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Exploring Education Systems: Towards a typology for future learning?

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Abstract

Background

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.

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to map the different forms of provision into a typology that will be 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 catergorised.

Theoretical Origins

The paper takes the three distinct alternative education types identified by Raywid (1994) as a starting point for this Educational Programmes Typology. It also draws upon the work of Aron (2003) 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.

Main argument

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 8 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.

Conclusion

The proposed typology needs to be tested against a wide range of possible settings in different countries and education systems, but offers a useful tool for looking

across boundaries of culture and practice. It provides an accessible vocabulary for exploring current learning programmes and those we create in the future.

Keywords: typology, educational programme, schome, alternative education, future schools, framework

Introduction

Since the 1970's, there has been an increasing drive to create a diversity of educational provision that will meet the full range of needs 'presented' by learners. In many countries, such as the United Kingdom, United States, 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, 1967; Almedinger, 1989; von Below, 2002). Secondly, there have been a number of typologies that have focused upon specific aspects of education such as Independent (Open) Learning (Moore, 1973), Special Education Teaching Environments (Happonen 1998), Multicultural Education (Burnett, 1994), Alternative Education (Raywid, 1994; Aron, 2003), 'Moving Schools' (Ainscow, 1995), the role of Teaching Assistants (Trevor, 2005), Pedagogy (Alexander, 1997), instructional methods (Molenda, 2001) and the nature of activities that generate knowledge (Habermas, 1971). Across these typologies it is evident that there are overlapping approaches to categorisation. All of them include a 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
- Who chooses, funds and administers where the learners are educated

- 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 organised
- What roles people fulfil within the system

Alternative Education Programmes

Of particular relevance to this paper are the typologies developed in relation to Alternative Education Programmes (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 (programs) in the United States. 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 characterised by its difference from traditional educational programmes, environments and organisation. 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 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 characterisation 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 recognises, Type 2 and Type 3 settings frame the child within the deficit model. The child needs to be fixed. Type 1 programmes, however, recognise 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 organisation and practice. Contained 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 Raywid's (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, focus/purpose, operational setting, educational focus, 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. They are specific to current programmes in the US 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 of

- Who: The population
- Where: Operational Setting
- What: Content and Objectives
- How: Administration and Funding

Proposed dimensions of the Educational Programme Typology

The simplest starting point for the proposed educational programmes typology are the *Who*, *Where*, *What*, and *How* categories used by Aron. 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. *When* 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:

- Who
 - At risk
 - School refusers
 - Low-achievers
 - Excluded
 - Young parents
- Where
 - In a school/alternative school
 - In a non-school formal setting
- 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

Evidently, using this framework in this manner would require producing a wide range of sub-category descriptors, creating the same problems as identified within the Aron typology. Nonetheless, as discussed below, they help in exploring the rationale for the categories this paper proposes.

Who?

The concern of this paper is all learners across their lifetime of learning. It is not about those who do not fit within one system, as is the case for the US-based Alternative typologies that have been discussed. In considering the *Who*, we can focus on the broad bands created by the legal frameworks of most countries. In most learning systems, students attend compulsory education until their mid-to late teens, then move into higher education, further education or workplace learning. Available to them at all points in this process are additional lifelong learning opportunities. The proposed educational programmes typology will therefore define the typical Age Range of a given programme type using the descriptors of Upto 18, Over 18, and Lifelong. This typical Age Range does not require that individuals are involved for the whole of this time period however. For example, many individuals leave school at 16 but still fall within the Upto 18 descriptor. It is possible, too, that some programmes may have a small number of learners who fall outside this category. For example, a school may have a student who is over 18, but is studying with students the vast majority of whom are younger than 18.

Where?

The notion of a specific setting and timings for an educational programme is borne out of traditional methods and understanding of the delivery of education. However, 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 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 any programme may find themselves in a variety of physical settings, it seems more appropriate to use the notion of the Arena. Lave (1988) 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 individual's 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 learning 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 recognises those learning programmes that occur outside of formally regulated structures, such as Home-education, and which often utilise 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, whilst Informal regulation involves greater internal flexibility. Use of these categories should also assist in differentiating possible future programmes that utilise 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 recognises 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 and Aron 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 define 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.

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 which 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 maximise their learning within it and to sustain it within other settings.

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 which have explored educational systems across countries (Turner, 1960; Hopper, 1968; Almedinger, 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 which 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, whilst the term 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.

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 the types of provision offered. In addition, there are numerous systems that fall outside of any one country's formally established systems. The intention of the educational programmes typology is to assist in recognising 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, 2 and 3, and uses her 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 I – The Proposed 9 Programme Types

Type	Programme Title	Example
Type 1	Alternative	eg A Reggio Emilia school
Type 2	Last chance	eg In-school suspension programme
Type 3	Remedial	eg In-school withdrawal programme
Type 4	Special	eg Special school
Type 5	Home	eg Home education
Type 6	Selective	eg Private school

Type 7	Comprehensive	eg State secondary school
Type 8	Schome	eg A lifelong learning programme
Type 9	Adult	eg University

Discussion of the proposed Educational Programme Typology

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 systematised 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 systematised programmes. Such non-systematised 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 in the following way.

