PROFESSIONAL IDENTITIES AND THE WATERSHED OF WAR: TEACHERS, HISTORIES AND MEMORIES

*Identidades profesionales y el impacto de la guerra.
Maestros, historias y memorias*

Peter Cunningham*

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Abstract. Teachers' individual lives and careers, identities and experiences are so various as to almost defy generalization. A valid and realistic aim of educational research is however to identify significant commonalities that enhance an understanding of the teacher's role. Memory is a prime resource for investigating factors that change over time in the course of a career and oral history provides a means of accessing and interpreting such a rich vein of evidence. One common feature shared by teachers in Britain during the mid-twentieth century was the impact on schooling of total war.

This paper draws on the memories of three teachers interviewed during a large-scale enquiry into British teachers whose careers spanned World War II. Analysis of this evidence is made with reference to recent writings on professional identity, and one aim of the paper is to promote continuing reflection on the way teachers' identities develop under the constraints of changing historical circumstance. Testimony selected for discussion here concerns their early education and career choices, their initial teacher training and their continuing professional formation, punctured for each at different points by the single overwhelming historical event of war.

The paper concludes with reference to recent literature on teacher identity, indicating how historical research and autobiographical perspectives across a whole career can contribute to contemporary understandings of how teachers perceive their work, and the formation of professional identities.

Keywords: Teacher identity. Teachers' lives. Teachers in wartime. Oral history. Teachers' memory.

* Homerton College. University of Cambridge. Cambridge CB2 8PH. United Kingdom. pjc36@cam.ac.uk

Resumen. *Las vidas de los maestros y sus carreras, identidades y experiencias individuales son tan variadas que se resisten a la generalización. Sin embargo, identificar elementos comunes significativos que mejoren el conocimiento del papel del maestro constituye un objetivo válido y realista de la investigación educativa. La memoria es un recurso excelente para investigar factores que cambian a lo largo del tiempo en el curso de una carrera y la historia oral ofrece un medio para acceder e interpretar un filón tan rico de evidencias. Una característica común compartida por los maestros en Gran Bretaña a mediados del siglo XX fue el impacto sobre la escolarización de la guerra total.*

Este artículo se vale de los recuerdos de tres maestros entrevistados en el marco de una investigación a gran escala sobre los maestros británicos cuyas carreras abarcaron la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Esta evidencia se analiza en referencia a las publicaciones recientes sobre la identidad profesional, y un objetivo del artículo es incitar a que continúe la reflexión sobre la manera en que las identidades de los maestros se desarrollan bajo las constricciones derivadas de circunstancias históricas cambiantes. Los testimonios seleccionados refieren a su formación temprana y a sus elecciones de carrera, a su formación docente inicial y a su formación profesional continua, afectadas para cada uno en diferentes aspectos por el abrumador acontecimiento histórico singular de la guerra.

El artículo concluye con la referencia a la bibliografía reciente sobre la identidad de los maestros, señalando cómo la investigación histórica y las perspectivas autobiográficas sobre una carrera completa pueden contribuir al conocimiento actual de cómo los maestros perciben su trabajo y la formación de las identidades profesionales.

Palabras clave: *Identidad de los maestros. Vidas de los maestros. Maestros en tiempos de guerra. Historia oral. Memoria de los maestros.*

INTRODUCTION

The research reported below has origins connected at a personal level with Julio Ruiz Berrio. Meeting Julio at an education history congress 30 years ago immediately preceded, for this author, a period of teaching in primary schools. The impressive teachers with whom I worked sparked my historical interest in the sources of their dedication, skill and creativity. At the same time, those decades of the 1980s and 1990s also nourished social and cultural history, qualitative and naturalistic methods in educational research. My reading of Julio's work was limited by language and location, but his publications, as his conference presentations, revealed a broad, humanistic and creative approach to his subject. His instinct for the evolu-

tion of curriculum and empathy for the work of teachers were reflected in and enriched by his cultivation of visual and oral sources for the history of schooling and education.¹

Just as histories of nations comprise an amalgam of institutional memory and personal memory, national commemorations and family traditions, so curriculum history must take account of living memory as well as documentary sources. My account of progressive pedagogies in primary school drew not only on official reports and key textbooks, but also on narratives of curriculum innovation rehearsed, related and retold, exchanged in professional discussions and passed on from one generation of teachers to the next.² Teachers' life stories record their careers and represent professional identities in terms of their roles and institutions, changing policies, practices and contexts, and the methodological complexities of data collection and interpretation are discussed by myself and my colleagues in our previously published work.³ Parallel with our historical research in the 1990s, extensive work on teachers' life histories was pursued by scholars in professional contexts such as policy critique and teacher development,⁴ together with a burgeoning of critical literature on the methodologies of life history and oral history.⁵

¹ Julio Ruiz Berrio, «The Hidden Curriculum of the Calleja Publishing House Reading Books», *Paedagogica Historica*, 38-1 (2002): 137-159; Julio Ruiz Berrio, Teresa Rabazas and Sara Ramos, «The Reception of New Education in Spain by means of Manuals on the History of Education for Teacher Training Colleges (1898-1976)», *Paedagogica Historica*, 42 (1-2), (2006): 127-141; Julio Ruiz Berrio, «La palabra y la voz», *Idea La Mancha: Revista de Educación de Castilla-La Mancha*, 4 (2007): 312-315; Julio Ruiz Berrio, *El patrimonio histórico educativo: Su conservación y estudio* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2010).

² Peter Cunningham, *Curriculum Change in the Primary School since 1945: Dissemination of the progressive ideal* (London: Falmer Press 1988).

³ Peter Cunningham and Philip Gardner, *Becoming Teachers: Texts and Testimonies 1907-1950* (London: Woburn Press, 2004); Peter Cunningham and Philip Gardner, «“Saving the nation's children”: teachers, wartime evacuation in England and Wales and the construction of national identity», *History of Education*, 28-3 (1999): 327-337; Philip Gardner and Peter Cunningham, «Oral history and teachers' professional practice: a wartime turning point?», *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 27-3 (1997): 331-342.

