

## Dare to Dream?

Susan Herbert

### Part 1

The chorus of David Rudder's "Champions" says: Champions take our dreams, and make us all immortal/We dance, we cry, we scream, we see beyond the portal...of doom.

Recently, I attended a workshop which delivered a significant message on the importance of developing vision statements and of working towards fulfilling dreams. Renewed attention is being paid to the notion that vision statements provide the "big picture" required to give meaning to the work of organisations, so that vision and mission statements are now prominently displayed in most organisations, including schools.

It seems that at some point in their careers, many popular artistes address the concept of "dreams." These are generally portrayed positively, as an articulation of a socially acceptable purpose that we work to achieve. The following chorus of a composition by Corrine Bailey Rae, which is premised on the assumption that we all have dreams, is a good example: "Three little birds sat at my window and they told me I don't need to worry. .../Girl put your records on/Tell me your favorite song/You go ahead let you hair down/Sapphire and faded jeans/I hope you get your dreams/Just go ahead let your hair down/You're going to find yourself somewhere, somehow."

Another example, "Fireflies" by Faith Hill, introduces the idea that we can be taught to dream: "Before you met me I was a fairy princess/I caught frogs and called them prince and made myself a queen/Before you knew me I traveled 'round the world/And I slept in castles and fell in love/Because I was taught to dream."

Who then teaches children to dream?

The term *teacher* is generally used very, loosely and some say that everyone is a teacher. To some degree, that statement is true because human beings learn in so many ways. We learn vicariously, from studying role models, from reflecting on our experiences, and, sometimes, from persons who are employed as teachers. So children can learn to dream by chance, based on the messages in the songs they hear or the books they read. Conversely, they may learn from their experiences that there is no point to having dreams.

Learning can occur without the intentional act of teaching. However, for persons who are employed as "teachers," the desired outcome of the intentional act of teaching is learning, and this learning does not happen by chance. This is not to say that professional teachers do not use unplanned opportunities to teach content, values, attitudes, and skills. But, traditionally, professional teachers set goals, aims, and objectives intentionally, and choose from among a variety of suitable strategies to achieve their intended outcomes. In other words, teachers deliberately plan for students' learning, use pedagogical content knowledge to achieve outcomes, and choose from among a variety of strategies to assess the extent to which their intended outcomes have been achieved.

If we use the concept of teaching as an intentional act then, who is intentionally teaching the children to dream, that is, to move above the habits and boredom of daily routines and conceptualise a purpose towards which they can set goals?

I have not yet seen a curriculum document that has a stated/explicit aim of having students dream/develop a vision to which to aspire, or textbooks that address that outcome. This in itself is perhaps not surprising given that we are purported to live in an age that is dominated more by science and technology than in an Age of Romanticism, and in which the former dictates the overarching way of thinking/knowing. According to Douwe Draaisma, “Romanticism provided the negative of the orientation which dominated science before and after it—trance and dream as opposed to lucid thought, vision as opposed to logic, harmony and unity as opposed to analysis, intuition as opposed to reflection, and the unconscious as opposed to the waking consciousness.”

In today’s world, there are residual negative connotations associated with “dreams.” Attention to “romantic” outcomes is therefore left to the “educational imagination” of individual teachers in the classroom rather than a system-wide movement. However, asking teachers in contemporary society to use their educational imagination may be an unrealistic request. Firstly, the overarching scientific ethos does not really encourage it. Secondly, perhaps as a consequence, most teacher education programmes do not nurture the imagination. Sheri Klein laments that “processes that are attributed to one’s inner life and that are associated with the artistic/aesthetic domain, such as intuition, contemplation, visualization, and imagination are largely ignored in teacher education programmes.” It is therefore unlikely that teachers will plan deliberately to address students’ dreams.

School of Education, UWI, St. Augustine