Table II – The Programme Types - Defined through Categories and Descriptors

Type	Programme Title	Programme length	Dominant educational approach	Degree of learner choice	Opportunities to access setting	Age range	Regulation	Location
Type 1	Alternative	Long or short term	Creative	High	Limited	Up to 18	Systemic	Fixed sites
Type 2	Last chance	Short term	Discipline	Low	Limited	Up to 18	Systemic	Fixed sites
Type 3	Remedial	Short term	Therapy	Low	Limited	Lifelong	Systemic	Fixed sites
Type 4	Special	Long term	Therapy	Low	Limited	Up to 18	Systemic	Fixed sites
Type 5	Home	Long or short term	Creative	High	Limited	Up to 18	Informal	Diverse sites
Type 6	Selective	Long or short term	Traditional	Low	Limited	Up to 18	Systemic	Fixed sites
Type 7	Comprehensive	Long term	Traditional	Low	Open	Up to 18	Systemic	Fixed sites
Type 8	Schome	Long or short term	Creative	High	Open	Lifelong	Systemic	Diverse sites
Type 9	Adult	Long or short term	Traditional	High	Limited	Post 18	Systemic	Fixed sites

Based on the seven category headings and seventeen descriptors it is possible to identify over 500 potential combinations. The majority of these combinations are not ones that would be recognised as typical educational programmes however. For example, a long term, discipline approach, offering low learner choice, with limited access, that is Post 18 within a systematic, fixed setting, is the description of a prison

sentence rather than a programme for meaningful learning. A more appropriate way forward seems to be identifying particular settings and seeing how they fit into the typology.

These following five examples have been chosen because they highlight specific features of the educational programmes typology. As the Types are criterion referenced rather than norm referenced and are defined by their own properties rather than in relation to other Types, it is possible to see programme overlaps within settings, and through these overlaps, to raise questions about how settings operate, how they frame themselves, and how they interact with the learner.

A KPM school

Opened in 1987 in Kerala in India by Sri K Padmanabha Menon, and now with a school in Texas, these are schools that interview parents to assess if they have the appropriate commitment to the KPM approach. Though the children come from a range of backgrounds, parents generally pay for their children to attend (Norman, 2006). As such this would seem to be a Type 6 Selective programme. However the KPM approach cannot be described as traditional. These schools have classrooms arranged by subject rather than age. The children choose their activities according to their interests. Therefore, KPM schools fit more closely in to a Type 1 Alternative programme.

The Open University (UK)

Some people may identify the distance learning provided by the UK Open University as a Type 8 Schome programme, in that they perceive that creative activities are delivered through a variety of ever-developing information communication technologies. However, many would see the pedagogy underpinning the majority of current Open University Courses as being didactic and therefore traditional. Open University courses most closely map onto a Type 9 Adult programme, particularly given that those Under 18 are rarely accepted onto them, that the teacher-student relationship is traditional in nature, as are notions of assessment, and that learning takes place in a closely regulated system. In addition, though access to Open University courses is far less restricted than other Universities, students must still have the required funds and access to specified levels of information communication technologies.

NotSchool

NotSchool is a programme in England for young people for whom mainstream provision (Type 6 or 7) has not worked. It operates within a virtual learning space where these young people ('Researchers') can communicate and be supported by 'mentors'. Many of these young people go on to achieve success in taking nationally recognised academic awards, such as National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) and General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) (Literacy Trust, 2007). Such a flexible and creative programme has much in common with Type 8, however, the limits on Age and the 'Fixed site' that the use of the virtual learning space represents means that this programme maps onto a Type 1 Alternative programme.

Hagwon

Hagwons are independent cram schools in South Korea, which children will commonly attend after their general school day. Access is dependent upon parental ability to pay. Hagwons often specialise in specific subjects, though others integrate

teaching across subject areas. Many aim to prepare students for national examinations (Zhou & Kim, 2006). Students are typically required to do considerable amounts of homework, and failure to perform to the required standards brings a swift disciplinarian approach (Woo-taek, 2001). The short period attendance each day and strict discipline may suggest a Type 2 Last Chance programme. However, many students will attend Hagwons alongside their formal schooling for many years, and strict discipline is used as a tool to control academic performance rather than as a specific behaviour modification tool (as is the case for Type 2 programmes). Thus, the Hagwon seems to more accurately fit the description of a Type 6 Selective programme.

A Visit to an Art Gallery

A one-off experience at an Art gallery raises interesting dilemmas for this typology. It is easy to dismiss it as a Type 0, in that it is unsystematic from the perspective of the learner. However, from the perspective of the Gallery and many visitors this would seem inaccurate. It is, for example, possible that this would most closely match a Type 9 programme, in that it is short-term, it has a traditional approach, and has high learner choice. If the visitor was attending as part of a systematised learning programme then this may be the case. But what if this visit was made by someone under 18? Possibly this should be categorised under a Type 8, in that the child concerned is in a setting in which their experience of the setting's educational approach is less well established and might not equate to their perception of traditional learning. Certainly this learning experience could be seen as part of the child's lifelong learning. It could also fall within Type 5, if the visit was part of home learning programme, or a Type 7 if part of a school visit. This highlights the point that in applying the typology one needs to look from the perspective of the learners and that the typology only applies to programmes which form part of their regulated educational experiences.

Future education systems

An important question for the typology is the degree to which it can respond to the developments of new learning programmes. How does it help us to explore an educational system which 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 recognised, is the possibility of a new Type of learning programme, Schome (Type 8). A Schome programme would be long term 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, in all possible learning settings, whilst 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 Schome (Type 8) could represent the new learning system for the 21st century.

Conclusion

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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