⁴ Stephen J. Ball and Ivor F. Goodson (eds.), *Teachers' lives and careers* (London: Falmer, 1985); Patricia J. Sikes, Lynda Measor and Peter Woods, *Teacher careers: crises and continuities* (London: Falmer, 1985); Peter Woods, *Critical events in teaching and learning* (London: Falmer, 1993); Ivor F. Goodson and Pat Sikes, *Life history research in educational settings: learning from lives* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2001); Ivor F. Goodson, *Professional knowledge, professional lives: studies in education and change* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2003).

⁵ Patrick H. Hutton, *History as an art of memory* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1993); Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, *The oral history reader* (London: Routledge, 1998, New York: Routledge, 2006); Philip Gardner, *Hermeneutics, history, and memory* (London: Routledge, 2010).

The account below tells stories of three teachers' lives, composed from testimony offered in response to a large-scale research enquiry whose overarching question concerned the long-term impact of war on classroom practice.⁶ Just three respondents' memories are presented here, allowing sufficient detail in the qualitative data to portray the individual personalities and careers of two women and one man. The selected testimonies are especially rich for exploring aspects of teachers' roles and identities, set in a specific historical context, in a paper that evolved through presentations at two successive annual conferences of the History of Education Society UK.⁷ The data is ordered below to follow their teaching careers in parallel, through successive stages. It is intended to allow their testimony to speak for itself before reflecting in conclusion on the ways that their professional identities might be constructed.

This paper also concerns the kinds of history that these remarkable respondents know and tell. Their accounts are professionally knowledgeable, not as professional historians but as educationists who have lived through a long period of change in educational policy and practice, a chronological sequence of cause and consequence witnessed at first hand. They are humane histories, as all three display empathy for the personal lives and relationships of teachers and taught, in specific institutional settings, environments and communities. A strong sense of place is evident in these accounts, and a feature common to all three is that they spent most of their lives, apart from evacuation (and in one case military service), in a particular locality: north London, south London, and the environs of Manchester in the north of England.

The three respondents selected for this paper were born at seven-year intervals in the period up to World War I, two women and one man. This se-

⁶ «The Impact of Wartime Evacuation Upon Teacher Attitude and Practice» (WEP), ESRC Award no. R000-23-72 11, project directors: Peter Cunningham and Philip Gardner, Faculty of Education at the University of Cambridge. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 145 teachers over the years 1997 to 2001. Respondents were identified in a cross-section of geographical centres through press and media enquiries and through «snowballing». 213 individual interviews produced more than 400 hours of recorded data. Each interviewee is identified by a «WEP number», footnoted on first mention below, and their quoted words are taken from transcripts filed in the project archive under this number. Audio files of interviews have been digitized and will be fully archived by 2016. In the meantime, restricted access to the data located in Cambridge may be arranged by application to the author.

⁷ HES UK Conference Winchester 2012 «Ruling, rebelling, and reforming classrooms»; HES UK Conference Exeter 2013 «Individuals, institutions and identities: memory and representation».

lection therefore offers three case studies for whom World War II was experienced in early to mid-career, and illustrates contrasting ways in which the wartime experience may have impinged on the development of their professional identities. The space of a short article cannot do justice to the wealth and variety of detail in each narrative, but enough detail is included to give a coherent picture of the careers of each, the different training institutions, schools, locations and patterns of wartime experience that contributed to the formation of «professional identity». Comment is made on the different qualities of testimony and memory, linking the character of the testimony to personality and professional identity. Despite the constraints of oral history interviewing, and of translating life histories into academic text, the research methods adopted aim at recording and conveying personality in the round.

THREE TEACHERS, THEIR HISTORIES AND THEIR MEMORIES

Rose was born New Year's Day, 1900 into a lower working class family with very little money.⁸ She grew up in a terraced house in Islington, north London, with three brothers, and a sister who was brain damaged at birth and died at the age of five. The siblings were not close, but played together of an evening. Father sometimes joined in the children's games, though he was generally quite distant, while mother managed everything and brought the children up. Rose lived with her parents to the age of 27; as an unmarried woman with a teacher's salary she eventually afforded to buy her own house where she continued to accommodate her parents. Throughout her career, apart from during the war, she taught in the area where she lived as a child and gone to school, and even during wartime evacuation just north of London she was little more than an hour's journey from home.

Rose attended local elementary schools. Her memories of her own schooling were positive, but relationships between children and teachers at her elementary school, in the years before World War I, were formal: «You weren't friends with teachers. Teachers were teachers and you were children and you sat still in your desk you didn't walk about. And you didn't talk unless you were told to and if you did, there might be trouble!». But she acknowledged

⁸ WEP respondent A031 Rose Cuttler. Rose is referred to throughout this paper by her given name, but the family name used here follows our general usage of pseudonyms for most respondents.

she owed her chance of secondary schooling to a good elementary teacher. From age 11, Rose recalled, she wanted to be a teacher herself. Proud of having won a scholarship to secondary school, she gained confidence from her academic success. There was also a practical attraction, an economic motive more commonly stated by men than by women: «I knew that teachers were never out of work and my father was sometimes. That was one of the reasons, I don't know whether it was the only reason but it was quite a strong reason that I thought about». In retrospect she recalled how crucial her academic success at school had been to securing her career. Her aspirations for the pupils she later taught, and her own quite formal approach to teaching them, were informed by her childhood experience of school.

