Editorial

The headteacher half apologised that the children were singing the old fashioned hymn 'All Things Bright and Beautiful' but reassured me that they no longer sang the verse '… the rich man in his castle, the poor man at his gate, God made them high or lowly and ordered their estate'. Yet, metaphorically speaking, in her ostensibly politically correct school it could be said, as in countless other schools, that rich men are indeed still sitting in their castles and the poor at their gates. The junior children are all in streamed classes and the younger ones are streamed within their classes by the familiar recourse to the names of large animals, small pets and primary colours. Children, teachers and parents alike are under no illusion as to the location of the castles and the gates. They all know full well which colour, which pet, which animal, represents those considered "best" at learning. They are also aware of the potential riches accruing to those in the upper streams.

The only change is that the Lord is no longer held to be responsible for the way in which such things are ordered and anyway we are told it is not intended for life. But we know and always have known, that streaming is nearly *always* for life. At a conservative estimate it has been calculated that 88% of all those children placed in streams or sets, as they now are on government recommendation from four and a half, will remain in those same groupings until they leave school. It is peculiarly and oddly British and it is a practice against which *FORUM* has been campaigning for over thirty years, inspired by Brian Simon, its co-founder, to whom many tributes are paid in this edition of the journal.

Once in streams or sets, children are then given differentiated work according to their pre-judged intellectual capacity. 'Differentiation', a supposed example of social justice is designed to give children of varying ability a fair chance according to their place in the rank order of such things. It is a use of the term 'social justice' though, that doesn't bear too close an examination. In the name of justice or even of fairness, a system of differentiation continues to exist in schools that we know by numerous research studies, is of little or no benefit to pupils. Indeed to some groups it is positively damaging. Socially, it is harmful to all and is regarded by many who have experienced it as the very antithesis of social justice. It is a form of 'fairness' that is both suspect and dubious, based as it is on an unquestioned belief in the notion of fixed ability and/or intelligence. As Clyde Chitty pointed out in the previous issue of *FORUM*, this notion has recognisable historical beginnings and it is not hard to find the baleful influence of the nineteenth-century Eugenics Society. It has permeated educational thinking to the extent that we are now seemingly and even dangerously unaware of the degree to which it influences decisions at many levels and in many contexts. Brian Simon recognised the danger and fought against it all his professional career and it is timely that with his passing we should be re-emphasising what he stood for.

In this context we are very pleased to publish Susan Hart's innovative article on developing teaching free from ability labelling. Based on an account of a recent research project ('Learning Without Limits') at Cambridge University Faculty of Education, it describes the differing practices of nine teachers, both primary and secondary, who rejected the notion of fixed ability. Importantly they did not subscribe to the practice of mixed ability teaching either. This, as Susan Hart points out, is but another version of fixed-ability teaching and one that has bedevilled the comprehensive school argument and distracted educationalists from properly engaging with the notion of fixed ability. Instead, their approach can best be described as the 'ethic of everybody'. Supported, and in some cases constrained by their circumstances, these teachers in their different ways, arrived at an approach to teaching and learning that Susan Hart has described as one of 'transformability' and one that emphasised not only those things that they did because they saw them as lifting the limits to their pupils' learning but the things that they did *not* do because they saw them as creating or perpetuating already existing limits. It is an article that takes forward our thinking about teaching without reliance on the notion of fixed ability in a new and important direction.

Michael Armstrong in his tribute to Brian Simon in this issue of *FORUM*, writes that for Brian there was always a simple test for any new pedagogy: does it serve to promote and support the common intellectual worth of every student? The idea of 'transformability' undoubtedly passes that test.

Annabelle Dixon

Tributes to Brian Simon

Brian Simon, educationist, author and founding editor of *FORUM* died in January 2002, aged 86. In this opening article, tributes are paid by Clyde Chitty, Nanette Whitbread, Colin Richards and Michael Armstrong, who writes also about Michael Young, an exact contemporary of Brian Simon.

Clyde Chitty writes …

Brian Simon was without doubt one of the towering figures in the story of twentieth-century educational advance. Sadly, like a number of other leading reformers and educational innovators – and one thinks here particularly of Caroline Benn, John Eggleston and Michael Young – he has not long survived the century to which he belonged. Coincidentally, it was John Eggleston, in his capacity as co-founder and administrator of Trentham Books, who published the last book that Brian and I worked on together, *Promoting Comprehensive Education in the 21st Century*, containing a selection of the talks that were given at a well-attended and highly successful conference held at the University of London in February 2001. Failing health meant that Brian was not able to attend the conference himself; but he would surely have been heartened by such tangible evidence of a renewed interest in, and commitment to, the cause to which he devoted most of his working life.

I first met Brian in the Autumn of 1965 when I was embarking on what turned out to be a mind-blowing PGCE year at the University of Leicester. I chose to take the option that Brian offered on the theory and practice of comprehensive schooling; and I still have the marvellous handouts he produced on such topics as changing views of the nature of 'intelligence' and the debates surrounding the practicability of mixed-ability teaching at the secondary stage of schooling. As it happened, I was starting my PGCE course at a significant time: two years earlier (in 1963), Robin Pedley had published his influential Pelican Original on *The Comprehensive School* and 1965 was the year that Tony Crosland's DES published its famous Circular 10/65, requesting all local education authorities to prepare plans for secondary reorganisation.

By the Spring of 1966, I was convinced that I wanted to teach in one of the new comprehensive schools; and on the day that Harold Wilson's Labour Party secured its second election victory, and this time with a workable majority of 97 seats (31 March 1966), I obtained my first teaching post – at Malory School, a large, very successful mixed comprehensive serving the Downham Estate in south-east London.

In the following years, I made regular return visits to Leicester to spend weekends with Brian and his wife Joan; and after 1968, I found myself working with Brian and Caroline Benn on the research for *Half Way There*, a major survey of the comprehensive reform, first published in 1970. It was indeed an exciting time to be alive – and to be politically active.

In his short and characteristically understated autobiography, *A Life in Education*, published as recently as 1998, Brian tells us that his first involvement in educational debates happened almost by chance – during his first year as an English student at Trinity College, Cambridge. A fellow student called at his lodgings to take him to a meeting of the Cambridge University Education Society, a lively group consisting mainly of undergraduates from the independent sector interested in the rationale behind new types of school.

As the son of an affluent civic figure in Manchester (later to be made Lord Simon of Wythenshawe for public services), Brian's own school years had been spent at Gresham's School at Holt in Norfolk, followed by two terms at an unusual school run by Kurt Hahn in Salem in Southern Germany. Brian was actually a pupil at the Schule Schloss Salem in March 1933 when Hitler's Brownshirts arrived to take Hahn off to jail for daring to speak out against the new Nazi regime.

During his four years at Cambridge (1933-37), Brian joined the Communist Party, recruited by Trinity contemporaries; and he took the fateful decision to specialise in the field of education. (His own mother, Shena D. Simon, who joined the Labour Party in 1935, remained an active member of the Manchester Education Committee for over forty years.) Having obtained a degree in English and economics, he moved to the London

University Institute of Education to obtain a qualification for teaching in the state sector.

At the Institute, Brian played an active role in the work of the National Union of Students, becoming Vice-President in July 1938 and then President a year later. It was during this exciting period that he amassed the material which was to be published in 1943 as *A Student's View of the Universities*. To understand Brian's early political allegiances, one has to appreciate that the late 1930s was a momentous time in European history when a whole generation of young students was 'politicised' by the events which were to result in the Second World War.

Five years of active war service (1940-45), in GHQ Liaison Regiment ('Phantom') in North Africa, Italy, France and Germany, were followed by five years working as a teacher in various types of school in Salford and Manchester. Then, in 1950, Brian obtained a lecturing post at the then small University College at Leicester, where he remained (becoming a Professor in 1966) until his so-called 'retirement' at the age of 65 in 1980.

The story of Brian's life and work after 1950 is a remarkable one. In 1953, he published *Intelligence Testing and the Comprehensive School* which was the first book to challenge the theory of Cyril Burt and other leading psychometrists that each child is born with a fixed amount of 'innate general cognitive ability' and that this 'inborn, all-round intellectual ability' can be measured by intelligence tests with a remarkable degree of accuracy and ease. Indeed, we learn from Leslie Hearnshaw's 1979 biography of Cyril Burt that it was Brian's pioneering critique that caused the psychologist, then in his seventieth year but by no means retired from the scene, to seek new fraudulent data to back up his extraordinary theories.

In the Autumn of 1958, Brian joined Robin Pedley and Jack Walton to set up the independent campaigning journal in which this personal tribute now appears, and he continued as a co-editor for over thirty years (until 1989). In 1960, he published the first volume of his massive four-volume history of the English education system covering the years from 1780 to 1990. And between 1975 and 1980 he worked with his colleague Maurice Galton to direct the influential ORACLE study of primary schooling.

Brian will be remembered by all who knew him for his unfailing courtesy, the kindness shown to young teachers and researchers and, above all, for his indefatigable energy. He was actually bored and frustrated when he had no writing projects to grab his interest and no deadlines to meet. Towards the end of his life, he derived great pleasure from researching the German side of his father's family, with its roots in the 1848 Revolution.

It is also important to stress that it is quite impossible to force Brian's work into any sort of neat category. We live in an age when many of our professors of education choose to specialise in a narrow range of educational issues. Brian's writing and scholarship ranged over a vast area of different though (in his hands) related subjects. He was, of course, far more than an eminent writer and scholar: he was also an ardent campaigner for all the things he believed in, taking to heart one of Karl Marx's famous theses (actually the last of his 1845 *Theses on Feuerbach*): 'The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in different ways; the point, however, is to *change* it'.

With the unstinting support of Joan Simon, a distinguished historian and researcher in her own right, Brian sought throughout his life to convince others of the centrality of education in the twin processes of human development and social change. In the words of a beautiful oration delivered by Professor Robin Alexander on the occasion of Brian being awarded the degree of Doctor of Letters at the University of Warwick, the thread which linked 'Brian the scholar' and 'Brian the campaigner' was 'his unswerving commitment to the causes of social justice and human perfectibility'.

Nanette Whitbread writes …

I was privileged to work with Brian in the movement for non-streaming comprehensive schools as well as in developing the study and teaching of history of education. In both contexts I greatly valued his kindly mentoring and friendship over nearly forty years.

When I took the PGCE course at London University Institute of Education in 1954, his *Intelligence Testing and the Comprehensive School* (1953) had already influenced me to want to teach in a comprehensive, and I persuaded my tutor to transfer me to one for my main teaching practice. Three years later I secured a post, with responsibility for history and geography and helping with French, in one of the first nonstreamed secondary schools as it opened.

I met Brian in late l963 when I was asked to attend a *FORUM* Editorial Board meeting to discuss the just-published Newsom Report, *Half our Future,* shortly after joining the staff of the City of Leicester Teacher Training College whose Principal, Francis Cammaerts, was on the *FORUM* Board. Three years later I became Assistant Editor of *FORUM* and worked closely on the journal with Brian until he retired as Editor twenty-three years later.

