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Control and Rebellion

> Training college education still suffers from the failure to recognise that the training college is the first stage of adult life and not the last stage of school life.
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> *The McNair Report, 1944*[1]

Although there were some day colleges, most Victorian training colleges were residential with students only leaving the campus for supervised teaching practice. Colleges routinely relied on the concept of *in loco parentis*, i.e. their legal responsibility to take on some of the functions of a parent and act in the best interests of the student in their care. This was developed in common law in Victorian times. It was not until 1970 that the age of majority, the age at which a child legally became an adult and could, for example, vote or enter into legally binding contracts, was lowered from 21 to eighteen years. However, I can remember as a lecturer the same protective attitude, particularly towards female students, persisting in the 1970s. In 2018 Minister for Higher Education Sam Gyimah cited *in loco parentis* in the context of universities offering all the support that students needed for their mental and physical well-being. Significantly, Sir Anthony Seldon, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Buckingham, recently referred to the concept when outlining its proposed policy to ban recreational drugs use at the institution.[2]

1. The McNair Report, para 234-38, pp. 74-7.
2. 'Buckingham University aims to be UK's "first drugs-free campus"',

Training college authorities intended their students to become professional teachers and not to undertake any activity which might reflect badly on the college. Thus, for example, in 1853 the Chancellor of the University of Exeter succinctly expressed these sentiments when stressing the importance of moral influences on the students attending St Luke's College, Exeter (established by the cathedral with the express purpose of training schoolmasters) and thus justifying the minutiae of its rules: 'It is that formation of character by moral influences which can only be effected by those who have been instructed but morally trained themselves.'[3] The college authorities sought to control the activities of male students in order to avoid displays of drunkenness and inappropriate behaviour.

Male students today sometimes opt to wear blazers in college colours but, surprisingly, in Edwardian times female students were also treated like schoolchildren and obliged to wear college uniforms, usually white blouses and ties in college colours, rather than choose their own suitable dress. These college uniforms were not only for games or physical education but required dress for academic lessons. A group photograph of Homerton students in 1865 shows the women wearing individual dresses but by 1903 the students were wearing uniform white college blouses.[4] Trainee schoolmistresses at Roehampton College, in a group photograph in 1901, are seen with regulation white shirts, college cravats and long black skirts and Roehampton was not along in opting for this style.[5] In 1912 first-year women students at Avery Hill College were photographed wearing long dark skirts and college ties.[6] At the turn of the twentieth century a student from the Municipal Training College in Hull described being burdened with 'hideous black serge tunics, adorned with violent yellow velvet saddles and girdles; and cream straw boaters with hat bands of the same waspish colours'.[7] In her reminiscences of life as a student in Hull Training College in 1917 Miss Farrer refers

BBC news report, 29 April 2018, available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-beds-bucks-herts-43940834, accessed 6 April 2020.

3. Brian Clapp, *The University of Exeter: A History* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1982), p. 20.
4. Simms, *Homerton College, 1695-1978*, p. 26, p. 46.
5. Watson, *The Story of Roehampton University*, p. 19.
6. Shorney, *Teachers in Training, 1906-1985*, p. 68.
7. Dent, *The Training of Teachers in England and Wales, 1800-1975*, p. 61.

to 'the hated straw hats' but admits they were useful points of identification in planning clandestine assignations with male students.[8]

The colleges for women in the early years of the twentieth century often resembled girls' finishing schools rather than higher education institutions. The presence of uniforms was just one factor. Significantly, the college lecturers were still termed governesses, as they had been in Victorian times. At first students were treated as if they were at a girls' boarding school, with no privacy in curtained cubicles in dormitories. These were only gradually replaced by individual rooms where the students could study in quiet.