Marjorie was a Londoner too, but from south of the river Thames, and like Rose her teaching career, apart from wartime evacuation, was spent mostly in the locality of her own childhood.⁹ Seven years younger than Rose, Marjorie was an only child. Her mother was self-educated, loved reading, wrote beautiful English, and in Marjorie's estimation would have been a brilliant woman had she received the education her daughter enjoyed. Her father was bent on self-education throughout his life, a clerical worker with the Post Office but studious and ambitious, pursuing opportunities in adult education. Marjorie reveals deep sensitivity to personal relationships but remains discreet about sharing these through reserved and careful expression in the oral history interview. Most noticeable in this respect is her account of her parents' relationship, which she describes as unhappy though largely concealed from her as their only child. She understands it as a characteristic marriage of its time, forged in the religious community of the Baptist chapel that her parents attended. But her father was enquiring and philosophical, intellectually ambitious through self-education, independent minded, atheistic and staunchly opposed to vaccination, for example. Marjorie loved her elementary school, which she remembered as progressive, learning through activities and a wide range of reading, and good relationships between pupils and teachers.

From her state elementary school Marjorie won a scholarship to a local endowed grammar school for girls that had a high reputation for academic

⁹ WEP respondent A088 Marjorie Porter. Marjorie is referred to throughout this paper by her given name, but in her family name of Porter is referred to here, exceptionally for our respondents, as following the interview she published an autobiography in her own name: Marjorie Porter, *I Was Different: A long life in education* (Leeds: Propagator Press, 2005).

and all-round education.¹⁰ Her recollections from retirement reflect both her own generous spirit and the ideological commitment to teaching that had shaped her career:

I was lucky and the fact that I've had a good foundation at a state school, Bonneville Road, Clapham and I then went to Mary Datchelor School [...] made me, made me. [also] I owe those two schools so much, I'll say, let's say 85% because I had the backing at home.

Dr. Dorothy Brock, inspirational head teacher at Marjorie's school, is well documented as a leading figure in educational reform, a highly regarded intellectual and academic who at the same time promoted social education and a broad curriculum, especially the musical activity that coloured Marjorie's subsequent contribution to primary teaching. It was Dr. Brock's example that inspired her own aspiration to teach as a career.¹¹

Where our two women teachers hailed from the capital city, Albert grew up in the industrial north of England.¹² Born in 1915 to a dynasty of Salford newsagents, his childhood was spent above the family shop in a reasonably comfortable home that was keen on reading and on education. Indeed teaching seems to have run in the family. Three of Albert's aunts, his newsagent father's sisters, became teachers. His namesake uncle Albert, his mother's favourite brother, was also a teacher, who taught his nephew to swim. «I think that influenced me to a certain extent on a choice of career». From the age of five or six, he «always wanted to be a teacher». Such a vocation from early childhood is more commonly found in women teachers' narratives than in men's, and it may be significant that his role model was a male. Albert also had a sister, older by six years, who made the same career choice, though this was a more common option for bright and able girls, who had fewer alternatives.

Albert attended a local church elementary school where academic success eluded him. His knowledgeable retrospective account, relayed in his

¹⁰ Supported by the Clothworkers' Company of the City of London from 1894 in their charitable promotion of education, especially for girls and women.

¹¹ Here cross-reference can be made between Marjorie's memories and extensive public documentation of her head teacher. See *The Story of Mary Datchelor School 1877-1957* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1957), 111-167. Dorothy Brock's life is also documented in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, and a further secondary source for the head teacher is the autobiography of a school friend and family friend of Marjorie: Olive Shapley, *Broadcasting a Life: The autobiography of Olive Shapley* (London: Scarlet Press, 1996), 18-21.

¹² WEP respondent A036 Albert Longman (pseud.).

oral history interview, wryly analysed the institutional and structural reasons for his lack of success at school, as well as the negotiations conducted on his behalf to gain him the grammar school place that performance in written tests had denied him. These negotiations, with a local grammar school head teacher, were conducted by his mother, who insisted on Albert's career intention of teaching, and referred to the track record established by his uncle and aunts.

Rose was bright and lively in her oral history interview, sympathetic and perceptive, giving detailed descriptions of classrooms and teaching. She enjoyed a meticulous memory. Her tone was pragmatic and quite humorous, less passionate than Marjorie about social conditions, and less emotional about the children she taught. She appeared to take things as they were rather than seeking opportunities for change. Rose was inclined to dismiss the notion of war as a major source of change. A significant difference perhaps between Rose and Marjorie was that the former lacked headship experience. So possibly Rose's dismissiveness of theory, and her consistent emphasis on common sense, reflect in part that she remained a class teacher and took no managerial responsibility for other teachers' training or professional development. At the end of her interview, Rose commented that on retirement she didn't miss teaching, but turned to focus attention on her garden; which contrasts markedly with a continued commitment to school that Marjorie pursued well into her nineties.

Marjorie had a phenomenal memory for detail, such as fellow pupils' and teachers' names. She was self-confident in her account of successful education, but not boastful. For her own achievements she credited the influence of her parents' example, the quality of her own school education, and reflected on her own personality. She was positive and emphatic about head teachers and principals that she encountered, and about examples of progressive innovation. But she was not uncritical, notably in her account of another head teacher in her career, a male head of an elementary school where she worked throughout the 1930s on into wartime and two evacuations.

Albert's story of his forebears' education through previous generations, and of his own early education at home and at his local school, was related in an affectionate but professionally knowing tone. The history that he knows and refers to is not only a professional knowledge of changing educational policy and practice, but also infuses the more personal history of

his family and locality. His testimony reveals a marked historical consciousness, a reflective historical approach exemplified by constructing arguments during interview, for example about selection for secondary schooling, or about the relative status of secondary schools from 1902. He describes not in condemnatory terms but with professional and sociological awareness the different values that prevailed and how they played out both in popular attitudes, and in the attitudes of teachers to different kinds of schools, to the opportunities and the barriers they presented. Oral history respondents almost inevitably generate a historical narrative, as historical time explicitly frames the interview. But relatively few, even amongst teachers, develop such a reflectively critical stance on policy and practice as did Marjorie and Albert. Albert observed, for example, the conservative tendencies and resistance to change that teachers demonstrated in their practice.¹³ He recalled that in the early 1930s the «method of teaching, organization of school and schemes of work [would be] those in vogue when the head teacher of that school had qualified». Thus, he noted, his older sister starting as qualified teacher in 1931, was told by her head teacher, who had qualified in 1888: «Forget all that psychology nonsense you were taught in College. In this school you teach as I say».