His initial attack on the flawed notions of IQ and innate intelligence, and hence of 11+ selection and streaming, were further developed into the field of educational psychology and understanding how children learn. Seminal to this was the work of a group of Russian psychologists around A.R. Luria, Lev Vygotski and others who were investigating the role of language in learning. After meeting this group in Moscow, Brian and his wife arranged for a collection of articles by the group to be translated and published in the United Kingdom in l957. This and Luria's visit to London and Leicester Universities opened the way for the translation and publication of a range of further research material from Russian psychologists over the next ten years. These had a significant impact on educational psychology here and in the USA, and provided a sound theoretical underpinning of the case for nonstreamed, non-selective education through a system of comprehensive primary and secondary schools.

When I returned to the London Institute of Education in 1960 to study part-time for the Academic Diploma in Education, I witnessed the transformation of outlook in

psychology teaching there. This was exciting stuff, highly relevant to my job in a nonstreamed school, and accorded well with my Comparative Education studies of comprehensive school systems in other countries. It strongly influenced my own approach to teaching children and equipped me for working in teacher education and on *FORUM* a few years later.

Under Brian's enthusiastic leadership, *FORUM* was an influential campaigning and practical pedagogical journal, with articles predominantly by and for teachers, stimulating the spread of good nonstreaming practice in primary and secondary schools. Day conferences, often in conjunction with the Comprehensive Schools Committee, further extended dissemination. Through *FORUM*, his work with PGCE students and local serving teachers at Leicester University School of Education and his many other professional contacts, Brian was at the centre of a nonstreaming network.

Together with his wife, Joan, Brian developed a complementary and parallel focus that liberated the historical study of education from an arid enclave insulated from contemporary trends in mainstream history. The new history of education became not only an established academic discipline but also a means of illuminating current educational issues. This approach grew from his own historical research and writing, led to his responsibility for the historical volumes in the Routledge and Kegan Paul Students' Library of Education (SLE) series launched in 1966 and to his key involvement in the founding the History of Education Society in 1969.

All aspects of his work made significant contributions to initial and in-service teacher education in university departments and colleges of education in the post-Robbins era.

The advent of the BEd inevitably strengthened links between colleges of education and their local validating university. So, charged with developing history of education courses within the new BEd, I naturally turned to Brian for advice and help. With typical generosity, he not only let me use many of his handouts from his School of Education courses, but also agreed to contribute seminars with our fourth year BEd students.

When I complained at the dearth of historiography relevant to students training for early years teaching, Brian typically encouraged me to undertake the research myself. Discussing my findings with him eventually resulted in my writing *The Evolution of the Nursery-Infant School* (1972) for the SLE series.

From these experiences of working with him, I came to understand why so many of his ex-students felt such affection and respect for Brian. Though not obviously extrovert, he nevertheless had a remarkable capacity for inspiring and enthusing those who worked with him.

All that Brian campaigned for was anathema to the reactionary forces unleashed by Margaret Thatcher on the education scene. The extent of opposition to the l988 Education Act and to the l996 White Paper, with Brian in a lead position, was testimony to how far his vision had become consensus wisdom.

But, as he recognised in the last major article he wrote for *FORUM* (Vol. 42, No. 3, 2000) the last five years has seen Labour in government not just missing opportunities as previously but actually undermining the prospect of a fully comprehensive education – leaving him with 'a feeling of disgust'. All who knew and admired him, along with those who have worked in and/or for the comprehensive system and the wider public which has benefited from its success, are surely aghast at the present drift of policy and outraged at Tony Blair's slandering of comprehensive schools. The only real tribute to Brian must be to articulate and galvanise resistance yet again to ensure the rejection of demonstrably unacceptable government education policy.

Michael Armstrong writes …
Brian Simon & Michael Young: heroes & visionaries

Brian Simon and Michael Young died within three days of each other in the middle of January. They were both eighty-six years old but it is hard for me to think of either of them as old men, such was the fire of their enthusiasm and the youthful power of their ideas. They have been my heroes throughout my teaching life, scholars and campaigners with very different personalities and political opinions but alike in their unshakable commitment to equality and their faith in comprehensive education as the necessary means to its achievement.

I first met Brian in 1958 when I arrived in Leicester as a PGCE student. I was already interested in the comprehensive school movement and knew something of Leicester University's connection with it but I identified this with the work of Robin Pedley whose views had been published in what was then the *Manchester Guardian* and whom I had heard lecture. It was not until I read the first number of *FORUM*, published just as the PGCE course was starting, that I realised that Brian, who was to be my methods tutor, was equally involved in the movement. Brian's unique understanding of the rationale for comprehensive education, set out in his book *The Common Secondary School* reinforced by his earlier devastating critique of intelligence testing, *Intelligence Testing and the Comprehensive School*, had a deep influence on me. Against expectation and the prevailing sentiment, which in my inexperience I shared, he insisted that comprehensive education was not a matter of social engineering or equal opportunity; it simply meant acknowledging the common intellectual capability of every child. It was a lesson that I have never forgotten.

Inevitably, this single-minded emphasis on intellectual equality led Brian to question the practice of streaming and setting, both within the new comprehensive schools and within the primary schools, where streaming had become a standard response to the pressures imposed by the eleven plus examination. Streaming, he saw, is little more than another way of selecting children and suffers from the same fatal weakness. The case against streaming soon became a major topic in *FORUM* and it was there that many of us learnt for the first time how we might successfully teach unstreamed classes. At this time, the early 1960s, the problem of selection, whether between schools or within schools, was also becoming an issue for

Michael Young and his colleagues at the Institute of Community Studies in Bethnal Green. Brian Jackson and Dennis Marsden's brilliant study *Education and the Working Class* was published in l962, to be followed by Brian Jackson's *Streaming: an education system in miniature* in 1964. Michael was keen to encourage the spread of comprehensive education and judged that the time was ripe for a new initiative. This is how I came to meet Michael, early in 1963. At the beginning of l964 I left my job at Wandsworth School to join the Institute and in the summer, shortly before the election of a Labour Government, Michael and I published a Fabian Society pamphlet *New Look at Comprehensive Schools*, advocating the Leicestershire Plan for a two tier system of high schools and upper schools as the easiest way of changing over from a selective to a comprehensive system. Two years later we followed it up with a second pamphlet, this time published by the Advisory Centre for Education, called *The Flexible School*, arguing again the case against streaming and proposing a variety of alternatives, many of which were to be developed further in the Nuffield Foundation's Resources for Learning Project which Michael helped to set up in l966.

Michael was as unlike Brian as could be. He was expansive where Brian was reticent, various where Brian was single-minded. Michael was full of initiatives, often brilliant and occasionally futile. It was hard to pin him down but impossible not to be carried away by his imagination and his enterprise. Brian, on the other hand, was measured, sometimes cautious, excited by new ideas but determined to ground them in history and theory. Brian took the long view, Michael looked for the immediate opportunity, or so it seemed to me during those exciting years. What brought them together was a profound conviction that all of us, as children or as adults, share a common power of intellect and imagination. Brian wrote of the 'common' school, Michael set up an institute of 'community' studies. It was this overwhelming belief in what people hold in common that inspired them both and thrilled those who had the good fortune to work with them.

In 1970 I returned to Leicester from London. Since then I have seen little of Michael Young although his writing has continued to excite me, not least his recent rejection, in an article published in the *Guardian* last year, of Tony Blair's tragically misguided commitment to the ideal of a meritocracy, the very term that Michael himself had coined not as an idea but as a dread warning. Brian however remained a close friend and colleague. Over the years, in a series of books and essays and in the pages of *FORUM*, his cherished journal, the case against selection in all its forms was pursued with equal conviction and care, even as the political climate turned sceptical. *FORUM* board meetings were never so lively as when Brian encouraged an argument over the latest educational thinking or decided that the time had come to sponsor a new conference or seminar. The arguments could be sharp, particularly when they were about matters of curriculum or teaching method. Brian was always cautious about pedagogy, especially in its progressive form, and yet he was a superbly thoughtful and supportive governor at the ultra-progressive Countesthorpe College in the early 1970s, defending the school against its critics with enormous skill. Perhaps it was not so surprising after all. Unyielding in his commitment to comprehensive education Brian was nevertheless a most open-minded thinker, generous of his own ideas and equally generous to the ideas of others. The test was always the same: did the new pedagogy, whatever it might be, serve to promote and support the common intellectual worth of every student? We might have disagreed about all manner of things but on this one great criterion we were always united.

A friend asked my wife a few days ago whether I was not devastated by the loss of these two great egalitarians. But it is not so. To look back over their long lives and outstanding services to the cause of eduational equality is at once a pleasure and a challenge. Along with Caroline Benn they are the first great heroes of the movement for comprehensive education, visionaries in a struggle which is far from over. To learn from their experience is to renew ambition. The message is simple, it's time to move on, there's work to be done.

Colin Richards writes …
Brian Simon – a primary appreciation

Does Education Matter? was the title of one of Brian Simon's many books. It certainly mattered to servicemen returning from Second World War to take part in the Emergency Training Scheme – at least as represented by the group I have been interviewing as part of my current research. They wanted to create 'a better world', to help foster a more caring, less unequal society, to give children greater opportunities, to 'make up' for the madness of war and the oppression and hardship of the pre-war period. They made their contribution – as primary class teachers and in most cases as headteachers, many taking a lead locally in opposing selection at age eleven, in introducing unstreamed classes and in humanising both the content and the process of education.

As an ex-serviceman himself, class teacher, university academic, political activist and humanist, Brian Simon shared, articulated and refined those aspirations and contributed massively through his writing, lecturing and campaigning to an educational advance that helped create a genuine primary education from the ashes of the elementary system.

He brought those of us working in primary education a sense of historical perspective to the tortuous enterprise of creating a fairer, more fulfilling education system for young children. His historical research charted the advances, the reverses and vicissitudes facing teachers and other working people in their struggle for an education system that would open up, not limit, potential, and provide far more than an 'elementary' schooling. That research provided us with a sense of what had been achieved, what could be achieved and what forces and circumstances might impede further advance.

His well-considered attacks on mental testing and the notion of fixed innate intelligence caused many of us to reconsider our basic assumptions about children and their potential – doing much to 'liberate' both ourselves and

children in the process. His vigorous campaigning in favour of an end to selection at eleven helped remove a formidable burden limiting the expectations, curriculum, teaching methods and organisation of post-war junior schools or departments. His advocacy of non-streaming in the l960s played a major part in producing a remarkable swift and widespread change away from streaming, a system of internal school organisation entrenched since the 1920s and '30s.

His classroom research helped us confront the gap between rhetoric and reality; the ORACLE research he pioneered revealed the complexities, dilemmas and the inevitable compromises of classroom life which gave the lie both to claims of 'a primary school revolution' along 'child-centred' lines to claims of the neglect of the so-called 'basics'. He and his fellow workers helped create a better informed, more sophisticated debate about ideology, policy and practice in primary education.

Those ex-servicemen I have interviewed had been optimistic (though buffeted by circumstance and very often critical of New Labour!) when I interviewed them over fifty years later. Throughout Brian's writing there was a rich and emboldening vein of optimism – that things can change for the better, that teachers can make a difference, that education can create a fairer, more fulfilling society, that human beings and institutions are infinitely perfectible. Brian exuded that optimism and helped create or sustain it in others including myself as former primary teacher and colleague. His life and work demonstrated that education *did* and *does* matter. As he himself concluded at the very end of his *Studies in the History of Education*, the struggle to ensure access for all to a full, all-round education conceived 'in a generous spirit involving recognition of the full mystery of human potential … will continue – for such must surely remain the perspective for the future'.