Students at state training colleges were controlled by a succession of bells and roll calls. In 1913 the King Alfred's prospectus stated that in summer first lectures began at 6.45am followed by Chapel and in winter lectures were later at 7.45am. In the interwar years there was some relaxation but a former student, John Shannon, described King Alfred's as being like a third-rate boarding school in the 1930s.[9] Whitelands College in mid-Victorian times had the students rising at six, dressing and sweeping rooms, before their first lecture at 7.00-7.45am. Lights had to be out at nine thirty in the evening.[10] Chester Training College had a typical 1930s timetable: Roll Call 7.40am. Chapel 7.45am. Breakfast 8.00am. Education 9.00-9.45am. Science 9.45-10.30am. French 10.30-11.15am. Interval 11.15am. Advanced P.T. 11.30-12.15am. Mathematics 12.15-1.00pm. Dinner 1.15pm. P.T. 2.30-3.15pm. Handwork 4.45-5.30pm. Tea 6.45pm. Chapel 7.00 pm. Advanced Handwork 7.15-8.00pm. Private Study 8.00-9.00pm. Societies 9.00-10.00pm. Dormitories 10.00pm.[11] The days were long at the training colleges and tightly controlled by the authorities.

Students at Edge Hill College in the early twentieth century had a long day because five and three-quarter hours were spent in class and five and a half hours in private study or in practice school.[12] The students could take a walk between five and six

8. Bibby, *The First Fifty Years*, p. 17.
9. Interview with the author, 30 March 2018.
10. Cole, *Whitelands College*, p. 9.
11. Bradbury, *Chester College and the Training of Teachers, 1839-1975*, Endpaper.
12. Montgomery, *Edge Hill College*, p. 27.

o'clock, unsupervised, but two students had to go together. Students taught in schools for two and a half hours daily for four days a week and stayed in one department for one month. There was in many colleges a sense that the day had to be rushed through.

Admittedly, there was some disquiet from independent observers about the students' workload. Consider, for instance, the 1894 HMI Report for Edge Hill: 'The timetable shows a heavy amount of mental work, and a comparatively slight amount for private study and recreation.' Two years later the same Inspector observed, 'Efforts will no doubt continue to be made to secure a substantial respite from study for every student in the course, which is all the more important because the College does not possess very extensive grounds for the physical exercise of so many young persons.'[13]

The college timetable gradually began to ease but was still too heavy for some of the twentieth-century students. In 1932 at St Luke's College the 7.00am lectures were abolished, bringing this rueful comment from a student, 'No longer do we rise hastily, wash hurriedly and rush to college frantically adjusting our collars at 6.50am – we do it all at 7.30 instead.'[14]

Mealtimes provided another time of social control. All students were served at the same time with staff at the high table, often on a dais, with a selected group of students. Even at King Alfred's in the 1960s it was the custom to bow to the principal at the top table for any student coming in late or having to leave early.

There were always complaints from students about the quality of the food. When I attended King Alfred's in 1961 the head chef had recently been convicted of colluding with local butchers to serve students meat deemed unfit for human consumption. In Victorian times weak beer was allowed at mealtimes for the male students at St Luke's, but it was not brewed on the premises. Presumably, it was considered an acceptable alternative to polluted water. However, there were abuses of alcohol and Fuller reports, in *The History of St Luke's College*, that in 1877 one student was expelled for repeated drunkenness.

At Edge Hill at start of the twentieth century there was rebellion over the student's food, in particular, about 'Mersey Whale which was a fish swimming in greasy water'. The students complained not about the menus but rather how the food was

13. Ibid., p. 28.
14. Brian Clapp, *The University of Exeter. A History* (University of Exeter).

made unappetising in the cooking. Helena Normanton, later a barrister, had a meeting with the principal, Miss Hale, about the state of the students' food and the food was then improved.[15]

In 1904 the Board of Education suggested four meals a day for students: breakfast, dinner, tea and supper. Dinner was to be the main meal but meat, fish and eggs should be provided at one other meal. The daily allowance of meat should be twelve ounces for men and ten ounces for women. There should be a generous supply of fresh vegetables, salad and raw fruit.[16] At St Luke's meals were prepared by a resident housekeeper and included shepherd's pie and Cornish pasties. Students found the diet of rice, bread and pastry monotonous and wanted fish, gravy on the greens and more jam. Students wanted oranges and apples to be served at least once a fortnight.[17]

