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## An Education Pioneer

David Stow (1793-1864) educated the young and helped create formal teacher training in Britain. Stow's aim in education was to educate the whole person and that entailed the physical, intellectual and moral. This was a vision he put into practice. This short article provides an overview of the work of David Stow.

David Stow was born in Paisley on the 17<sup>th</sup> May 1793. He was a pupil at Paisley Grammar and entered into business with his brother-in-law in 1811, aged 18. Six years later he was a partner in Wilson, Stow and Company, a silk firm. He lived and worked in Glasgow and he became very anxious about the serious impact of poverty on the lives and moral character of children in the densely populated city. He was motivated by his Christian faith and was influenced by Dr. Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847) who was appointed Church of Scotland minister to the Tron Church in 1815 and then in 1819 to St. John's. Stow became an elder of St. John's Church and opened a Sabbath School in the Saltmarket in Glasgow in 1816. Sabbath schools provided basic education in literacy, numeracy, hygiene and religious and moral values for the children who worked during the week.

The Sabbath school was successful, but Stow became acutely aware of the limitations of this form of schooling and the need for full time education. A visit to Samuel Wilderspin's Infant School in Spitalfields convinced Stow that education should begin early and that day schools were the most effective schools. He helped establish the Glasgow Infant School Society in 1827 and an infant school for children aged two to six was opened on the 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1828 in the Drygate. The school had a gallery of tiered seats for one hundred children and there was a large playground outside. The school was conceived as a 'model school', a school that would provide an effective and practical example of infant schooling to be imitated in other parts of the city and Scotland. By 1831 five infant schools were established in Glasgow.

Stow's methods were adopted for the school and were unusual for the period. He rejected punishment and strict rules: the rod was not used in the model schools of the Glasgow Educational Society. In religious instruction, he eschewed the rote learning of the shorter catechism and focussed on the use of scripture and constant contact with the children. The idea of constant contact extended to playground activity. The teacher could observe the behaviour of the children in the playground while supervising and participating in the games. Stow argued that without a playground and the observations of the Master there could be no moral training. The behaviour demonstrated in the playground (for example, selfishness or kindness) would be used for discussion with the children in the gallery. Stow talked about the 'sympathy of numbers', using the peer group in a positive way in the gallery.

Stow understood the words training and teaching in a certain way. Stow associated teaching with instructing or lecturing. He understood training to be focussed on ensuring the lesson is learned by the children. Stow was very committed to co-education of boys and girls and was opposed to teaching them separately (except for activities such as sewing). Separate teaching and even being taught together created a risk to their character. The risk was removed when they were morally *trained* together. Stow did not approve of Monitors who only taught facts

and were a poor substitute for a master. The Infant School movement was ultimately quite short lived – it began to fail by 1839 but it did influence later developments.

Stow became concerned about the quality of teachers and turned his attention to their training. In 1832, he was involved in the creation of the *Glasgow Educational Association*, later the *Glasgow Educational Society*. In 1837 new premises were acquired in Dundas Vale to house the growing population of the Drygate school. These premises, under the guidance of the *Glasgow Educational Society*, provided four model schools for different age groups and a Normal Seminary for teacher training, the first in Britain. Stow believed that the Normal Seminary was the ideal institution for the training for teachers. The premises included sixteen classrooms, a gallery, playgrounds, a library, a museum and a capacity for 1,000 children and 100 students. Admission to the Normal Seminary to become a trainer would require a sufficient amount of elementary knowledge and a certificate of character from the local minister. The student body was co-educational and non-residential: the students were lodged with trusted persons of good religious character who would report any unbecoming conduct.

In 1841, the working week for the students was forty hours and they spent sixteen and a half hours of their time on study (receiving instruction on music, geography, natural history, physics, arithmetic and algebra, sacred history, drawing, elocution and gymnastics) and the remaining time on training in teaching and in explanation of education. The tutors would 'model' lessons and there were criticism lessons. Four students would each deliver a lesson for fifteen minutes in succession. Each of these began with physical activity and ended with the singing of a psalm. Initially the training was six months, and this was extended to eight or nine months and later to a year.

Persistent financial difficulties for the Normal Seminary were partially alleviated by government grants but the administration was transferred to the Church of Scotland. The Disruption of 1843 had a serious effect on David Stow and the future of the Glasgow Normal Seminary. Those who seceded to the Free Church were no longer allowed to be members of staff in the Glasgow Normal Seminary. This included David Stow and the vast majority of the staff. David Stow left the Seminary on the 8<sup>th</sup> May 1845 and led the directors, students, pupils and the teachers (bar one) to the Cowcaddens to found the Free Church of Scotland Normal Seminary in Glasgow. The new building was completed in 1845 and was debt free by 1848. The Disruption resulted in a dual system of Normal schools in Glasgow and Edinburgh. The Glasgow Normal Seminary in Dundas Vale became known as the Church of Scotland Normal School and the new Normal school in the Cowcaddens as the Free Church Normal School. The Church of Scotland had a Normal School in Edinburgh and the Free Church established a Normal School at Moray House in 1848. These four Colleges continued until the early twentieth century.

David Stow was invited to be the honorary secretary of the Free Church Normal School in Glasgow and continued to oversee the work of the School and attend the majority of the meetings until 1861. He died in 1864. Stow was not recognised as an important educational thinker in his time. He faced opposition from the university educated teachers in parochial schools and clergy who were antipathetic to his aims and methods. He himself had not attended university. The inspection of the Glasgow Normal Seminary by J. Gibson in 1841 was critical of the methods employed and the levels of knowledge of some of the students. Stow

himself could be over critical of others, inflexible in his opinions and methods, and vain about his achievements. Nevertheless, Normal Seminaries were created in India and the West Indies and teachers from the Glasgow Normal Seminary were employed in places like England, Canada, Australia and Jamaica. He promoted education for young children, especially in the towns and cities and a relationship between the master and pupil based on mutual respect and rooted in Christian love. He strongly advocated the use of Music, Physical Education and play - children should enjoy school. His Normal Seminaries were the foundation for contemporary teacher education in Scotland.

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A full list of references is available on request.

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