Extracts from letters

We are very grateful to Joan Simon, Brian Simon's wife, for permission to publish the following extracts from letters she received after Brian's death. They illustrate the depth of regard in which he was held by so many people.

'There is nothing to equal his work for insight into historical processes combined with deep humanity. The study of education today has no-one who can match him. We shall all miss the wonderful conversation, the razor-sharp mind and the incredible depth of his knowledge.'

'…as you know, I admired him tremendously – he was one of the most principled, gentle and courteous people I have ever met.'

'He was much loved as a man of gentleness but passion, of support and interest in others, of integrity and concern for justice. I remember well his wry note in response to a suggestion of "a conspiracy underlying the Conservative government's educational initiatives…" – "Historians tend to avoid conspiracy theories – but I think you may be right".'

'He was a giant and will surely have a special place in the hearts and minds of all who knew him.'

'I thought of him not only as a great historian and thinker who influenced so much of my life as a scholar but also as a kind and sympathetic man whose friendship I valued highly.'

'It is very rare for such integrity and honesty to be allied to such determination, zeal and hard work. Allied to this he had a compassion and a generosity in his judgements which was always encouraging to younger scholars.'

'I especially remember the many genial working meetings and the social gatherings – I remember how impressive he was as a teacher – a man of kindly dignity, strong convictions and complete integrity … I count myself very fortunate to have known him.'

'I have vivid memories of my occasional visits … when I experienced his courtesy, friendship and conversation. Politically and as an historian of education, he was an inspiration to me.'

'For many people he was wholly exceptional and a truly great man. He was the meeting of everything that people could aspire to as a scholar, a gentleman and as a social visionary … he lit up a room when he was in it. There aren't many people whose dying reminds you of how you should live your life.'

'Brian's contribution to the advance of working class education was outstanding and the changes of the present decades owe much to his work. Equally he was a leading figure in the establishment of education as a legitimate field of scholarship.'

'He continued to work for so long simply because … fired by belief, he could see the purpose, the need.'

Developing Teaching Free from Ability Labelling: back where we started?

ANNABELLE DIXON, MARY JANE DRUMMOND, SUSAN HART & DONALD McINTYRE
on behalf of the 'Learning Without Limits' team. SUSAN HART, a lecturer at the University of Cambridge, Faculty of Education, was the initiator of the research project that she describes below. Here she offers an alternative pedagogy, based on the research, that is an exciting and radical new approach to teaching free from ability labelling.

If you like to think of history as progress, it's worth taking a look at some of the back copies of *FORUM* from the 1960s and 1970s (great value at three shillings and sixpence each). For contributors to the journal at this time, the idea of fixed ability as a way of understanding differences in achievement was indubitably a thing of the past. The battle was won. Claims for IQ testing as a measurable and reliable predictor of academic potential had been thoroughly discredited. The negative consequences of systems built upon these assumptions had been widely recognised. In its place, these educators were espousing a much more optimistic view of human educability. They were actively working to build a comprehensive system of education which would not place barriers in the way of children's development; within new structures, they were exploring fresh pedagogical approaches, determined to exploit to the full their newly acquired freedom from the iniquities and inequities of selection.

Yet forty years on, ideas of fixed ability are still alive and well in our schools. Children are still divided into groups of the 'more able', 'average' and 'less able' and work provided accordingly. OFSTED inspectors check that teaching is differentiated for each of these groups ('blobs', as one teacher called them recently), on the assumption that otherwise the 'more able' are held back by 'slower learners'. In spite of considerable research evidence to the contrary, Government policy specifically recommends 'ability-grouping' as the basis for effective teaching and for raising standards for all. And from the earliest stages of formal education, teachers are required to make explicit predictions about future development several years ahead on the basis of existing attainment. Such predictions only make sense, and can only be justified, if they are underpinned by the assumption that current differences reflect stable and relatively unalterable differences in potential.

So what has happened to erase from collective memory all that was once known about the damage that ability labelling and ability grouping does to teachers' and children's hopes and expectations? Have we really forgotten about the painful sense of rejection, and loss of self-esteem and motivation that comes from being written off as 'less able'? Are we no longer concerned about the inequalities inherent in judgements of 'ability', about the dramatic wastage of talent that comes from viewing large numbers of children as incapable of serious achievement? Do we no longer recognise the link between ability labelling and the oppositional behaviour expressed by some groups of pupils who reject the schooling that they believe has rejected them? All these – and many more – effects of ability labelling and grouping have been repeatedly identified by research spanning several decades, including recent research in the 1990s. How, then, can we have allowed fixed ability thinking, and the organisational and grouping practices that come in its train, to regain such a spurious credibility and become once again established in the majority of schools?

The explanation is to be found, at least in part, in the imposition of a reform agenda by successive governments which has been premised on the conviction that the comprehensive project in its most radical form was and is fundamentally misguided. While there clearly was a period in the 1960s and 1970s when beliefs in fixed ability were seriously challenged (and some educators deliberately shifted to the language of *attainment* rather than ability), this reform agenda has put in place a set of initiatives built around unquestioned assumptions of relatively stable differences of 'ability'; they explicitly require teachers (whatever their personal beliefs and values) to make advance judgements about pupils' potential *as if* such predictions were both possible and legitimate. Yet, as Gillborn & Youdell (2000) point out in their recent challenging text *Rationing Education*, these views of ability, 'as a fixed, generalized and measurable potential, are completely incompatible with critical notions of equal opportunities and at odds even with leading contemporary research in psychometrics' (p. 65).

As the 'bog-standard' comprehensive comes under renewed attack and 'diversity' becomes the buzz word for educational provision in the new millennium, there is an urgent need to challenge this dismissal of the ideas that inspired the comprehensive project. If the limitations imposed by ability-labelling are not to be perpetuated in the name of raising standards, there is a summary need to refresh our collective memory about the possibilities originally raised by the rejection of theories of IQ and fixed ability for *liberating learning on a scale previously unimaginable*. In some senses, it is true that we are 'back where we started', as Brian Simon (founder editor of *FORUM* and leading critic of theories of IQ and intelligence testing) intimated might happen if we did not

successfully combat the re-emergence of selection (Simon, 1996). But at least we are now in a stronger position to move forward. We can use the lessons of experience to rethink the comprehensive project in the context of today, to campaign for the reinstatement of its key ideas at the heart of national education policy and to identify ways forward that will enable us to explore and exploit its as yet unrealised potential.

Limitations of the Focus on Mixed Ability Grouping and Teaching

What emerges from an examination of the history of the development of comprehensive education, as it unfolds in the pages of this journal, is that the backlash came before the important pedagogical task of developing the necessary new teaching appoaches had made significant headway, at least in the sense of being articulated theoretically and made widely available for discussion and debate. With hindsight, it seems that the project stalled over debates about the pros and cons of mixed-ability grouping which were rehearsed again and again but never finally resolved. Given the duration and intensity of these debates, it was easy to lose sight of the fact that the espousal of mixed-ability grouping and associated modes of teaching did not in itself reflect a radical break with ideas of fixed ability. It is possible to defend 'mixed ability' approaches as more just and educationally sound than ability-based grouping and teaching, while still holding fast to ideas of fixed ability. The comprehensive project became equated (by supporters, in some cases, as well as by critics) with the struggle to promote and defend mixed-ability grouping and teaching, with the consequence that the more radical possibilities for the reconstruction of education arising from the critique of theories of IQ and fixed ability slipped off the agenda.

If we are to re-ignite the spirit of comprehensive reform, as Clyde Chitty urges in the most recent issue of this journal, then re-opening debates about mixed ability versus ability grouping is arguably not the best place to focus our energies. Chitty argues persuasively that 'one of the great tragedies of the last hundred years has been our failure as a nation to take on the essential concept of human educability and thereby challenge the idea that children are born with a given quota of 'intelligence' which remains constant both during childhood and in adult life' (Chitty, 2001). If Chitty is right, what is needed is to put debates about fixed ability *thinking* back on the agenda, and to give urgent priority to the critical *pedagogical* task of further developing, and articulating theoretically, approaches to teaching underpinned by a more optimistic view of human educability. It was with a view to making a contribution to this task that the *Learning Without Limits* project was set up in 1999 at the University of Cambridge, Faculty of Education. The project was funded by the Wallenberg Centre for the Improvement of Education, as part of a broader programme of research under the umbrella title *Beyond Conventional Classrooms.* We hoped to contribute to that programme by generating one or more models of teaching free from reliance on conventional notions of ability. In this article, we describe the nature of the research that we have carried out, and the ideas for an alternative model of teaching that have emerged.

The Learning Without Limits Project

The project's name was inspired by a powerful passage in Stephen J. Gould's *The Mismeasure of Man*, which we felt captured the essential concerns that prompted the research. Gould says:

> *We pass through this world but once. Few tragedies can be more extensive than the stunting of life, few injustices deeper than the denial of an opportunity to strive or even to hope by a limit imposed from without but falsely identified as lying within. (Gould, 1981, p. 29)*

The project began by advertising nationwide for teachers to contact us who had themselves rejected the idea of fixed ability, and who had been developing their classroom practice accordingly. The response to our advertisement reinforced our conviction that there were many educators 'out there' who shared our concerns. People with similar interests contacted us from all over the country. Fifty teachers sent for information about the project, and twenty-two sent in applications, in which they were asked to write in detail about why they wanted to be part of the project. We were deeply moved by some of the personal experiences described in those application forms, including one from a teacher who at the age of 16 had been devastated to be told by her headteacher that it would be 'a waste of everybody's time' for her to stay on in the sixth form. Another wrote, 'Even if I am not selected, I am genuinely delighted to know that such a project exists'. We held seventeen interviews, and a team of nine teachers (four primary and five secondary) covering a range of very different teaching contexts was eventually established.

Over the following year, members of the University team spent many hours in these teachers' classrooms, observing and interviewing both teachers and pupils. We also met together in Cambridge to share our thinking and develop the research collectively. In constant collaboration with the teachers, we gradually built up individual accounts of the key constructs at the heart of each teacher's thinking, and an understanding of how these constructs worked together to create their distinctive pedagogy. We then summarised the key ideas in each account and collectively looked across all the accounts for common themes and differences, in order to try to identify the key concepts and practices that are distinctive of teaching free from determinist assumptions.

Ability v Transformability

From this collective analysis, we have generated the idea of 'transformability' as the possible basis for an alternative pedagogy which consciously rejects ability labelling. The difference between 'ability' and 'transformability' lies in the particular view of pupils' futures which guides teachers' action in the present. With ability-based teaching, young people's academic futures are already, in some senses, laid down; their upper limits are determined by intellectual capacity, or lack of it, that lies within. There is nothing that teachers or learners can do to change these upper limits, only strive to ensure that each pupil reaches his or her given potential. This is done by making the predicted future implied by the labels 'more able' 'average' and 'less able' the central point of reference against which essential teaching decisions are made.

Teachers form groups, design tasks, sequence and pace teaching and evaluate progress on the basis of what is considered 'appropriate' for these different groups of learners if they are to achieve their presumed potential.