Freda Hawtrey, after her arrival as the new Principal of Avery Hill, insisted on raising the standard of food served to the students; she criticised it as 'coarse and tainted'. She complained that the students were given margarine instead of butter and far too much tinned food. After her intervention fish and eggs began to feature on the menu. At the London County Council inspection in the 1923-24 session, it was reported that extra milk was available and the head housekeeper made sure that the menu was not repeated twice in the month.[18] One particular, working-class female student at Avery Hill at first considered the new Principal Freda Hawtrey remote and 'stand-offish'. However, when Miss Hawtrey discovered the early hour students had to leave for teaching practice, she arranged for them to be given hot drinks. This considerate gesture really impressed the student.

In contrast to the above colleges, Rhoda Anstey of the private Anstey Physical Training College was a vegetarian and emphasised the value of healthy eating. She had a positive attitude towards health and physical education, ordering the girls to rest after meals.[19] They had lectures on vegetarianism from Miss Anstey and food values from Miss Barnsley.

Colleges wanted not only to control professional timetables but also to constrain the leisure activities of their students. John

15. Montgomery, *Edge Hill College*, p. 32.
16. Dent, *The Training of Teachers in England and Wales, 1800-1975*, p. 80.
17. Fuller, *The History of St Luke's College, Exeter, 1839-1970*, p. 252.
18. Shorney, *Teachers in Training 1906-1985*, p. 110.
19. Crunden, *A History of Anstey College of Physical Education*, p. 8.

(King Alfred's College, 1935-37) described one of the effects of the mandatory roll call at six in the evening at the college. In order to see a whole film, students had to view the end at the matinee and then stay on for the beginning at the next screening.[20] Neither could the students relax by visiting the pub because they were banned from all public houses within a radius of six miles and disobedient students could be reported to the Bishop's Court. Similarly, at Kingston upon Hull Training College there was a lively repertory theatre in the town but it was not until 1934 that students were allowed to return at nine-thirty in the evening.[21]

Students were barred from taking part-time employment as, theoretically, this might detract from their studies. However, many students found a way to circumvent this. According to John Shannon, in the 1970s one student at King Alfred's took a job at Waterloo Railway Station which was over an hour's journey away. He was initially able to successfully combine job and course. This did not last long. To his consternation, one day Paul (the student) was summoned to the office of the Principal, Martial Rose. There had been an incident at the station and a London detective had traced Paul and travelled to Winchester to interview him as a witness. When he heard, Principal Rose was furious and demanded Paul give up his employment.

It was not just public leisure activities that were monitored; private activities, too, came under scrutiny. The authorities kept very tight control over leisure time. At Avery Hill in the 1920s even staff had to obtain permission to install a radio in their own rooms and it was not until the 1930s that a radio was acquired that was shared round the halls or residence. John Shannon reported having clandestine access to a radio in college. Even postwar at St Luke's College, Exeter, for example, in 1947 wireless was still not allowed in students' rooms (officially because of the overloading of the electrical circuit).

Most colleges required students to be back at college by nine o'clock in the evening unless they had been granted an exeat by the warden. However, students usually had an obliging friend on the ground floor in one of the hostels who would leave a convenient window open for late returners. Landladies at Exeter were instructed to keep a watch on their students. They had to return by nine and would be reported to college authorities if they returned later than 11.00pm.

20. Interview with the author, 30 March 2018.
21. Bibby, *The First Fifty Years*, p. 34.

The college authorities also sought strictly to control relations between men and women. *In loco parentis* was interpreted to mean the rules of a strict Victorian father rather than the more enlightened attitudes of the later twentieth century. Novelist Vera Brittain recalled that she had to be closely chaperoned by an aunt when, while at Somerville College, Oxford, she met a male friend in 1914.[22] The situation was seen as especially problematic in Oxford and Cambridge where students from the all-female colleges were vastly outnumbered by the male undergraduates. Not only was mixed visiting in halls not allowed, but female students had to obtain special permission to go out to tea with male undergraduates. Charis Frankenburg, a friend of Vera Brittain at Somerville College, recalled in her autobiography the strict rules on chaperones. An accompanying don was obligatory and even seeing a brother in college required a chaperone. Charis quoted this verse which presumably referred to Emily Penrose, principal of Somerville:

