die USA. As Raywid (1994) points out, despite the wide range of alternative school programmes, these systems have been created for students who are not best served by the regular provision, and alternative provision has therefore been characterized by its difference from traditional educational programmes, environments and organization. The notion of alternative as embodied within US legislation is typically defined as a 'program' which is additional to, adaptive of or in place of structures and techniques used in existing, traditional classrooms or 'regularly scheduled curricular programs' (State of Wisconsin, 2001, s. 115.28). The characteristics of alternative programmes have thus been set against a general description of regular or mainstream programmes. Aron (2003), for example, draws upon the definition of regular schools from the Iowa Association of Alternative Education's (IAAE) Constitution and Bylaws, Article II: *Regular school: an established environment designed to provide a comprehensive education to the general populace to which assignment of students is made more on the basis of geographical location than unique education need.*

Within this description there is evidence of descriptors identified in the education typologies mentioned above, particularly who attends and where, but it does not include the detail necessary' for deeper analysis. For example, the term 'comprehensive education' will mean very different things in different countries. The description itself could also describe a selective school, or a variety of tertiary settings. The typologies of the alternative programmes, however, serve as an important starting-point for a broader characterization of current educational frameworks. Contained within them are types of programmes that have a key function in current systems, as well as descriptors upon which this paper can build.

In particular, Raywid's (1994) typology offers an effective starting-point. Raywid identifies three types of alternative programme. Type 1 are long-term programmes of choice, in which there is considerable flexibility' in relation to content and instructional strategies. Type 2 are short-term programmes onto which students are placed as a 'last chance', and in which discipline is a central driver. Little attention is paid to modifying curriculum or pedagogy. Type 3 are short-term programmes for students who are in need of academic and/or social emotional support, so that they can return to the mainstream. These alternative programmes do not include home educators or private school provision, but are framed by the notion that they serve those who are disadvantaged or not achieving within regular settings. As Raywid recognizes, types 2 and 3 settings frame the child within the deficit model. The child needs to be fixed. Type 1 programmes, however, recognize that the difficulties can be in the child-school match, and that in meeting the students' needs the programme must be innovative and creative in relation to both organization and practice. Contained

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within the typology therefore are descriptors of who attends, programme length, dominant educational approach and degree of learner choice. Implicit too, because of the relationship to regular programmes, is the age range of students involved.

Aron's (2003) typology draws upon Raywids (1994), but rather than building upon notions of choice or educational approach, it focuses upon the programme's relationship to other systems, its target population, locus purpose, operational setting, educational focus and administrative entity, as well as credentials offered and funding sources. Within this typology there are a wide range of descriptors under each of these headings, 48 in total. These sub-category descriptors are not about the nature of what happens within the setting, however, but are linked to demonstrable aims, targets and measurable outcomes [4; 11]. They are specific to current programmes in the USA and based on current possibilities. Thus the model offers some useful broad headings but is constrained as a tool by its complexity and its lack of flexibility for future developments. However, Aron does provide a simpler frame within the paper by placing the analysis of alternative programmes under the headings;

- The population;
- *Where*, operational setting;
- *What*: content and objectives;
- *How*: administration and funding.

The simplest starting-point for the proposed educational programmes typology are the *who*, *where*, *what*, and *how* categories used by Aron. I however, in addition and in response to the aspects identified in the other typologies, *when* and *which* are **also** categories that need to be considered. This would refer to the time of day and length of attendance on the programme, and *which* would refer to the title given to programmes. Using these headings and applying them to alternative education typologies could, for example, produce the following framework;

*What*: Therapy.

Discipline Regular lessons Creative approaches.

*When*: Formal school hours.

Out of school hours Short term Long term.

*Why*: Formal qualifications.

Personal development Skills development.

*How*: Administrative characteristics (charity, church, state, not-for-profit).

Funding characteristics.

*Which*: Type of school (public/private).