A further example of Albert's critical reflection, combining professional knowledge and personal anecdote, is his account of selective secondary schooling in the years before and after World War I, tainted by snobbery, and the status perceptions of head teachers and their institutions. Illustrating this point, he casts back to his Uncle Albert's career, to the creation and staffing of new grammar schools in the early twentieth century. Then his narrative leaps forward to the 1950s, the post-World War II provision of «secondary education for all» and selection of pupils by intelligence testing at age 11. By that time the local relations between head teachers of differentiated secondary schools, «secondary grammar» and the new «secondary modern schools», became less hierarchical, bonded by personal acquaintances and university backgrounds of senior staff. Those relationships began to dissolve snobbery between the leaders of different kinds of secondary school, though other evidence can be found of continuing professional distinctions between grammar, secondary modern and primary teachers, and

13 See for example: Larry Cuban, *How teachers taught: constancy and change in American classrooms, 1890-1990* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1993).

status differentials that persisted in public perception between different categories of school. This personal testimony enriches and nuances the historical record obtainable from documentary sources alone.

INITIAL TRAINING AND EARLY CAREER

Teachers' career choice and identity forms gradually at home and school. Their professional formation is managed in institutions where they acquire necessary knowledge and skills, and hone appropriate values for conducting their work. This process continues organically, perhaps haphazardly, in the early years of practice as a certificated professional.

Rose entered the profession as a student teacher, a scheme that placed the young student newly emerged from secondary school straight into the work of classroom teaching.¹⁴ Her decision was strategic, given her family circumstances and the opportunities available at that time, bursary and practical experience. She reflected on her lack of readiness or preparation for this role, but appreciated the luck of having a good head teacher to help her crack the disciplinary challenge. Rose's account gives a sense being «thrown in at the deep end» at age 17 to control a large class of elementary school pupils, but she equally recognized the advantage accrued once she proceeded to the college training course.¹⁵

at this School that, where I was sent, I was given a whole class, [...] [at that time] [...] called 5b, so they weren't the bright children, and some of them were nearly or perhaps 13, but slow at their work. Just shot in. No training. It was probably wicked for those children I had for a year because they couldn't have had a proper education although I did what I could and we got on alright. [...] this whole class was a small class compared with everybody else, everybody else probably had 60 but I should think I had about 36 [...] I was in charge and had to get on with it. [...] I just tried carrying on as my own teacher earlier on, had taught me.

Following her student teacher year, she attended for two years from age 18 to age 20, a London County Council day training college called Grey-

¹⁴ Cunningham and Gardner *Becoming Teachers* is a full-length study, drawing on oral histories, of the scheme in England from its inception in 1907 to its gradual decline by the time of World War II.

¹⁵ Cunningham and Gardner, *Becoming Teachers*, 49-54, 165, 174-5, 177, 188-192, 201-206, 217-218.

stoke Place in the heart of the city. This originated as a Pupil-Teacher Centre where the model was, adopting modern terminology, a «partnership» with local London schools.¹⁶ At such an institution students would traditionally have spent half their time teaching in school and half studying in college over a period of two to three years, to earn an Acting Teacher's Certificate. Rose studied Maths and Botany as her two special subjects, and had some time to learn drawing and painting. The latter became a lifelong interest, testified by her own paintings that graced the wall of her room when we interviewed her so much later in life. Music was amongst other subjects studied and at the end of her first year, the students produced plays.

Rose recalled psychology lectures, but they held no interest for her. «I thought a little common sense goes a lot further than a lot of Psychology, even in those days». Yet we know from the historical record that her psychology lecturer was W.G.Sleight, a writer of books that were widely used at the time. Significant for her professional formation, Rose recalled that college lecturers were much friendlier than teachers at school had been. «You could talk to them». The Botany mistress used to organise walks out on Saturday morning sometimes going quite far afield to the rural outskirts of London. However, it seems that this more relaxed relationship did not immediately provide a model for any new approach to teaching in school.

For nineteen years, after qualifying from college in 1920 to the outbreak of war in 1939, Rose worked at one elementary school in the area where she herself had grown up as a young girl. How she related her early experiences in retrospect, through her oral history interview, provides rich and fascinating data for our study. On the development of her teaching methods, key to professional identity, her testimony is sure-footed, remarkably clear for a centenarian recalling events from eighty years before. But it is also rich precisely for its nuanced ambivalence, its continuing active reflection on the way she taught and how her attitude and practice evolved.

Marjorie's training college was a local authority (London County Council) residential college for women. She attended as a day student, for reasons of economy, which left her feeling a little marginalised. Yet her estimation of Avery Hill Training College in the years 1925-1927 echoes the enthusiastic accounts of her earlier schooling. The historical evidence of these memo-

¹⁶ Wendy Robinson, *Power to teach: learning through practice* (London: Woburn Press, 2004), 33-48.

ries must be understood as the retrospective reconstruction by a successful teacher, an enthusiast for child-centred education, an optimistic but intelligently critical and highly experienced professional. One telling statement is that «Lecturers had all been teachers and knew what they were talking about». She recalls a group of eight students going out to school one day each week, for which a lesson was planned and discussed in college; each week one of the students was called on without notice to conduct the lesson while her colleagues and the lecturer observed, then the following day back in college it was «torn to pieces in discussion». Activity methods were encouraged, for example in natural sciences with a strong emphasis on observation and visits beyond the classroom walls. Psychology courses were also recalled as important, and they included theories of child development with reference to Piaget. But those ideas became more valuable later on in her career; as historians we recognize that during her college years Piaget's research was in its early stages, becoming better known and more accessible in English translations a decade on, from the later 1930s onwards. Marjorie recognizes that they were not so close to children in college, that in her school-based training she dealt with whole classes and hardly talked with individual children. But she considers the seeds were sown of her thinking about children, and that a broad knowledge of psychology provided the frame.