> We have a dear dame called the Pen
> Who is rather distrustful of men.
> Once she chaperoned me
> When I went out to tea
> But I don't think she'll do it again.[23]

Charis accepted these restrictive rules with equanimity but other students regarded them with more resentment.[24] The memories of Homerton collected by Elizabeth Edwards illustrate how harsh college authorities could be in the early twentieth century:

> I was reported one Sunday morning for being seen walking with a young man. I had to see Miss Allan [Principal of Homerton] and had to explain that my companion was a great friend from home. We went to the same Congregational Church at home. When we were seen together, we were walking back from a

22. Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1933).
23. Charis Frankenburg, *Not Old Madam, Vintage* (Lavenham: Galaxy Press, 1975), p. 59.
24. Charis Frankenburg, *Not Old, Madam, Vintage* (Lavenham, Suffolk: Galaxy Press, 1975), p. 15.

> Morning Service. Miss Allan listened but I had to write home to get a permissive letter to my mother. . . .
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> I was called to Miss Allan to be asked whether I thought it a good idea to see my friend from Emmanuel [College] so often. This interview shook me severely: what kind of institution had I come to? . . .
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> I had to get a letter from my parents before being allowed to go to the first house at the London Palladium with a man friend from home. When I got back to college, a lecturer told me it would have taken 'x' minutes to walk back from the station: 'What have you done with the other twenty minutes?'[25]

There were contemporary critics of college authorities for denying basic freedoms to women students, and who judged attitudes of female principals as dating from Victorian times when they were themselves students. The Oxford University magazine, *Isis*, in its issue of 4 June 1924, criticised the restrictions as being too many and argued that the 'current atmosphere of oppression created a culture of defiance and contempt, and encouraged an unhealthy, furtive attitude to sex and relationships'.[26]

Restrictions about socialising with the opposite sex applied to male as well as female students. In the 1930s the male students at Winchester were permitted to include nurses from the nearby nurses' home in their dramatic productions, but they were strictly forbidden to visit them at the nurses' home.

The aim of the authorities at most of the teacher training colleges was to keep the opposite sexes physically apart. In the UK even in the 'swinging' 1960s female friends in women-only colleges reported that they had to put their beds in the corridor when entertaining the opposite sex. This seems a naive view of sexual activity by spinster lecturers. After 1961 men were allowed into the female hostels at Homerton from 2.30pm until 10.00pm. This was considered most advanced. At King Alfred's in the 1960s attitudes were fairly relaxed over visiting hours in my women's hostel. It had been an all-male college and restrictions on male visiting hours were applied at the request of female residents rather than college authorities.

25. Edwards, *Women in Teacher Training Colleges, 1900-1960*, p. 119.
26. Jane Robinson, *Bluestockings: The Remarkable Story of the First Women to Fight for an Education* (London: Viking, 2009), p. 200.

The universities were equally as strict as the colleges of education in seeking to control relationships between men and women. John Beckett, in his absorbing history of the University of Nottingham, describes the gender rules for chaperoning female students in the 1950s with strict rules for men being allowed into the female hostels: 'The week-end visitors should be introduced to the warden at the first appropriate moment.' In Nightingale Hall, Nottingham, stories are legion about Audrey Beecham who was the Warden in the 1960s. She had a penthouse flat and allegedly used a shotgun from this vantage point to scare off any men she spotted illicitly in the grounds. Audrey Beecham had volunteered to serve for the Republicans in the Spanish Civil war and was an ace shot. Men were also constrained at Nottingham. Neil Brealey (1945-49) recalled that the university 'was very much *in loco parentis*, riddled with petty regulations governing conduct which we resented and tried to ignore or circumvent'.[27]