Programme across or within settings Strategies, beliefs, services though a school, university or museum are time-specific institutions in which teaching is carried out, they are not necessarily the main sites of learning for an individual, particularly in relation to non-academic learning goals. Learning and practice are mediated by the social world in which they exist and therefore any

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individual has a personal understanding and version of a setting in which they operate (Lave, 1988). How individuals make use of experiences of any given learning context has a decisive impact on understanding their learning process (Lave, 1988; Lave & Wenger, 1991). The setting is 'a relation between acting persons and the **arena in** which they act' (Lave, 1988. p. 150). Since it is intended that the typology will be adaptable to a full range of learning contexts, and since individuals as part of artv programme may find themselves in a variety of physical settings, it seems more appropriate to use the notion of the 'arena'. Uses this term in relation to the wider systemic and institutional framework in which learning activities occur. The arena provides a focus for processes and practices that exist beyond the individuals experience of them. Using the notion of the arena allows too for the inclusion of physical settings not yet considered, and for the virtual settings created through the use of information communication technologies.

The proposed education programmes typology will define the arena of a given programme type, using two categories. Location and Regulation. Location will use two descriptors: Diverse sites and Fixed sites. These describe the sites of limitation within the arena. Fixed sites suggests that the majority of spaces used are mediated primarily through the institutional framework, such as those provided through a school, university, a specific website or controlled information communication technologies network. Diverse sites recognizes those learning programmes that occur outside of formally regulated structures, such as home education, and which often utilize a wide variety of institutions. Regulation will also use two descriptors: Systemic or Informal. These describe the institutional processes and the degree to which they – are defined externally and a priori. Systemic regulation is generally externally defined and a priori, while Informal regulation involves greater internal flexibility. Use of these categories should also assist in differentiating possible future programmes that utilize a wide variety of institutions but do so within a formally regulated structure.

*What?* In defining the content and form of delivery of the education programme we are **faced** with a diversity of approaches and areas of learning that vary enormously between countries and systems. Raywid's typology provides us with a useful way forward **here** however. Raywid recognizes four different approaches: namely, those which can be seen as traditional, suggesting a didactic approach; those which are innovative and creative; those which focus upon discipline; and those with a focus upon therapy. The first two categories clearly operate in the context of the others, and within the wider historical context of a country's teaching practices. All four categories are not mutually exclusive, but represent the dominant approach within a particular **arena**. Central to the definition of content and form is also the degree to which the individual learner has control over them. As Raywid (1994) and Aron (2001) identify, a high degree of learner choice is central to alternative programmes, as it is when

considering adult learning in higher education and within the lifelong learning context. The proposed educational programmes typology will therefore delineate the dominant educational approach, using Traditional, Creative, Discipline and Therapy as descriptors. It will also define the degree of learner choice, using High and Low as descriptors [11].

*When?* The proposed educational programmes typology will not specifically identify programme types in relation to the hours of attendance. This category is subsumed by three others, namely the regulation, the dominant educational approach and the degree of choice. It can be anticipated, for example, that a creative educational approach, with a high degree of learner choice and with informal regulation involving diverse sites will have a flexible approach to timings. In contrast, the traditional approach, with a low degree of learner choice and systemic regulation involving fixed sites will have a more rigid approach to hours of attendance. The length of time that an individual stays within a programme cannot be inferred from these other categories, however. As Raywid already identifies long-term and short-term attendance upon programmes, it seems appropriate to consider these as descriptors under the heading of programme length. It is significant here that this perception of attendance is taken from the learner's perspective. For those working within a given arena, the experience will most likely be long-term regardless of the amount of time each learner spends there. This delineation of period of attendance is therefore particularly useful when considering the impact of a programme type upon the learner's experience of that learning context, as well as their ability to maximize their learning within it and to sustain it within other settings [11; 9].

*How?* In considering the administration and funding of programmes we are again faced with a wide array of possible descriptors. It seems appropriate to consider those typologies that have explored educational systems across countries (Turner, 1960; Hopper, 1968; Allmendinger, 1989). Within these typologies the selection process for entry to programmes has been of key importance. This enables differentiation between private and public education systems, as well as other programmes that focus on production of an elite class of learner. Thus, the proposed educational programmes typology will define the opportunity a learner has to access a setting, using the descriptors Open or Limited. The use of the term 'open' equates to there being no barriers to entry, while 'limited' equates to the individual having a restricted opportunity to enter in the first place. This limited opportunity may be as a result of financial barriers that have to be overcome, or selective approaches by the programme based on such factors as performance on tests, locational constraints or a diagnosed label [3].