Above all, two individuals at Avery Hill are credited by Marjorie with the kind of formative influence she attributed to her secondary school head teacher. In one case it was the College Principal Frieda Hawtrey seen initially as «stiff and prim» and «a real old dragon», but ultimately viewed as a model leader caring for the personal welfare and comfort of her students. Here we can cross-refer between personal memory and public record in a published secondary source.¹⁷ A second influence was her biology teacher Miss Henley the «old hen».¹⁸

I've never thought of this before, she did her teaching and encouraged our teaching to go out with the children, she took us out as if we were children all round the grounds and talked about the trees and the plants [...] I can remember this. And that was a new approach. That was my first introduction to taking children away from the classroom.

¹⁷ David Shorney, *Teachers in Training 1906-1985: A history of Avery Hill College* (London: Thames Polytechnic, 1989), 107-135.

¹⁸ Shorney, *Teachers in Training*, 86-7, 125-6, including photographs from 1911 and 1923, the latter just two years before Marjorie was taught by her.

As a certificated teacher Marjorie began her work in a London infant school under a «very progressive and supportive» head teacher. Her second post was in a 7-14 Elementary School, where she went on to teach the seniors. Here the male head teacher was a martinet who kept strict discipline with the threat of corporal punishment. The contrast between two head teachers provided material for critical reflection on her own early professional development. Also significant was a colleague who teamed up and encouraged extra-curricular activities with children's music and dance beyond the school walls.

It was a wonderful experience [...] my first experience of leaving the school building and going out with children. [...] children were going out from school, doing things and we were doing more in school, like breaking down the normal curriculum, this for me, is when it began and we were doing a good job and I was enjoying my life there, very very much indeed.

Albert's training experience contrasted with Rose's and Marjorie's in three respects, as he was resident (rather than a day student), in a Church of England college, and for men only. His college was Anglican and «ancient» compared with the secular, more modern environment in which our two women had their professional training. Like Rose and Marjorie, Albert also reported positive memories of college, but that is by no means a common feature of teachers' testimonies, which varies frequently and markedly in their evaluation of the educational, professional and social benefits derived from college. Such variance reflects the different personalities of individual teachers, of course, as well as the character of different institutions.

Corresponding to Marjorie's memories of college staff who influenced her, for Albert it was Chester's Vice Principal, an authority figure and role model in Albert's professional development. Albert describes him as young, but memory and the written record diverge here as we establish from documentary sources that Herbert Morrell was in his mid-forties at that time. Morrell had joined the staff before World War I and had been ten years Vice Principal when Albert came to study. On the other hand, the published record confirms Albert's recollection of Morrell as a forceful character and remarkable man who took responsibility for the whole of theory and practice of teaching, fulfilling the long established training role of «Master of

Method». ¹⁹ Albert remembers, and the college history confirms, the great respect that Morrell earned and the influence he had throughout local schools. «He exerted an unassailable influence over those he trained, and it is no wonder that the name Morrell remains [sic, 1975] a legend in the schools». ²⁰ Albert describes him as «highly professional» demanding high standards, for example in matters of dress: «When we went on school practice to schools in Liverpool, Birkenhead and all round, we had to wear a suit, properly dressed and we all had to wear a hat and in winter, gloves. He said: “You must dress as professionals”». In Albert’s account Morrell was both professional and passionate about the teacher’s role, a positive attitude to encouraging children in school coupled with constructive feedback to trainees when observing in classrooms. «He was renowned. He was known all over Cheshire and Lancashire. It was very valuable because if you’d been to Chester College [...] you would always be had in esteem».

Despite Morrell’s impressive and influential professionalism, the education theory Albert encountered was «quite basic», a not uncommon retrospective judgment by those who went on to work in the post-war years when the development of educational research and thinking was so marked. Albert regularly attended vacation courses during the 1950s in Manchester, Oxford and London, where he was introduced to scientific thinking such as that of Piaget. Yet he found that «every new approach to teaching, whatever subject, I could build on the basics that I’d had, that this man Morrell had brought out in the College. He was basic, he was practical». From the point of leaving college, Albert was firmly committed to his own professional development, evidenced by his visit to a physical training college in Denmark just before outbreak of war.

WARTIME EVACUATION

A strategy planned by the British government in advance of the World War II, was for teachers to accompany schools in evacuation from urban and industrial areas to the relative safety of the countryside. Children were to be «billeted» in foster care with rural families and teachers would provide continuity of education by sharing village school premises or in improvised

¹⁹ Robinson, *Power to teach*, 52-66.

²⁰ John Lewis Bradbury, *Chester College and the Training of Teachers, 1839-1975* (Chester: Chester College, 1975), 218.

accommodation such as village halls. Vast numbers of children accompanied by their teachers followed this plan immediately on the outbreak of war, but circumstances varied hugely between areas of the country. In the early months of war, when air-raids did not immediately occur, many children returned to the towns and cities, where often their school buildings had been commandeered for military purposes. Within a year, aerial bombardment intensified so that schoolchildren were forced to repeat the evacuation exercise in subsequent waves.

Throughout this time, teachers were often required to relocate at short notice and frequently needed to improvise in various ways to sustain children's schooling both in rural and in urban locations.²¹ In the course of these evacuations they inevitably got to know their pupils much more intimately, and sometimes had to take responsibility for aspects of the children's welfare outside of school. Wartime evacuation therefore produced historically specific and unusual conditions for teachers' professional development. Institutions became quite fluid and individuals were put to the test of drawing on their own resources. The evacuation experiences of our three subjects, Rose, Marjorie and Albert, were significantly different from one another, not only in kind but also in how those experiences affected each person's career and professional identity.