Male and female students found ingenious ways of outwitting the authorities. Dr Cyril Bibby, Principal of Kingston upon Hull Training College, included this caretaker's account in his history of the college. At Kingston the rules were strict and, in particular, there was to be no speaking to the opposite sex. However, the college caretaker discovered illicit activity and he knew where his duty lay:

> The 'no speaking' rule was evaded by students having secret hiding places for notes, and I might not have known of this but for one being quite near the boiler house. Another way of evading the law was by the use of Morse code signalled by mirrors from the two facing hostels. I have no doubt that the two students mainly concerned in this were frequently puzzled as to the reason I needed to have work to do in certain rooms, at the times they had fixed for their meetings.[28]

No doubt in other colleges there were also other ingenious subterfuges employed by students. This element of control and subversion is reminiscent of sociologist Erving Goffman's work on the interaction in total institutions. Erving Goffman

27. John Beckett, *Nottingham: A History of Britain's Global University* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2016), pp. 127-30.
28. Bibby, *The First Fifty Years*, p. 15.

was a leading Sociologist who in the 1960s developed theories about human interaction and place in the closed world of total institutions.[29]

It might be wondered why male students who had served in the armed forces in wartime, or undertaken National Service, adhered to such petty restrictions. Perhaps it was because the armed services employed strict discipline over the minutiae of everyday life. The restrictions were not accepted without resentment. One student complained of life at St Luke's: 'I am old enough to fight, old enough to get married and thus feel I can be trusted to draw my own bathwater to the correct depth.'[30]

These were individual acts of defiance but there was one instance of major rebellion long before the more widespread student unrest of the 1970s which was more common in universities. In 1887 what was termed 'The Great Rebellion' of a whole group of students took place at St Luke's College, Exeter. This protest was unusual because it was not about food, visiting hours or the depth of bathwater but about a perceived threat to their professional careers.

On 26 February 1887 *The Times* reported that 30 second-year St Luke's students took their belongings with them and left in protest at poor mathematics teaching which they believed led them to fail the compulsory second year government examination: 'The students do not object to the tutor as a man, or as a lecturer in English history, but they *do* object to him as a teacher of mathematics.' The students walked out of their Monday morning lecture when the tutor entered the room. The students demanded that the Principal, Dr Dangar, personally take over mathematics teaching as he had done in previous years but Dr Dangar declined their invitation and demanded an apology. Instead of this, the students wrote 'an impertinent letter' and their claims were elaborated. It was then pointed out by Dr Dangar that the tutor concerned had been inspected by HMI and proceeded to be appointed to Oxford University. The students were eventually persuaded to return to college. There were no ringleaders but, in order to restore the Principal's authority, two students were selected to be punished by suspension and the remaining rebels were gated for the rest of the term.

29. Erving Goffman, *Asylums. Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (New York: Anchor Books, 1961).

30. Fuller, *History of St Luke's College, Exeter, 1839-1970*, p. 488.

Coverage of the rebellion in the local and national press led the matter to the House of Commons. Mr Sydney Buxton, MP for Tower Hamlets, asked a question in the House of Commons as two of the students involved were his constituents and he believed they had been unjustly punished. The local press showed sympathetic understanding of the predicament of the students: 'Pupils of any kind hardly ever rebel against an able and sympathetic teacher.'[31] Neither the details of how the affair ended, nor the consequences for individual students, are known. However, one rebel, Frederick Margetson Rushmore, eventually became Master of St Catherine's College, Oxford.

An important aspect of rare student autonomy was sporting activity. It bound the students together and helped them to withstand the hardships of college life. This can be seen in the development of team games at Cheltenham College which provided the students with an opportunity to organise themselves and take control of their sporting destinies. Charles More in his history of Cheltenham College correctly determined that games gave male students an *esprit de corps*.[32] Originally rugby was the main sport in men's training colleges but by the turn of the twentieth-century football 'dribbling rules' was equally popular. College principals favoured football over rugby as being less dangerous. Cricket was played in the summer as a team game, and tennis and rowing were also popular.