With transformability-based teaching, the future is inherently unknowable. Pupils' academic futures are *in the making* in the present; they are being created in and by the present. From the point of view of pedagogy, this alternative vision of the future in the present changes *everything.* It gives teachers a very different sense of the importance of the present, and of their own power, and their pupils' power, to affect the future by what they do in the present. Teaching cannot be guided by predictive labels because, if the future is being created in the present, then to make pedagogical decisions in the present on the basis of such categorisations is indeed to *create* those futures-as-predicted. There is nothing fixed or unalterable about existing patterns of achievement and response. Indeed, the pedagogical task *is* to stimulate – and make possible – growth, development and change, to create classroom conditions that will release learning from the limits that create and are reflected in existing patterns. Through the choices they make – how they think as well as what they do – teachers work to *transform* current patterns – and future possibilities – by opening up opportunities that might otherwise have remained closed, and by taking concerted action in the present to prevent and remove external limits on learning that might otherwise have constrained pupils' achievement. Essential pedagogical choices – such as how to organise classrooms, group pupils, design tasks, build relationships and evaluate their own and their pupils' success – are not just choices *to* act in certain ways, in line with their beliefs and understandings, they are also choices *not to* act in ways that they believe will create or perpetuate existing limits on learning (see Table I, pages 10/11).

There is a sense of history embedded in these choices – teachers' sense of their own place and part in history – that is a distinctive characteristic of transformability-based teaching. These teachers know where they are coming *from*, what kinds of constructions of learners and practices need to be left behind; they also know what they are working *towards*. As a reference point for classroom decision making, this sense of the future being made in the present translates, at classroom level, into what we have come to call 'an ethic of everybody': *everyone* must have the best possible chance to develop their existing competences and enjoy the satisfactions and successes of learning that previously were thought only to be available to the academically gifted few; *no-one* must have their future possibilities constrained by limits operating in the present (notice how often, in the right-hand column of Table I, the words everyone, everybody and no-one appear). With ability-based teaching, an ethic of 'differential treatment' applies: differences justify and, in some cases require, different treatment. Transformability emphasises *universal entitlement* rather than differences: *everybody* counts, *everybody's* learning is equally important, *everybody* contributes to the learning environment. And so it follows that teachers work constantly to create – and if necessary invent – approaches that allow everybody, without exception, to engage in the activities provided, to contribute to the learning that takes place, to have the experience of being excited by learning, to gain something worthwhile, and to feel a sense of safety and belonging. These are aspirational goals that, by definition, are not yet achieved. Indeed, many of the constraints which prevent their achievement are arguably not directly susceptible to individual teachers' influence. But the essence of transformability-based teaching is that it:

(i) knows that they are not yet achieved
(ii) believes that progress can be made towards achieving them in the current context, and
(iii) believes that there are things that teachers can do to bring them closer to realisation.

As well as a basis for decision-making, the 'ethic of everybody' provides an uncompromising framework for the continuing evaluation and development of classroom practice.

Does 'Ability' Always Mean 'Fixed Ability'?

We hope that this contrast between models of teaching based on ability and transformability will also prove useful to the many teachers who do use ability labelling but, sharing our concerns, do not use it in a fixed, deterministic way. At a research seminar, early in the project, where we had shared the aims, intentions and methods of the project with an audience of teachers, researchers and lecturers, a colleague approached us afterwards, convinced that we were misinterpreting what many teachers mean by ability labels. He argued that when teachers talk about 'more able' and 'less able' children, they're not necessarily talking about *fixed* ability. 'It's just a convenient shorthand', he said, 'for talking about differences in children's current abilities, for instance in reading and maths. When "ability" is used in this way, it needn't have all the negative repercussions that have been traditionally associated with it.'

His intervention was a timely reminder, in our quest for an alternative model, of the need to formulate our arguments and show that our starting points apply equally to this apparently less determinist usage. For this view of ability could be even more pernicious in its effects than fixed ability labelling if it is not subject to the same caution and critical scrutiny as the idea of fixed ability has intermittently been, because it is assumed to be benign. Whenever the language of 'ability' is used, there will always be ambiguity about what is meant, and potential for misinterpretation – by other adults and by children – as long as ideas of fixed ability persist and predominate in our culture. And if these different (actual) abilities are used to divide children into permanent groups and sets, or to justify systematic selection and provision of different tasks and learning opportunities, the practical *consequences* of ability labelling will be broadly the same whichever interpretation of ability teachers have in mind. Indeed, as the research by Gillborn and Youdell referred to above indicates, the new era of PANDA (Performance And Assessment) comparisons, target setting and league tables creates a climate in which there is pressure to treat ability as if it *were* fixed, in order to justify the targeting of scarce resources to the groups most likely to boost SAT and GCSE results. Our notion of 'transformability' affords a new theoretical perspective which we hope teachers will find useful in reviewing their own use of 'ability' labels and the consequences for children's learning.

TABLE I: Decision-making for transformability

Choices NOT TO: HOW LIMITS ON LEARNING COME INTO BEING	**Choices TO: CREATING LEARNING WITHOUT LIMITS**
1 Teachers' beliefs/expectations	
● I don't think of children in terms of ability labels. I think that ability labels are damaging to teachers' thinking because they write off some children's potential. They reduce teachers' expectations and make it seem that failure or limited achievement is inevitable for those labelled 'low ability'. They create the impression that there is no point in trying to help 'less able' children to become more successful learners. The children then pick up these messages and begin to lose faith in their own capabilities.	● I work on the basis that everyone can be helped to become a better learner. I give priority in my teaching to activities concerned with strengthening and developing all children's intellectual powers. If anyone is having difficulties, or doesn't seem to be making progress, I don't put this down to lack of ability. I assume that something is blocking their learning and try to work out what it might be. I look for ways of adjusting or changing what I am doing or the opportunities that I am providing, to see if the pupil and I can find better ways into learning.
2. Children's beliefs/expectations of themselves	
● I try not to do anything that might damage children's sense of self-worth, their belief in their own capabilities or their expectations of their own learning. I think that ability labelling limits learning by undermining children's confidence, and their willingness to engage in classroom activities and to persist when they encounter difficulties.	● I believe that children's contribution to their own learning is crucially important, so it is vital to do everything possible to build self belief and confidence in their own capabilities, and to repair and rebuild this where it has already been damaged. I do this by planning tasks and activities that are accessible to everyone, and ensuring that they offer everyone the possibility of success and satisfaction.
3. Classroom ethos	
● I think that ability labelling creates a divisive ethos that is damaging to everybody's learning. It gives high status to some and low status to others. It drives a wedge between learners, making them think that 'less able' pupils have nothing to contribute to the learning of 'bright' pupils.	● I try to create an inclusive classroom ethos in which everybody has equal status. I demonstrate this equal status through the way I set tasks, and structure groups, through fostering collaboration, through the way I respond to and use pupils' contributions, through recognising achievement in a variety of ways and making success routinely available to all, not just to a few.
4. Acknowledgement of diversity	
● I don't think it's right to say "I treat all children the same, *regardless* of gender, class and ethnicity". I think that limits on learning can be created unless schools recognise diversity and do all they can to reach out to pupils of different social, cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds, and their parents.	● I make a point of choosing content and trying to teach in ways that recognise, connect with, and actively build upon every learner's diverse experience, knowledge and background, to create a learning community where no-one feels marginal and everyone has a rightful place.
5. Concepts of teaching and learning	
● I don't think of teaching in terms of curriculum "delivery". Learning is limited by an approach that sees teaching as the delivery of parcels of pre-packaged content to passive learners.	● I prefer to approach teaching and learning as a partnership, a process of exchange. What the pupils bring and contribute is as essential as what I bring and contribute to the learning that takes place. I try to create an environment in which everyone genuinely has, and is conscious of having some control over their learning.
● I think learning is also limited by being seen purely in individual terms, as something that goes on just in the minds of individual learners, so that there is no need for talk and interaction between learners.	● I see learning as a social and collective endeavour, in which everyone has a part to play. I make lots of opportunities for students to use talk as a means of learning, to work collaboratively and contribute to one another's learning.

Choices NOT TO: HOW LIMITS ON LEARNING COME INTO BEING	Choices TO: CREATING LEARNING WITHOUT LIMITS
● Learning is limited too where the affective/emotional dimensions of learning are overlooked, or considered unimportant; pupils won't engage fully, contribute their ideas or take risks in their learning if they are afraid of the teacher or of how their peers will respond.	● Pupils will clam up, give up or find other ways of disguising difficulties if they are afraid to admit that they do not understand or feel personally threatened.
● I pay as much attention to the emotional dimensions of learning as to the intellectual. In planning, I consider how to harness and heighten pupils' emotional investment in classroom activities. I want everyone to feel excited and lit up by learning. I also take active steps to ensure no-one feels embarrassed or shown up; I work to create conditions where people feel safe and expect to be successful, where they do not feel personally threatened and so switch off or panic.	● I recognise that it can be difficult to admit you don't understand or ask directly for help. I try to make myself accessible by circulating round the classrom, and try to respond gently to requests for help, even the second or third time. I try to create a sense that we're all working together, that we're all on the same side.
6. Classroom language	
● Almost everything that happens in classrooms is mediated through language, and there is enormous potential for communication between teachers and learners to break down and for learning to be limited when patterns of classroom communication are simply taken for granted.	● I try to organise patterns of communication in the classroom so that learning is developed through dialogue, creating a bridge between the learners' language and the curriculum. I try to empower learners by helping them to develop a language for thinking and talking about learning.
7. Task design	
● I don't set up activities that will exclude any members of the group. I also avoid tasks that are differentiated by levels of attainment or presumed ability because they cumulatively limit the opportunities for learning to which some children are exposed. They may also undermine children's confidence, motivation and self-esteem by conveying negative messages to them about their capabilities. I don't want to make judgements in advance about what individuals can achieve, and so put limits on their learning myself.	● Wherever possible I prepare tasks and activities that recognise and cater for differences but are accessible to all and offer an open invitation to everyone. This allows learners to respond and extend the activity in their own way. I ensure that there is always something worthwhile to learn that is achievable by everyone, and that there is sufficient variety and choice to cater for different learning preferences and strengths. Sometimes I offer a choice of harder and easier activities and encourage people to choose, and mostly they don't go for tasks that would be too easy because they want to feel satisfied with their learning.
8. Grouping	
● I avoid grouping strategies that systematically limit the learning opportunities available to some learners and can lead to polarisation, disillusion and disaffection through the creation of divisive and excluded groups.	● I use flexible grouping strategies that do not close down learning opportunities, and that give positive messages to all learners about their capabilities and their contribution to collective learning.
9. Assessment	
● I don't limit my pupils by expecting them always or mostly to show their learning in writing. I think this disadvantages children who find writing difficult or who express themselves more effectively in other ways. I don't use marks or grades when giving feedback on work except when I am explicitly required to for progress reports and examinations.	● I create a wide range of opportunities for learning and demonstrating learning that are not solely dependent upon children's facility in expressing their ideas in writing. I try to give individualised feedback on learning in ways that help pupils to understand what they can do to improve their work and increase their control over their learning.
10. Peer culture	
● I know that peer relationships and youth cultures can work against classroom learning if these dimensions of pupils' identities and social worlds are ignored or suppressed.	● I try to teach in a way that acknowledges learners' social worlds, relationships and cultures and is responsive to them. I try to adapt my teaching in order to harness them positively into the school curriculum

Towards an Alternative Reform Agenda

If our analysis is sound, and the concept of 'transformability' does capture something pivotal to pedagogies free from ability labelling, teachers who have consciously rejected the idea of fixed ability should recognise and be able to connect with our account of it, even though they have probably not articulated their thinking and practice quite in this way before. At the very least, it provides a fresh idea, a fresh way of reading classroom teaching, illustrated by a set of nine rich descriptive accounts of highly individual and distinctive practices, which can be used as a stimulus to renewed discussion and debate around the ideas of fixed ability. More ambitiously, we believe that the idea of transformability-based teaching could also play a central and critical part in the construction of an alternative improvement agenda, built around a critique of theories of intelligence testing and ability labelling.