Rose was evacuated with her school to countryside just 50 km north of London, and remained in that area for the duration of the war, teaching in a variety of situations. Rose described her evacuation as «comfortable». She admits with characteristic awareness, not smugly, she had a very lucky war, whilst recognizing this was not the case for so many others. She remained throughout the war conveniently housed, not too far distant from her London home, and with only a few occasional extra duties to manage. Professionally it brought opportunity to diversify, teaching not only her regular junior age range. Most attractive for her was a period of teaching mathematics to older students, a subject in which she had specialized at college

²¹ Most literature on evacuation in Britain has focused on children's experiences rather than teachers'. Gaertner's comparative study makes a contrast with Germany, where teachers played no significant role in the evacuation. For Spain, a recent biography of Justa Freire, teacher during the Spanish Civil War, devotes a chapter to Freire's use of school colonies as a laboratory for the new education, corresponding more closely to opportunities taken by some teachers in wartime Britain. See: Niko Gaertner, *Operation Pied Piper: The Wartime Evacuation of Schoolchildren from London and Berlin 1938-46*, (Charlotte, NC, USA, Information Age Publishing, 2012); María del Mar del Pozo Andrés, *Justa Freire o la pasión de educar: Biografía de una maestra atrapada en la historia de España (1896-1965)* (Madrid: Octaedro, 2014).

and which she enjoyed. Less enjoyable, but nevertheless a developmental experience, was being assigned to teach infants, sharing a classroom with an uncertificated local teacher who had worked in the same school through her career; here Rose felt she was able to make a positive contribution, teaching arithmetic with a new rigour openly welcomed by parents. As so often in evacuation the opportunity arose to teach outside in the open air, regular lessons as well as nature walks, and Rose took this in her stride. Again she is characteristically phlegmatic, not enthusing as advocates of progressive pedagogy did, about the new pedagogical possibilities, rather just «getting on with the job». She was never forced to work in shifts, as many evacuated teachers were, making use of school premises for part of the day and improvising activities for the rest of the time; with no hint of apology or irony she observes that aside from occasional lessons outside, the children in her classes were «sitting and listening» just as they had before the war.

Rose «didn't know» whether, in the circumstances of evacuation, she got to see the children in a different light. But she was able get to know their characters and became friendlier with her students than she had previously. There were occasions when she had to deal with parents and foster parents, needing to mediate in difficult situations that sometimes arose, but looking back she saw this as «part of the job» and «getting on with it», rather than signifying any transformation in her professional identity. When pressed, she acknowledged the evacuation period as «an interesting time, because it was different from anything I'd experienced before», but contrasted with Marjorie the professional impact was far from dramatic.

Marjorie's wartime was by far the most disruptive and dramatic of the three, in two consecutive evacuations followed by a return to London teaching in conditions of aerial bombardment through the years 1943 to 1945. In the first wave of evacuation, she accompanied children from her school to the south coast of England. Like many other teachers in this initial evacuation she improvised educational and social activities with the children in their rural surroundings, often in the open air, making the most of their unforeseen circumstances. Here, the inspiration of her science teacher at training college was put to good use in active nature study. Pastoral care was also needed, supporting the children emotionally in the traumatic detachment from their families and home environment and through the frequently difficult process of settling down to live with strangers, their «foster families».

I was worried because it was the first time I had actual responsibility with nobody [head teacher] over me. [...] that was good for me, that was the beginning of me taking charge of something and I found [...] I was able to take charge and I relished it in a way and as I went on in evacuation [...] there was a development in myself that I very much appreciated.

She found she was able to teach with more freedom. «I didn't have to think of the old man [head teacher] looking over my shoulder, I enjoyed that and the children I think realised that there was a relaxing atmosphere there and they responded to it, they were good».

Because the numbers were small she was able to get to know the children more, and they talked a lot about their homes, beginning to regard her as a friend. That hadn't happened before the war, and she hadn't known much about the pupils' homes. She also felt that teachers in evacuation were trusted by parents. Her argument carries some overtones of nostalgia for a better world that has since passed, but it is also thoughtful and carefully argued.

After nine months Marjorie and her school were re-evacuated, this time to Wales where she stayed for three years. There she encountered new challenges such as a culture clash with the religion and family customs of the local population, as well as her own pupils growing up in their early teenage years. By 1943 many of her pupils had returned to London, so she too went back, and found herself teaching in wartime conditions where at some points in the war bombing raids were a regular occurrence that disrupted both the domestic lives of pupils and the school day.

Albert, like Rose, had only a short excursion, in his case to the Lancashire coast, north of Manchester where children settled in billets made unprecedented demands of teachers in caring for the whole child and improvising a curriculum. As little bombing took place in these early months, some children chose to return to Salford to be with their families. Albert remained in the countryside for those pupils who preferred to stay. Here he had responsibility for keeping children occupied in their free time, as well as for negotiating over difficulties with billets and foster families. He reflected specifically, with only a hint self-criticism, that hadn't spent time on meticulous planning in the period of evacuation, but had responded to changing situations as they evolved. His ambiguous position was as acting

head teacher for the evacuated children, but teaching them within the local village school which had its own head teacher. It was a formative experience with some responsibility, but «I was relaxed at Knott End, [...] was relaxed». What most distinguished Albert's evacuation from that of the two women, was its brevity, because in the following year he joined up in the Royal Navy as a PT instructor where he spent his war service from 1940 to 46. This experience would have been instrumental in his rapid recruitment to headship immediately following the war.

PERSONAL LIVES AND EXPERIENCES OUTSIDE TEACHING

Albert's career development reminds us of the need to consider personal lives and experiences outside teaching as integral to the individual teachers' professional development. As well as enlisting for military service, his short period of evacuation was the occasion of meeting and marrying his wife. As with several other teachers, family circumstances could change significantly during the course of war.