*Which?* The breadth of educational programmes on offer is such that using all the current terms is impractical and counterproductive. Each country has their own terminology for different stages of the learning process, and for

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the types of provision offered. In addition, there are numerous systems that fall outside any one country's formally established systems. The intention of the educational programmes typology is to assist in recognizing the similarities across systems and between different programmes regardless of the labels formally applied to them. The proposed typology echoes Raywid's in defining types of programme. It draws upon her types 1, 3, and uses the generic terms of reference for these three. It then identifies a further six types, giving each of these a programme title to assist in referencing and recognition. Fundamental to their use, however, is the recognition that these programmes are rarely operating in isolation (Table 1).

**Table 1**

**The proposed nine programme types**

| Type   | Programme title | Example                             |
|--------|-----------------|-------------------------------------|
| Type 1 | Alternative     | e.g. A Reggio Emilia school         |
| Type 2 | Last chance     | e.g. In-school suspension programme |
| Type 3 | Remedial        | e.g. In-school withdrawal programme |
| Type 4 | Special         | e.g. Special school                 |
| Type 5 | Home            | e.g. 1 hum-education                |
| Type 6 | Selective       | e.g. Private school                 |
| Type 7 | Comprehensive   | e.g. State secondary school         |
| Type 8 | Scheme          | e.g. A lifelong learning programme  |
| Type 9 | Adult           | e.g. University                     |

The educational programmes typology is explicitly designed to deal with programmes in which educational purposes are primary. All the identified types operate on the basis of a longer term learning trajectory for the learner, in which the programme type plays a central role. The table must also be viewed from the perspective of the learner. It is explicitly about their systematized programmes of learning. It is not about how a particular institution sees itself. The typology, therefore, does not attempt to **address** all day-to-day learning activities which occur outside of the learner's systematized programmes. Such non-systematized learning we would describe as type 0. The proposed categories for the typology are: Programme title, Programme length, Dominant educational approach, Degree of learner choice, Opportunities to **access** setting, Age range, Regulation and location. These are applied to the nine types. Based on the seven category headings and 17 descriptors, it is possible to identify over 500 potential combinations. The majority of these combinations are not ones that would be recognized as typical educational programmes, however.

Future education systems. An important question for the typology is the degree to which it can respond to the developments of new learning

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programmes. How does it help us to explore an educational system that reflects social and cultural developments, the evolution of information communication technologies and other technologies, and our changing understandings of learning theories and practices? Of particular importance, at a time when the need for a new lifelong model of learning is being widely recognized, is the possibility of a new type of learning programme type 8 Scheme programme. Scheme programme would be long or short term, rooted in creativity and involving high learner choice. It would allow all learners the opportunity to engage with learning opportunities at all points of their life, and in all possible learning settings, while at the same time providing them with a systemic arena (regulation) that could support and formally acknowledge their learning. The educational programmes typology encourages us to think beyond current models of education, and helps us to consider in what ways a type 8 Scheme programme could represent the new learning system for the 21st century.

The proposed typology presented in this paper needs to be tested against a wide range of possible settings in different countries and education systems. The typology offers a useful tool for looking across boundaries of culture and practice. It presents us with an accessible vocabulary for exploring our current learning programmes and for exploring those we create in the future. Of itself, it does not provide answers to the challenges that we face in developing responsive and effective educational programmes, but it does focus our questions on key aspects of those programmes and the position of the learner within them. It helps us to frame our thinking around a new kind of education programme, one that has flexible entry, flexible delivery is lifelong, learner-centred and learner-driven, and which delivers systematic accreditation opportunities. The educational programmes typology does not describe the ways in which such a system would be enacted, that would depend on the social and cultural environment in which it was sited, but it does help us to discuss what is possible.

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