Although it could seem naive to think that there might be a chance of halting the juggernaut of reform as currently conceived, there are points where the values of our project clearly overlap with those underpinning the current reform agenda. There is a common concern that the talents and capabilities of many young people remain untapped throughout their formal education. There is a common wish to challenge assumptions that not much can be expected of young people from disadvantaged social backgrounds, and (according to a report in the *Times Educational Supplement* of 4 January 2002) a common commitment to concerted action to reduce class-based discrepancies of achievement. The current programme of reforms rightly recognises the power that schools and teachers have to influence young people's development. It is just possible, then, as results reach a plateau and evidence accumulates of undesirable and anti-educative effects of many of the externally imposed reforms, that there might come an opportunity to present an alternative improvement agenda which offers a different, more readily sustainable and self-regenerating approach, rooted in teachers' own values, commitments and aspirations.

When that moment comes, we need to be ready with convincing evidence to support this alternative agenda. We will need to have completed the vital theoretical and practical task that was begun, but never satisfactorily carried through, in the 1970s and early '80s. We now know that our failure at the time to articulate viable and effective models of teaching capable of liberating learning from the constraints of ability labelling cost us dear. We should lose no time in seizing the initiative now.

With the *Learning Without Limits* project, we have taken a first step. We have identified the principle of 'transformability' and around this elaborated a multi-faceted model which attempts to articulate how the practical strategies of teachers who have rejected ability labelling work together to create a distinctive pedagogy. As we have shown, practice based on transformability is necessarily in a state of constant development; working for change is written into its nature. Improvement does not have to be imposed on teachers, and superimposed upon existing teaching, by managers or inspectors because the driving force comes from teachers' passions and sense of social justice; teachers' desire and ability to make a difference *are* what makes teaching worthwhile.

However, we recognise that what we have done in our project *is* just a first step. Further close collaboration between teachers and researchers will be needed to carry the work forward. The idea and practices of transformability need to be further elaborated through engaging with the understandings and experience of a wider group of educators. We also need to share and develop further understanding of the dynamics affecting young people's choices to engage with or disengage from school learning. A further area for research and development work is to share and build an explicit, collective understanding of the social determinants of learning. If, as we have argued, a central part of the teacher's task is to understand and act upon the social processes through which limits on learning come into being, this understanding and action will need to look beyond influences at work in individual classrooms, and indeed beyond the walls of schools.

These are some of the next steps needed to take the work of the project forward. We hope that we have done enough, so far, to persuade policy makers and practitioners that there *is* a more promising, just and constructive alternative improvement strategy that we could pursue and that it is one worth fighting for.

Acknowledgement

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The 2001 White Paper and the New Education Bill

CLYDE CHITTY

This article follows up the Editorial in the last number of *FORUM* on the February 2001 Green Paper.

Introduction

My Editorial in the Autumn 2001 issue of this journal (Vol. 43, No. 3, 2001) badly needs updating. It was written in August 2001 and dealt almost exclusively with the Labour Government's Education Green Paper *Schools: building on success: raising standards, promoting diversity, achieving results*, launched at the beginning of the year. Since then, we have had a new White Paper *Schools Achieving Success*, published on the 5 September and a new Education Bill, published on the 23 November. There are a number of major themes and policy alignments running through the White Paper and the Bill which show a marked similarity with what has gone before; but it would be wrong to treat the Green Paper as the definitive statement of the Government's legislative intentions.

The Green Paper

Looking back briefly to the Green Paper, it is interesting to note that its main sub-title clearly implies that, in the Government's view, 'raising standards', 'promoting diversity' and 'achieving results' are all synonymous aspirations; and that, in this respect, there is a direct link with the thinking behind the Conservative White Papers of the 1990s, notably John Patten's *Choice and Diversity*, published in July 1992. The Labour Government's modernising agenda assumes that choice, diversity and the promotion of specialist schools will lead to greater public confidence in the state system, particularly at the secondary level. Add to that a creeping obsession with the 'virtues' of privatisation, and you have a strong case for arguing that nothing much changed where education is concerned when New Labour gained its landslide general election victory in May 1997. If anything, the reintroduction of selection and the corporate takeover of education are being fostered to a degree barely considered attainable by either John Patten or his successor Gillian Shephard.

The Green Paper argues that primary education has already been 'transformed' with the introduction of such successful initiatives as the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. It is now time to concentrate on the secondary sector; and a number of key themes are discernible in the document:

- a rejection of the outdated principles underpinning the era of the 'one size fits all' comprehensive;
- a concern to see the promotion of diversity within the secondary sector allied to the extension of autonomy for 'successful' schools; and
- a desire for private and voluntary sector sponsors to play a greater role in the organisation of secondary education.

The Green Paper provides details of a bewildering array of new types of school: Specialist Schools, *Advanced* Specialist Schools, Beacon Schools, 'Faith-based' Schools, City Academies and other schools established by sponsors from the private and voluntary sectors. There is little mention of the Education Action Zones Initiative which was one of the big ideas of David Blunkett's *Excellence in Schools* White Paper published back in July 1997. A report in *The Times Educational Supplement* in January 2001 that the EAZ experiment was to be dropped brought furious denials from a number of zone directors. But it was clear that the Government was indeed disappointed that, outside a few 'high profile' examples such as Newham, private-sector money had largely failed to materialise and that zones were failing to use their controversial powers to disapply the National Curriculum and change teachers' pay and conditions. Accordingly, Schools Minister Stephen Timms told a conference of zone directors in November 2001 that none of the contracts for the country's 73 zones would be renewed when they expired at the end of their five-year period, and that the more successful initiatives were to be subsumed within the Government's 'Excellence in Cities' Programme.

The White Paper and the Bill

The September White Paper pursues the idea of extending choice and diversity with a single-minded devotion. Indeed, the word 'diversity' appears *seven* times in the space of a short three-page introduction. We are told that we need to move away from 'the outdated argument about diversity versus uniformity'; that 'ours is a vision of a school system which values opportunity for all and embraces diversity and autonomy as the means to achieve it'; that 'devolution and diversity are the essential hallmarks of the White Paper'; and so on.

There are new target dates for the implementation of key elements of the Government's programme. There will be at least 1,000 specialist schools in operation by September 2003 and at least 1,500 by 2005, this latter date being a year earlier than at first envisaged. The number of Beacon Schools in existence in September 2001 – roughly 1000 – already includes 250 secondary schools; and the number of secondary Beacons will be expanded to 400 by 2005.

There are also clear 'floor targets' for student performance – the term used to describe *minimum* performance levels to be achieved by all secondary schools, irrespective of the nature of their catchment areas. By 2003, all schools should have at least 15% of their students achieving five or more A* to C grade GCSEs; by 2004, at least 20%; and by 2006, at least 25%.

It is fair to point out that much of the initial reaction to the White Paper has been pretty hostile, and I will deal

with some of this reaction before concentrating on one or two of the more controversial elements of the Government's legislative programme.

Focussing on the issues of selection and specialisation, the promotion of 'faith-based' schools and the growth of privatisation, the bodies critical of the Government's education policy could hardly be dismissed as insignificant. The National Association of Governors and Managers attacked the proposals for more faith and specialist schools, arguing that such developments would only 'worsen cultural, religious and economic divisions in society'. The Head of Education at the Local Government Association said there was a real danger of creating an 'apartheid system', where children of different faiths were educated separately. He went on to report: 'The message we are picking up from 150 local authorities in England is one of deep concern about expanding faith schools in this way'. The National Union of Teachers pointed out that the White Paper's obsession with 'autonomy' and 'diversity' for secondary schools was remarkably similar to the old Tory concept of 'diversity and choice' – a policy discredited by the Audit Commission as long ago as 1996. Concentrating on a slightly different issue, the National Association of Head Teachers claimed that the proposal to give so-called successful schools more freedom to offer recruitment and retention incentives risked 'worsening the teacher shortage'. It said the policy would 'disadvantage less successful schools, many of which were already struggling with difficult students and recruitment problems'.

Somewhat surprisingly, it was a local authority that had been leading the way on privatisation which was most vociferous in its attack on Labour plans for greater business involvement in the running of schools. A paper prepared by Surrey County Council argued that the involvement of '3Es' in 'turning around' the previously 'failing and under-subscribed' comprehensive Kings Manor in Guildford had taken place in 'an atmosphere of co-operation'. The White Paper, on the other hand, would have the effect of *forcing* a local authority to bring in private firms to 'turn around' a failing school. In the words of the Council document: 'This would create a highly adversarial climate and one in which the private sector would find it much harder to succeed in the event of strong local opposition.'

The Future of Faith-based Schools

It is not difficult to understand why the promotion of 'faith-based' schools has provoked a good deal of criticism and unease among large groups of teachers and community leaders and a number of Labour and Liberal Democrat MPs. (The origins of religious schools and their anachronistic status in an increasingly secular society are dealt with in a lengthy and detailed critique elsewhere in this journal by Derek Gillard.) Apart from any other considerations, it was only last summer that racial disturbances caused considerable alarm in a number of northern cities. The Ouseley Report into race relations in Bradford concluded that fragmentation of its schools on racial, cultural and faith lines had played a key role in heightening racial tensions. Ethnic loyalties, cemented at segregated primary schools, remain fixed through the years of secondary schooling. It seems obvious that a Government supposedly keen on building confident, socially integrated, multicultural communities should not be seeking new ways of exacerbating such fragmentation. This was the thinking behind an amendment to the new Education Bill tabled by former Health Secretary Frank Dobson and Liberal Democrat education spokesperson Phil Willis requiring all new church schools to reserve at least a quarter of their places for children of other faiths or of none. In the event, the debate on the Education Bill, scheduled for the 5 February 2002, was postponed and there was no opportunity on that occasion to vote on the cross-party amendment. On the following day (the 6 February), the amendment was heavily defeated, by 405 votes to 87 – a Government majority of 318, with the Conservative Opposition voting with the Government.

The 'Threat' of Privatisation

A number of key figures addressing the Labour Party Spring Conference, held in Cardiff at the beginning of February 2002, stressed the need for public sector reform which apparently involved the energetic pursuit of public-private partnerships and a new emphasis on devolved decision-making. All those who did not share this new vision could be branded either as 'wreckers' or as 'small "c" conservatives'. For Tony Blair, the Government now faced the same combination of Tories and left-wingers that had tried, though without success, to destabilise Neil Kinnock when he was working to 'modernise' the Labour Party and its policies back in the 1980s.

While not particularly happy to be described either as a 'wrecker' or as a diehard opponent of change in all circumstances, I would certainly wish to be included among those who are deeply alarmed by New Labour's 'neo-liberal' agenda for schooling. The cogent arguments put forward by Richard Hatcher in a powerful recent article published in the journal *Education and Social Justice* (Volume 3, Number 2, Spring 2001) were taken up by George Monbiot in a piece headed 'Schooling up for Sale', published in *The Guardian* (8 January 2002). According to Hatcher and Monbiot, it is Tony Blair's ambition that as the export value of manufacturing, farming and even some of the traditional service industries declines, Britain will become a market leader in exporting a flourishing new international business: privatisation. The United Kingdom's private education industry has to be fostered and nourished by the State until it is strong enough to compete with America and other powerful capitalist economies. This has to be viewed as the most fundamental challenge to public schooling in this country since its inception. All the privatising measures contained within the White Paper and the Bill can be seen as small but significant steps towards the construction of a new education market on terrain which has traditionally belonged to the State as the dominant provider of schooling in a democratic society.