Rose remained single throughout her career, caring for and housing her parents, and a sustained close friendship with another single woman, regularly spending weekends in their shared caravan in the Surrey countryside, was a continuing feature of her social life during the war. Marjorie, like Rose, continued to care for her parents, but during the evacuation in Wales, in her mid-thirties, she met and married a recently widowed head teacher.

Marjorie's marriage is of particular significance insofar as this relationship had started as a professional one, the man in question, Len Gaskin, was in evacuation from another London school, and they shared teaching premises.²² Len Gaskin's wife, evacuated with him to Wales, died of cancer. As a widower he proposed to Marjorie and she was married at the age of 35, in 1942. They immediately adopted one of her evacuee pupils, a girl whose tragic family life included the death of her brother, blown up through misadventure by a land mine during their evacuation in Wales. Marjorie's own baby, born three years later, in the week following the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings as she recalled, died shortly after birth.²³ Len retired from teaching but was active in community choral music, an interest he and Mar-

²² Porter, *I Was Different*, 101, 108.

²³ Porter, *I Was Different*, 115.

jorie shared, and he gave her great encouragement and support professionally in her career when she progressed to her first head-teachership in 1950. Marjorie pursued her professional career in the post-war decades with great conviction and commitment, despite her personal life continuing to be affected by tragedy. Her adopted evacuee daughter Joan gave birth to a baby in 1953 but then took her own life in a fit of post-natal depression.²⁴ Just eight years later her husband died of cancer.²⁵ Yet she remained a dedicated head teacher seeing her role as one of service not just to children but to the community, and therefore combining her educational role with activity in local politics. In her widowhood, still in her early fifties, she was once more proposed to and married a local politician in south London, continuing her characteristic consolidation of professional and personal life.

TEACHING AFTER THE WAR

This account of Marjorie's personal life in the post-war era brings us to consider post-war careers. Rose, despite her evident intellectual ability and the variety of professional experience she had acquired in evacuation, was content to remain a class teacher with no apparent ambition for promotion or management roles. She returned to Islington to teach in just one school for the remaining fifteen years of her career. Rose rejected the proposition that evacuation might have changed her teaching, while accepting that all experience inevitably changes a teacher's approach — «you don't give the same lesson the same way twice». But she considered that evacuation changed her outlook on many other things and gave as an example her political change of mind regarding women teachers' entitlement to equal pay; before the war she had rejected the women teachers' union campaign on this, but working alongside men in various positions during evacuation had convinced of its justice. She considered she had become more confident as a teacher with all her years of experience, and appreciated the greater friendliness with children during the 1950s. But she attributed this to smaller class sizes, and to changing social culture in the post-war era, «a different atmosphere». Whilst in favour of «discovery learning», she had no interest in psychological theories of child development and remained rather conservative in her approach to classroom organization.

²⁴ Porter, *I Was Different*, 135.

²⁵ Porter, *I Was Different* 147.

Marjorie by contrast forged a career for herself as a head teacher, impelled, as evidenced in her testimony, by a passionate and political concern for children's welfare, for the possibilities and complexities of educational provision. She was as ready to continue discussing principles during the oral history interviews in her nineties as she evidently had earlier in her career. Immediately prior to her first headship she had spent a year on the renowned Diploma in Child Development at London University's Institute of Education. But for her, theory was clearly rooted in the everyday reality of classrooms and schools, applied through a practical understanding of children as learners, learning in a community and a social context. She was head teacher of one primary school, from 1950 to 1960 and the reputation she gained there led to appointment as head of an even larger school from 1960 to her retirement in 1968. Well beyond retirement she continued to work voluntarily in schools for well over thirty years, still engaged with local schools when she gave her oral history interview age 93.

Albert, who attained officer rank in the Royal Navy as a physical training instructor, was almost predictably destined for school headship; his gender and his status would have been decisive factors in his promotion. He left the armed services to become deputy head of a school in Salford, where he had begun his career, and was very soon promoted to head teacher of a junior school in the Lancashire town of Bury, where he remained for ten years. The quality of Albert's headship was apparently acknowledged with his appointment in 1956 to a large school on a big Manchester over-spill estate, where he worked the remaining 21 years of his career. He spoke more of the teachers than of the children, but discussed sensitively the quality of teachers entering the profession in the post-war era. However the complexity of a head teacher's role, for example in curriculum leadership, and the social significance of the school and of young children's learning do not feature prominently in his autobiographical account, as they do in Marjorie's recollections.

TEACHER IDENTITY AND THE WATERSHED OF WAR

Julio Ruiz Berrio echoed Giner de los Rios with his belief in the profound importance of training teachers, and also encouraged teachers as researchers.²⁶ That is a disposition shared in a wealth of contemporary literature

²⁶ Carmen Sanchidrián Blanco, «Julio Ruiz Berrio, historiador y maestro», *Revista Española de Pedagogía*, 257, enero-abril (2014): 179-182.

where teacher identity is considered for its relevance to interpreting teachers' personal testimony, and the application of historical data to contemporary understanding. Teacher educators Young and Erickson confronted a mistrust they encountered between themselves and teachers by analyzing their own professional histories.²⁷ In that context they identify phases of «imagining», «becoming» and «being», three stages that may emerge spontaneously in narration or be constructed by historians in ordering the evidence. «Imagining» may embrace childhood experiences, forming the idea of teaching, observing teachers and internalizing positive student-teacher relationships. «Becoming» includes the career choice that emerges from imagining, perceptions of role and status that align with personal identity, the impact of institutions, formal curricula and course structures; features include «school practice» or «professional placements», induction, relationships sustained with teacher-educators and school mentors. «Being» entails a career-long sequence of experiences, responsibilities, adopting the role in particular institutional, social, community contexts, managing relationships with administrators, head teachers or colleagues, with pupils or students and especially with particular individuals, «successes» and «failures». Through each of these stages run the multifarious ways that they see themselves, and consider others to perceive them. Our respondents' memories illustrate these stages in a dramatic historical context, providing rich and complex matter not only for historical but also for contemporary understanding.²⁸

That intersubjective complexity was recognized by Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop, who, in reviewing the proliferation of studies on teachers' professional identity published over the previous decade, identified (re)presenta-

²⁷ Janet R. Young and Lynnette B. Erickson, «Imagining, Becoming, and Being a Teacher: How professional history mediates teacher educator identity», *Studying Teacher Education*, 7-2, August (2011): 121-9.