Although the timetabled day was long and hard at Borough Road College, there too a redeeming feature for the students was emphasis on sport as a way of maintaining a healthy body and cultivating a team spirit. The students were allowed to play cricket on Saturday afternoons at Kennington Oval, the Surrey County Cricket Club ground, later a test match venue. In winter the students played football at Battersea Park where they competed against rival colleges. Later, college buildings were cleared away to provide tennis and fives courts.[33]

John Shannon had happy memories of his sporting activities in the 1930s. It is significant that in his *Memoirs* Shannon devotes comparatively little attention to educational matters but a large section to sport, perhaps reflecting his priorities:

31. *Gloucester Echo*, 7 March 1887.
32. More, *A Splendid College*, p. 53.
33. Bartle, *A History of Borough Road College*, p. 41.

> A Sports Club ran all the sporting activity entirely supervised by students. Sport was an integral part of the institution and the students felt they had a large part to play. Although there were only one hundred and fifty male students in the college it turned out the following teams: two Football, two Tennis, one Hockey, one Rugby, one Athletics, one Cricket and one Badminton. These teams had fixture lists, often playing twice a week. Once a year the Sports played each other – 'Muffs and Duffs'. I was Captain of Tennis and Badminton as well as playing for some of the other college teams.
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> The Captain of each Sport was responsible for fixtures and the collection of all monies which he passed to the Treasurer and cheques were countersigned by a member of staff for the college. All the administrative work was carried out by the students without any clerical or administrative help. The Treasurer made transport arrangements. The College provided refreshments and for long-distance fixtures there was an extension of the evening roll call. Afternoons were kept free for Sport, with lectures in mornings and evenings.
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> Venues varied greatly as opposition came from fellow colleges, local clubs, universities, armed forces bases. There was a fixture at Worthy Down Air Station with its silver tea service in the Officers' Mess. This was very different from the R.O.A.C. at Southampton, though we preferred their 'bangers and mash'.[34]

Sporting activity developed a sense of corporate loyalty. One King Alfred's student said that, when his team played colleges such as St Luke's, 'You put on your college blazer and college tie and felt really proud. You were really somebody.' Gary (King Alfred's College, 1974-77) took physical education as his main subject and felt part of an elite group: 'There can't be many subjects where people from other subjects want to get involved.' His friend at Brighton College of Education discovered the same commitment towards PE at that college.

The problem for the management of training colleges was finding the right balance between encouraging individuality and

34. John Shannon, *John Shannon. A Memoir* (Winchester: Winchester University Press, 2017), p. 39...

exercising control over the students. It seemed easier for many colleges to opt for complete control and this led to resentment and rebellion. Visiting St Luke's after 'The Great Rebellion', the HMI, Mr H.E. Oakley, wisely commented: 'I am very much in favour of treating them as young men, not as schoolboys; too strict a control has an effect in the opposite direction.'[35]

Social attitudes changed after the 1950s and the 1970s saw a period of student activism in the United States, France and the United Kingdom. Archive records show that the Students' Union of Mather College, Manchester, joined with the universities and higher education colleges in taking direct action against education cuts in the 1970s. Manchester Area National Union of Students in its flier asked members in May 1976: 'Have you got an occupation to go to?' It listed the successful student occupations of administrative buildings, which included that at Didsbury College (400 students out of 1,200 even in the middle of examinations). Student occupations took place on Tuesday, 25 May 1976 at Elizabeth Gaskell and Mather Colleges and again on the Thursday of that week. The spontaneous wave of protests included demonstrations against teacher unemployment and mass leafletting.[36]

The debate on the role of colleges *in loco parentis* continues today but even in residential higher education institutions there is no longer the same level of control. The introduction of student fees for higher education of over £9,000 per annum has arguably given students greater rights as consumers and, in some areas, given them more control. However, institutions are still wary and wish to retain some control over their students. Examples include the actions of Sir Anthony Sheldon, University of Buckingham, analysed at the start of this chapter.

35. Fuller, *The History of St Luke's College, Exeter, 1839-1970*, p. 266.
36. *Mather College Occupation Bulletin*, No.2, May 1976.