The Faith Schools Debate: glass in their snowballs

DEREK GILLARD

Churches and other religious groups already own about a quarter of England's state-funded schools. Tony Blair's New Labour government wants them to run even more. Derek Gillard surveys the background, analyses the arguments for and against and concludes that it is the very last thing that England needs.

Historical Background

The earliest schools in England were the 'Song Schools' of the Middle Ages, where the church educated the sons of gentlefolk and trained them to sing in cathedral choirs. By the sixteenth century the church had began to set up Elementary Schools to cater for other sections of the community. Indeed, until about 1880 virtually all education in England was provided by the church.

As education provision expanded rapidly in the early years of the twentieth century, so did the cost, and the churches began to look to the state to meet some of the expense. 'As standards have risen and inflation of costs has bitten deep, the voluntary bodies have increasingly needed to seek financial help from the public authorities. Thus the Acts of 1902 and 1944 were significant steps in redefining the relationship as a measure of independence was exchanged for the comparative security of financial support from the public service' (Brooksbank & Ackstine, 1984).

The use of public money to finance church schools caused controversy right from the start. There were 'obstructive passions raised when the involvement of the churches in education was debated on a number of occasions before the First World War' (Brooksbank & Ackstine, 1984).

The System Established in 1944

The current system is largely the result of negotiations between Education Minister R.A. Butler and Archbishop William Temple during the preparation for and passage of the 1944 Education Act. The Act 'created a unified framework which brought the church schools under state control but left them with varying degrees of independence according to how much financial support the church continued to provide' (Mackinnon & Statham, 1999). LEA (Local Education Authority) schools were named 'county' schools; those owned by the churches became 'voluntary' schools. Of the latter, there were two main types – 'Aided' and 'Controlled'. Aided schools (about 4,300 in the 1990s) provided their own premises and met some of the maintenance costs in exchange for a degree of control. Controlled schools (about 3,000 in the 1990s) provided their own premises but all the running costs were met by the LEA and the governing bodies had control only over religious education. (There were also a few 'special agreement' schools.) Almost all the voluntary schools were owned by the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church. (The 1998 School Standards and Framework Act changed some of the names – county schools became 'community' schools and grant-maintained schools became 'foundation' schools, for example – but the framework remains much as it was.)

Today, surveys show that 45% of the population of England has no religious faith and that nearly a third do not believe in God. Less than 10% of the population is actively religious. Out of a population of sixty million, fewer than a million attend Anglican services on a Sunday.

By contrast, a quarter of England's primary schools (6,384 schools with 790,000 places) and one in twenty secondaries (589 schools, 150,000 places) belong to the churches. (There are also 120,000 children in church-owned independent schools.) Of the religious schools, forty are non-Christian, thirty-two of those being Jewish.

New Labour's First Term

Labour returned to power after eighteen years of Conservative government in June 1997. Relations with the churches got off to a shaky start when Anglican bishops warned that the Lords would contest the new government's 1998 School Standards and Framework Bill. The bishops felt it would dilute Church of England representation on the governing bodies of Aided schools and change their religious character by amending admission procedures. They were also concerned that controlled schools opting for foundation status would lose their religious character. David Young, Bishop of Ripon and Chairman of the Church of England's Board of Education, said that church schools 'are excellent and sought after and we wish that position to be maintained'. The new Secretary of State for Education, David Blunkett, assured them he did not want to upset the compromises of the 1944 Education Act which allowed church schools a considerable degree of autonomy within the state system. Stephen Byers (then School Standards Minister) said, 'We value the role that church schools play and therefore we will not be introducing any measures which would weaken or diminish their position'. (John Carvel, *The Guardian*, 23 October 1997).

The new government was clearly aware that a system which gave huge amounts of state funding to thousands of Christian schools but hardly any to schools of other faiths was inherently discriminatory. Anxious to demonstrate its commitment to multiculturalism, it quickly set about addressing the problem.

In January 1998 Islamia Primary School in Brent (London) and Al Furqan Primary School in Sparkhill (Birmingham) became the first state-funded Muslim schools in England. Two months later, on 9 March, Stephen Byers announced that the John Loughborough Secondary School in Haringey (London) would become

the first state-funded school to be run by a minor Christian denomination, the Seventh Day Adventists. It would get a full public grant from September and £0.5m to improve facilities. Clinton Valley, head of the predominantly Afro-Caribbean school, said 'It is a just decision … Britain is now coming to embrace all its children.' Local MP Bernie Grant said 'While Catholic and Church of England schools have been publicly funded, these parents have had to pay for exercising their choice, which was discriminatory and wrong' (John Carvel & Ruaridh Nicoll, *The Guardian,* 10 March 1998).

During 1999 two more Jewish schools were given state funding and a Sikh school became the first of its kind to become state-maintained.

Having thus demonstrated its commitment to minority faith groups (and no doubt anxious not to upset the Christians) the government now turned back to the churches. In July 2000 Education Minister Estelle Morris wrote to Lord Dearing, head of a committee reviewing education provision for the Church of England. She indicated that the government would consider ways of helping dioceses raise the estimated £2m they would need to meet the initial cost of building each of a hundred new secondary schools over the next five years in order to educate at least 100,000 teenagers 'in a religious environment'. Dearing noted that all three main political parties were 'well disposed to the creation of more church schools' and his committee urged each of the forty-two Anglican dioceses to consider opening at least two new church secondary schools' (Stephen Bates, *The Guardian*, 21 July 2000).

Proposals and Problems: 2001

In the run up to the General Election of 2001 it was clear that religion was becoming a serious element in the government's – or, at least, in Tony Blair's – thinking on a number of issues, not just education. In February the government published a Green Paper announcing its intention to increase the number of single faith schools and on Thursday 29 March, Tony Blair addressed a conference of religious organisations from both Christian and other faith backgrounds, organised by the Christian Socialist Movement at Westminster Central Hall. He outlined his own religious motivation in politics and stressed the value of religion in modern society. He insisted that church schools were a pillar of the education system, 'valued by very many parents for their faith character, their moral emphasis and the high quality of education they generally provide'. More widely, he called for religious charities and organisations to become partners of the government in promoting health and welfare provision. Mr Blair, 'the most religiously-inclined prime minister for many years, has been generally cautious about speaking of his faith but is known to have been irked by [Conservative Party leader] William Hague's attempts to annex Christian morality for the Conservatives' (Stephen Bates, *The Guardian*, 30 March 2001).

The idea of partnership between government and religious organisations came from America, where it had been promoted by evangelicals such as presidential adviser Jim Wallis, who spoke at the Christian Socialist Movement conference.

But even as Mr Blair was developing his plans for partnership with the voluntary sector, George Bush's plan to channel US government aid to 'faith-based' religious charities was running into trouble. The 'Church' of Scientology said it would be seeking government aid for its drug rehabilitation and literacy programmes, based on the 'dianetics' theories of the group's founder L. Ron Hubbard; the Hare Krishnas were gearing up to solicit federal funds for their houses for released prisoners and shelters for the homeless; the Moonies (now renamed the 'Family Federation for World Peace and Unification') were planning to ask for taxpayers' money to promote their sexual abstinence programmes in schools; and Conservative Christian bodies were expressing anxiety that Louis Farrakhan's Nation of Islam organisation might also try to become a beneficiary of Mr Bush's initiative (Martin Kettle, *The Guardian*, 13 March 2001).

Concerns about the direction of government policy were beginning to surface here, too. Senior Labour Party figures warned Tony Blair of the danger of mixing religion and politics in the drive to win votes. Former deputy party leader Lord Hattersley said 'evangelising' was dangerous and could alienate sections of society, and Martin O'Neill, Chair of the Trade and Industry Select Committee, said 'We could be in danger of reinforcing social divisions in the name of alternative forms of provision' (Lucy Ward, *The Guardian*, 26 March 2001).

However, none of this deterred Mr Blair. Following Labour's General Election victory in June, his ministers issued a series of pronouncements all indicating the government's intention to pursue the religious route. It was announced that the capital contribution for voluntary aided church schools would be cut from 15% to 10% and that other government proposals would open the door for the church to work with the private sector in running weak or failing schools (Rebecca Smithers, *The Guardian*, 15 June 2001).

Lord Dearing's report *The Way Ahead* into the future of the 4700 Church of England schools in England was published shortly after the election. It recommended improving the patchy provision of church schools in the primary sector and increasing by about a hundred the number of church secondary schools by expanding existing ones, building new ones and taking over failing ones. Dearing said 'The church probably has the best opportunity to go forward in education that it has had in 50 years.' Canon John Hall, adviser to Dearing's committee and General Secretary of the Church of England Board of Education, said that twenty 'local discussions' were already going on to set up new church secondary schools.

Once again, support for these moves was by no means unanimous. Peter Smith, General Secretary of ATL (Association of Teachers and Lecturers) commented 'Religious belief is a private belief not a state issue … It is truly amazing how many people develop strong religious beliefs if they think that the best school in the area is a "faith school".'

On 18 July Schools Standards Minister Stephen Timms declared that the 'great majority' of secondary schools would soon be specialist schools (attracting extra money as well as kudos), or 'beacon' schools (boasting a distinctive character or ethos) or schools based on a religious faith. To these would be added the new 'City Academies', set up in partnership with business and community sponsors and the churches.

Rebecca Smithers (*The Guardian,* 19 July 2001) noted a number of widespread concerns:

- Would the effective abolition of the 'bog standard' (Alastair Campbell's description) comprehensive school create a two-tier education system? Specialist schools would flourish while their poorer rivals would become unpopular sink schools. How extraordinary that Labour should embrace, with little or no evaluation, a scheme originally launched by Margaret Thatcher in the shape of her City Technology Colleges.
- The daunting array of labels gave the impression of more choice. But would that really be the case? Parents would find themselves having no choice except the specialist school on their doorstep. Why commit a youngster at 11 to a specialism which may be entirely inappropriate seven years later?
- The problem of selection. Specialist schools which became very popular would be forced to resort to selection on a larger scale.
- Diversity between schools (rather than within them) would result in 'a hierarchical structure for schools, with little incentive to help each other out or pass on best practice.'
- Head Teachers were concerned about 'the time and effort they have to devote to bids' and that 'the government's plans will lead to one set of schools being treated as high-status and high-funded and the rest low-status and low-funded.'

There were other problems. Indeed, 2001 was not a good year for anyone seeking to promote religious involvement in education.

A report commissioned by Bradford Council examined the extent of racial problems in the city and concluded that communities were becoming increasingly isolated along racial, cultural and religious lines, and that segregated schools were fuelling the divisions. The report was prophetic. At Easter, rioting broke out in Bradford and images of burnt-out cars and boarded-up pubs appeared on television news bulletins. Martin Wainwright noted (*The Guardian,* 17 April 2001) that 'some of Bradford's most moderate and liberal politicians are worried about the imminent prospect of a Muslim high school; a logical step, given the success of Catholic and Jewish schools, but with obvious implications for ghettoisation'.