²⁸ Douwe Beijaard, Nico Verloop and Jan Vermunt, «Teachers' perceptions of professional identity: an exploratory study from a personal knowledge perspective», *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 16-7 (2004): 749-764. A vital example of historical perspectives applied to contemporary professional development can be found in the work of Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education, *Stepping Stones: Recording the Voice of the Past* (Astana, 2013), the product of teachers from across Kazakhstan collecting oral testimonies as an integral component of their action research (www.nupdp.weebly.com). See: Peter Cunningham «Teachers' Lives, Teachers' Voices and Educational Development in Central Asia» (blog post: 3 November 2014) <http://historyofeducationsociety.blogspot.co.uk/2014/11/teachers-lives-teachers-voices-and.html>.

tion in teachers' stories as one of three categories.²⁹ Professional identity comprises an ongoing process of interpretation and re-interpretation. But the concept of professional identity they noted as frequently ill-defined, in many cases reduced to purely cognitive aspects of personal practical knowledge. More attention was needed to «self» and «identity», to relationships between the two, and to the role of agency and of context in professional identity formation. Though they may not use these technical terms, our teachers' recollections are rich in statements of «self», «identity», «agency» and «context».

Kirk and Wall examined the importance of «emotional labour» in the constitution of the «teacherly-self», adopting Maggie MacLure's «biographical attitude», a methodology that privileges «informal, person-oriented genres such as biography, autobiography, life history, narrative and anecdote» for making sense of social change and for exploring hopes, fears, opinions and beliefs.³⁰ They did so to explore teachers' reactions to neo-liberal reforms of the 1980s and 1990s that fundamentally undermined child-centred practices, practices that had emerged from war and flourished in the post-war decades. Kirk and Wall identified themes of emotional commitment, resilience and loss in relation to the occupational identity of teachers. In the process of «composing» identities they recognize a dialectical relationship that occurs in the oral history interview, between the engagements of lived experience on the one hand, and social relations and cultural practices on the other. So we are reminded to be cautious in our interpretations, but can nevertheless identify a quality of «emotional labour» in accounts of wartime teaching and its impact on practice of teachers who worked through the World War II and beyond.

Rose worked with different age-groups, in improvised settings, and alongside different kinds of teachers. Her attitude to gender differentiation in the teaching force was transformed by her experience. There was a great deal of continuity in her approach to teaching, holding on to the disciplinary devices of rote learning and sitting in rows, though she did ac-

²⁹ Douwe Beijaard, Paulien C. Meijer and Nico Verloop, «Reconsidering research on teachers' professional identity», *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 20 (2004): 107–128.

³⁰ John Kirk and Christine Wall, «Resilience and loss in work identities: a narrative analysis of some retired teachers' work-life histories», *British Educational Research Journal*, 36-4, August (2010): 627–641, citing MacLure, M., «Arguing for yourself: identity as an organising principle in teachers' jobs and lives», *British Educational Research Journal*, 19-4 (1993): 311–322.

knowledge social and technological changes in the classroom that resulted from the war. Marjorie worked in the English and Welsh countryside as well as under bombardment in her familiar city surroundings. She was acutely conscious of the contrasting cultural values of the two rural communities in which she taught, and their impact on the children. She laid much more emphasis than Rose on the experience of pastoral care and its effect on her practice, as well as the opportunities for active learning found in the rural environment. Albert's brief evacuation of only a few months was seen as a formative experience with its extended responsibilities, but at the same time relaxed. In terms of professional development it was his transfer to being a teaching officer in the armed forces that was most influential on his later career. On evacuation he also met his wife to be, but that relationship seems to have less professional significance than Marjorie's wartime marriage.

All three trace their professional development in terms of their own motivations and the circumstances that war produced. Institutional and interpersonal relationships intertwine in a narrative long rehearsed but revived and revised in this historical enquiry. As throughout social life, the circumstances of total war brought about profound change for teachers and schools in England. Long-term changes in educational policy were one manifestation of change, but professional perceptions of the teachers' role and the cumulative experience of teaching in wartime conditions, were significant factors also. These merit closer scrutiny and an essential source is provided by the first hand accounts of individuals such as Rose, Marjorie and Albert. ■

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Note on the contributor:

Peter Cunningham is a Senior Research Fellow at Homerton College, Cambridge, and is currently working on teacher professional development projects for the University of Cambridge in Kazakhstan and Mongolia. His research interests lie in social and cultural history, and as an educationist he aims to apply insights from history to current policy and practice. He has studied school curriculum and pedagogy, teacher education and teacher identity, using oral history and focusing especially on the impact of WW2 and on progressive practice in twentieth century primary schooling. Activity within History of Education Society UK and the International Standing Conference on the History of Education (ISCHE) led to membership of the organising committee for ISCHE 36 in 2014 on War, Peace and Education. Participation in the Decorated Schools network, an AHRC funded research project on school murals and school sculptures, resulted in co-editing and contributing to *The Decorated School: Essays on the Visual Culture of Schooling* (Black Dog, November 2013). In 2012 he published *Politics and the Primary Teacher* (London: Routledge, 2012) and articles in *Oxford Review of Education* (October 2012), and in *History of Education* (January 2012).