During the summer the rioting spread to Oldham, Greater Manchester, Burnley and back to Bradford, where, in mid July, there were three nights of violence. Police in riot gear faced an onslaught of bricks, bottles, petrol bombs and fireworks, two men were stabbed, more than fifty were arrested and 120 officers were injured in 'some of the worst disturbances seen in Britain in twenty years' (David Ward & Patrick Wintour, *The Guardian,* 12 July 2001). The new Secretary of State for Education, Estelle Morris, appeared to lack her predecessor's enthusiasm for single-faith schools when she acknowledged that the issue was 'a political hot potato for the government'. She announced that 'local concerns would be listened to in areas of racial tension' (Rebecca Smithers, *The Guardian,* 19 July 2001).

The Archbishop of Canterbury tried to play down fears that 'faith-based schools' perpetuated inter-religious conflict. Some Church of England schools in Bradford, he pointed out, catered almost exclusively for Muslims. Roy Hattersley commented (*The Guardian,* 30 July 2001) 'We can only speculate about what happens at the compulsory act of worship. But we can be sure that British Muslims will not take such a relaxed view of their educational obligations.'

Then, as the autumn term began, television screens were filled, night after night, with images of angry Protestants shouting abuse and hurling stones at five year old Catholic girls and their parents making their way to Holy Cross Roman Catholic School in the Ardoyne. Of all Northern Ireland's obscenities in the past thirty years, this struck many people as the most appalling. The pictures of hate-filled adult faces and little girls crying faded from the news bulletins after a few days, but the problem didn't go away. As late as mid-November, four hundred police were being employed daily to see fifty children safely to school. The Protestants were not entirely the villains they were sometimes made out to be. Their actions were a product of the insecurity they felt as a result of what they saw as Catholic encroachment into their area. Nonetheless, the message that religious differences breed hatred and intolerance couldn't have been more vividly portrayed.

Despite all these problems, the government's White Paper *Schools Achieving Success,* published on 5 September, contained much about the involvement of the private sector – including the churches – in failing schools, and about independent religious schools being welcomed into the state sector 'with clear local agreement'. However, Will Woodward, Patrick Wintour & Rebecca Smithers suggested (*The Guardian,* 6 September 2001) that 'the government's enthusiasm for these has waned since the Bradford riots'.

Then there was 11 September. Several thousand people died when the twin towers of the World Trade Centre in New York were demolished by terrorists fired with fundamentalist religious beliefs. Hostility to Muslims grew and the government talked about extending the protection of the blasphemy law to cover religions other than Christianity and about introducing a new law which would make illegal the incitement of hatred on the grounds of religion. (Perhaps they should have heeded the words of US statesman and scientist Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790): 'When a Religion is good, I conceive it will support itself; and, when it does not support itself, and God does not take care to support it so that its Professors are obliged to call for help of the Civil Power, it is a sign, I apprehend, of its being a bad one.')

However, even if Estelle Morris was beginning to wonder whether the government was doing the right thing, neither the race riots in northern towns nor the obscenities of the Ardoyne – nor even the grotesque wickedness of 11 September – did anything to quash the enthusiasm of the faith groups to grab some government cash. Tracy McVeigh (*The Observer,* 30 September 2001) pointed out that there had been 'a huge rise in approaches from religious organisations over the past few weeks'. And it wasn't just the mainstream churches. The DfES (Department for Education and Skills) revealed on 29 September that 'considerable interest' had been expressed by minority faith communities in setting up schools within the maintained sector. Forty projects were already being planned, including a £12m Islamic secondary school for girls in Birmingham, an evangelical Christian school in Leeds and a new Jewish school in London. The Salvation Army and the Seventh Day

Adventists said they were evaluating 'opportunities created by the White Paper'.

Opposition Grows

Others were less enthusiastic. Government ministers privately expressed concerns and academics predicted disastrous consequences for racial and religious integration. Labour peer (and friend of Tony Blair) Lord Alli, said 'Anything which encourages isolation and segregation in communities through education is a recipe for disaster'.

Liberal Democrat Education Spokesman Phil Willis said 'I think there is a real danger here of educational apartheid … we have already seen children excluded from their local school because they are of the wrong faith, and any organisation which gets state funding should not be allowed to be partisan. It is a particularly bad vision for areas like the mill towns of Lancashire where we have already seen such flash points of race tension this summer. This is the twenty-first century. We should be attempting to educate citizens of the world, not narrow-minded, parochial, sectarian citizens.'

The National Secular Society pointed to the report of Lord Ouseley (former Chairman of the Commission on Racial Equality) on the Bradford riots. *Pride, Not Prejudice* had warned of deep divisions caused by segregation in housing and education: 'There are signs that communities are fragmenting along racial, cultural and faith lines. Segregation in schools is one indicator of this trend.'

The LGA (Local Government Association), representing education authorities in England and Wales, said that it had 'deep reservations about the drive to increase faith schools. The move is potentially divisive and would be another indication of central dictation of local education provision.'

Tim Brighouse, Chief Education Officer of Birmingham, said 'Faith schools will hinder race equality if they are evangelical schools admitting people of only one faith'.

Given all these voices raised against the state funding of religious schools, it was surprising, to say the least, that the government still seemed to think it had widespread backing for its proposals to increase the number of such schools. By mid-November 2001 it was clear that no such support existed. A poll of nearly 6,000 people, published in *The Observer* on 11 November, found that only eleven per cent were in favour of more faith schools. Extraordinarily, the poll showed a higher level of opposition to the government's faith schools initiative than there had been to the privatisation of British Rail or even to Margaret Thatcher's poll tax.

Education Secretary Estelle Morris was said to be privately less than happy about the policy but found herself in an impossible position. She was faced on the one hand with a policy she inherited from David Blunkett and which still, apparently, had the strong support of the Prime Minister, and on the other, by her own DfES officials who were said to be concerned that new Muslim and Hindu schools would be boycotted by white parents and would end up catering only for Asian pupils.

However, she swallowed her concerns and on 14 November she told the General Synod of the Church of England, with breathtaking irony, that anyone who was against government proposals for more faith schools was intolerant. 'For hundreds of years we have tolerated and respected parents' right to choose a faith-based education. Are we now saying that in 2001 we can no longer be tolerant about that?' (This was arrant nonsense. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with intolerance. It depends what it is you're intolerant of. We tolerated slavery for hundreds of years but I don't see Estelle Morris bemoaning the fact that we tolerate it no longer.)

She went on to announce that it would be a statutory requirement for church schools to 'build links with other local schools to prevent their becoming too exclusive' (Stephen Bates, *The Guardian*, 15 November 2001). What on earth was that supposed to mean? It was clearly intended as a sop to the many who had expressed concerns about the policy while being vague enough not to worry the churches.

In mid December, several reports were published on the riots in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford. As expected, they raised serious concerns about the role played by single-faith schools in the segregation of communities. The Community Cohesion Review Team chaired by Ted Cantle called for 'measures to tackle schools dominated by a single ethnic group' and proposed that 'church and other faith schools should offer at least 25% of their places to pupils of other faiths' (Alan Travis, *The Guardian*, 11 December 2001). Similarly, David Ritchie's report on Oldham recommended that three church secondary schools which currently accept no Muslim pupils should ensure that up to 20% of places are open to non-Christians.

Despite these damning reports, Downing Street was still said to be supporting the creation of yet more faith schools.

Arguments for and Against Faith Schools

It is not difficult to see why the churches and other religious organisations are keen to open more state-funded faith schools.

'For the established church, eager to fill pews, schools are the only product they have left to offer that people actually clamour for' (Polly Toynbee, *The Guardian*, 15 June 2001). But it isn't just the Church of England that needs faith schools to fill the void left by the departure of its worshippers. Other faiths are worried that future generations will see little point in adopting the old belief systems. The Hazrat Sultan Bahu Trust wants to build a state Muslim girls' school in Birmingham. Rafaqat Hussain, its president, said 'this is allowing children to be educated in a familiar atmosphere where they can have prayers at the right times without timetables clashing and where other issues important to our faith can be accommodated … we are losing our youth … values are not being passed on … there is a growing concern that we must go back to traditional values, and those are not being met in the inner-city comprehensives.' Did he really mean '*allowing* children' or should he have said *forcing* them? Did he mean 'Where they *can* have prayers' or where they *will* have prayers?

Obviously, there is a great deal of self-interest in the faith groups' desire for more religious schools. They see such schools as a lifeline. 'Few who first meet religion in adulthood are able to take it seriously; priests know that to keep the old faiths alive, they have to get their hands on

children' (A.C. Grayling, *The Guardian*, 24 February 2001).

But why is the *government* so keen on faith schools? Is it just because the Prime Minister is himself a committed Christian? Or because a number of his colleagues in government are also religiously inclined? What are the arguments they put forward in support of the faith schools policy? They can be summed up in Tony Blair's phrases 'moral emphasis' and 'high quality'. Each is worth examining.

The Notion that Faith Schools Promote Spiritual and Moral Values

Tony Blair has made much of his view that faith schools promote spiritual and moral values in their students (the implication being, presumably, that county schools don't). In addition, the White Paper *Schools Achieving Success* said 'We want faith schools that come into the maintained sector to add to the inclusiveness and diversity of the school system and to be ready to work with nondenominational schools and those of other faiths'. An account of recent events in Oxford suggests that these aspirations are little more than pious tosh.

St Augustine's School has been a successful joint Roman Catholic/Anglican comprehensive school for many years. However, during negotiations concerning the reorganisation of Oxford city's schools from three-tier to two-tier, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Birmingham, the Most Revd Vincent Nichols, suddenly announced his intention 'to withdraw his support from August 2003 from the special joint provision, originally made when St Augustine's was established' and to propose instead the setting up of a Catholic secondary school to meet the 'legitimate pastoral and educational needs of the Catholic community in Oxford'. This was in spite of the commitment of St Augustine's governors to continue with joint Catholic and Church of England education (*The Oxford Times* 28 July 2000). This posed a problem for the Church of England. There was no room in Oxford for an additional secondary school, so without the joint school, there would be no Anglican secondary provision in the city. Astonished parents were told by the Church of England that the Catholics were threatening 'to evict the school from their buildings' unless they got their way. The Archbishop of Birmingham responded by accusing Anglicans of acting 'with little regard for the basic principles of ecumenism'.

The battle for St Augustine's 'was merely the prelude to an even more bitter clash, which briefly saw the two churches in an undignified competition to create a new church-aided school in Oxford' (Reg Little, *The Oxford Times*, 21 September 2001).

The insults flew back and forth for a year until, in September 2001, the Church of England authorities gave in and raised no objections to Cardinal Newman School being expanded into a new Roman Catholic secondary school. In return, the Catholics agreed to offer full support to any Anglican proposal for a new Church of England school in the future. This wasn't much of a deal for the Anglicans, since the chances of a new secondary school – of any sort – being set up in Oxford in the foreseeable future are effectively nil.

The problems didn't even end there. In October 2001, members of Oxfordshire Education Committee called on

St Augustine's School, Oxford

the Catholic authorities 'to accept local Muslims and children of other faiths in the hope of strengthening community ties'. The Catholic response was not exactly positive. Fr Marcus Stock, spokesman for the Catholic archdiocese, said 'We are setting up the Catholic school to provide a school primarily for baptised Catholics. The Catholic community actually pays extra money for the privilege of making a decision over admissions' (*The Oxford Times*, 12 October 2001).

And it's not just in Oxford that such insular and confrontational attitudes can be seen. The Church of England says its schools offer opportunities to pupils and their families 'to explore the truths of the Christian faith' (not, apparently, to question them). Furthermore, 'church schools should give preference to parents with Christian backgrounds, employ Christian teachers as far as possible, and make sure Christian teachers get preference when it comes to promotion. Heads must be committed Christians. The schools must force all children, even those of other faiths, to say Christian prayers' (Francis Beckett, *The Guardian*, 13 November 2001).

In other words, Christian schools do not exist to teach respect for other faiths, but to instil Christianity. The same goes for other faith schools. According to its mission statement, the state-funded Islamia School in north London strives 'to provide the best education, in a secure Islamic environment, through the knowledge and application of the Qur'an and Sunnah'.

So the idea that faith schools promote tolerance, respect and cooperation is nonsense.

Some of them have pretty dubious values when it comes to punishment, too. In November 2001 forty 'Christian' independent schools asked the High Court in London for the right to hit their pupils on the biblical grounds that 'the rod of correction imparts wisdom'. They claimed that the ban on corporal punishment breached parents' rights to practise their religion freely under the Human Rights Act and that 'corporal punishment is part of their Christian doctrine'. The Head Teacher of the 'Christian Fellowship School' in Liverpool, Phil Williamson, said 'It is really for parents to have the right to send their children to a school whose standards and values are the same as in their own home … Since 1987, when corporal discipline (sic) was removed from state schools, standards have plummeted and it is reflected in the violence in our classrooms … For younger pupils, we

would smack them on the hand or leg using the teacher's hand. With older pupils, girls would be strapped on the hand by a lady teacher, and boys would be smacked on the backside with something akin to a ruler, but wider', he said. 'We have vast experience in using these means.' (Perhaps Mr Williamson is trying to emulate Dr Busby, Head Master of Westminster School during the seventeenth century, who 'was regarded by flagellants as perhaps the finest expert with the rod that England has ever known') (Gibson, 1978).

The NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) responded: 'Harking back to some Dickensian view of schooling is no way for a civilised society to treat its children'. The DfES opposed the application, saying it represented a misunderstanding of the true purpose and nature of the Human Rights Act (Tania Branigan *The Guardian* 3 November 2001). Fortunately, the High Court rejected the application on the not unreasonable basis that beating children is hardly an essential feature of the Christian religion.

Dickensian' is right. What an appalling vision of education. Values? Morality? You must be joking. And remember, these are the sort of schools which now want to get their hands on your taxes.

The Perception that Faith Schools Get Better Results

The line that 'church schools get better results' is widely peddled and rarely challenged. I have already noted the views of David Young, Bishop of Ripon, that church schools are 'excellent and sought after'; of Stephen Byers, School Standards Minister, that 'we value the role that church schools play'; and of Tony Blair himself, who thinks church schools provide a 'high quality of education'. Lord Dearing's report *The Way Ahead* said that 160 children applied for every 100 places in church schools and claimed that this indicated that there was a clear demand for religious education. But, as Polly Toynbee pointed out (*The Guardian*, 15 June 2001) 'No-one with a straight face can pretend the demand is for religion: it is for results'.

Is there any evidence of the 'high quality' or the 'better results' that church school proponents claim? On the contrary, there is evidence that church schools are not providing a better education than non-church schools – that they may even be providing a poorer education, given the nature of their intake.

Some of the claims made for faith schools are, to say the least, disingenuous. Canon John Hall, the Church of England's Education Officer, told *The Times Educational Supplement* that St Christopher's Church of England School in Accrington 'regularly outperforms' the neighbouring community school, Moorhead High. But, as the *TES* discovered, the church school has only 12% special needs children while Moorhead has 69.8%. Hardly a fair comparison. Indeed, with figures like that one would be entitled to *expect* that the church school would achieve significantly better results.

In October 2001, Civitas (The Institute for the Study of Civil Society) published their report *Faith in Education*. It demolished the myth that church schools are centres of excellence and called into question the 'unthinking policy' of expansion of faith schools. The report looked at DfES data on Church of England and Catholic schools from National Curriculum test results at the age of seven up to GNVQs and A Levels and concluded that there was 'an enormous and unacceptable variation in standards between schools across Britain that was as marked in church schools as it was in local authority schools,' that 'churches were failing to monitor the standards being achieved in their schools' and that 'parents should not assume church schools equalled a quality education.' John Marks, Director of the Civitas Educational Unit said 'One of the most striking findings was the variation of standards. They really were huge, we're talking about a difference of pupils being three years behind children of the same age at another school. The churches should really be concerned. I would say to parents that they cannot assume that a church school is a better school.'

According to the Civitas findings, compared with their peers at non-church schools, fourteen year old pupils at Church of England and Catholic schools are on average about six months ahead in maths and nine months ahead in English. However, all pupils are, on average, achieving substantially below expectations for their age – church school pupils are fifteen months behind, non-church school pupils up to two years behind (Tracy McVeigh, *The Observer,* 14 October 2001).

On the face of it, being six months ahead in maths and nine months ahead in English would seem to indicate that church schools are doing better than county schools. But then you have to take into account the advantages of back door selection. 'God may move in mysterious ways,' wrote Polly Toynbee (*The Guardian,* 15 June 2001), 'but there is not much mystery in the way He runs His schools: He does it by selection. By ensuring a strong core of dedicated, ambitious parents who know how to congregate in the same schools, church schools mostly get better results.'

So is it true that church schools are selecting – either intentionally or otherwise – more able children from 'better' backgrounds? A key indicator of a deprived background is the take-up of free school meals. The figures are instructive. Across the country, 17.6% of primary-age children get free school meals. The figure for Roman Catholic schools is 16.1%, for Church of England schools, just 11.5% (Gaby Hinsliff, *The Observer,* 18 November 2001). Local Government Association spokesman Graham Lane commented, 'Anywhere the governing body is choosing the students, they tend to reject those children that need extra resources.'

Another key indicator is the proportion of children designated as having special educational needs. Polly Toynbee examined the league tables for the Borough of Lambeth (London). Most of the schools which scored 80% – 90% for eleven year olds in maths, English and science were faith schools. But the church school which topped the borough table with 100% in science had only 8% of special needs pupils, compared with some of the county primary schools which had 50%. Toynbee commented, 'No wonder parents queue at the altar for the wafers and commute their mighty four-wheel-drives across the borough for a good Catholic education'. On the other hand, one Catholic school with no special needs pupils got 'very mediocre' results while one outstanding non-church school with an astonishing 59% of special needs children got results over 90%.

A similar situation exists in relation to 'statemented' pupils – those with statements of special educational needs. Government figures for 2000 show that 1.6 per cent

of children in mainstream primary schools and 2.5% of students in mainstream secondary schools were statemented. The figures for Church of England schools were 1.5% and 2.2% respectively, while Catholic, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh schools had even lower figures (Gaby Hinsliff, *The Observer,* 18 November 2001).

As Penny Toynbee declared, 'If the government wants to introduce more selection, why not say so, instead of going through this religious rigmarole? It is just a fig leaf for the simple and universal fact that the most motivated parents and the middle classes will always navigate every school (or health) system, to congregate in the same places, making them better as a result.'

One of the reasons that Bangladeshi and Pakistani parents often prefer segregated education for their children is their perception that the local comprehensive fails them. But under-achievement has many causes, and one of them is the amount of time some of these children spend in mosques studying the Qur'an, according to a report by Dr Mohammed Ali, Chief Executive of a Bradford charity. 'Quantity not quality is provided in most British mosques and madrasahs and that is probably one of the reasons for the poor educational performance of British Pakistani pupils.'

In fact, comprehensive schools can and do provide good quality multicultural education. Polly Toynbee reported on Plashet Girls' School in East Ham (London). 70% of its students are Muslim (Bangladeshis and Pakistanis), 10% Hindu, 10% Sikh and 10% Christian. Bushra Nasir, its Muslim Head Teacher, 'has gone to extraordinary lengths to accommodate every religion'. Special arrangements are made for assemblies, the uniform, diets and Ramadan. The proportion of students gaining five A-C grade GCSEs has risen from 28% to 59%, and many now go on to university. 'With great care an ordinary state school can educate girls well, with enough sensitivity to satisfy religious anxieties – better by far than segregating the faiths'. (Polly Toynbee, *The Guardian,* 9 November 2001).

It is clear, then, that the two main arguments put forward in favour of faith schools do not stand up to critical scrutiny. There are other arguments against such schools.

Sectarian Divisions

That sectarian divisions are a serious problem has been amply demonstrated by recent events in Northern Ireland and in Bradford and other of the UK's northern towns. We have already seen that Lord Ouseley damned segregated schools as a prime cause of racial hatred. He spoke of 'attitudes hardening and intolerance to differences growing.' Bradford's Education Committee has no say in the school admissions policies of the four Catholic, two Church of England and one Muslim secondary schools in the city.

Religious schools cause apartheid in Oldham, too. Grange School is 97% Asian while the Church of England's Blue Coat school is almost entirely white. Why the segregation? 'Because Blue Coat, like Oldham's other C of E secondary, demands church attendance from parents with a vicar's letter to prove it … Officially there is rejection of bussing children across race and class lines as attempted once in America, yet parents from all over Greater Manchester are happy to bus their children into Oldham's two 'good' white schools' (Polly Toynbee, *The Guardian,* 9 November 2001).

Single faith schools deny children the right to grow with and learn about people of other backgrounds and beliefs. They are a recipe for future disaster. Children should not be educated separately in religious ghettos, 'thereby perpetuating the exclusivity and mistrust which must arise if people believe their religion is the only true one and everyone else is wrong' (A.C. Grayling, *The Guardian,* 24 February 2001).

By giving taxpayers' money to religious organisations which are themselves historically and theologically at odds, the government is actually reinforcing these divisions. 'The world's major religions – especially Christianity, Islam, and Judaism – are not merely incompatible with one another, but mutually antithetical. All religions are such that if they are pushed to their logical conclusions, or if their founding literatures and early traditions are accepted literally, they will take the form of their respective fundamentalisms … The solution is to make the public domain wholly secular, leaving religion as a matter of private conviction' (A.C. Grayling, *The Observer,* 12 August 2001).

Taxpayers' Money

All religious groups are minorities in the UK – even the Church of England. Should taxpayers' money be used for minority religious purposes? And where does it end? Who decides which religions are worthy of state funding? Jehovah's Witnesses? The Mormons? Scientology? The Moonies?

Can it be right to force the majority of the population, who are 'opposed to superstitious beliefs and practices', to contribute against their will to the perpetuation of such things? Religion should be a matter of private conscience and choice, not something to be supported from public funds. 'If minorities wish to have their children taught in schools which premise belief in gods, astrology, space aliens or elves, they should pay for it themselves' (A.C. Grayling, *The Guardian,* 24 February 2001).

Parents' Rights

In many parts of the country, especially in rural areas, a church school is the only realistic option for parents unable or unwilling to transport their children long distances to school. This is a real dilemma for parents who do not have religious beliefs. And then there are those who live in an area where the only decent school happens to be single-faith. Do they pretend to convictions they don't have – even if they find those convictions offensive – for the sake of their children's education? 'This is particularly disturbing for mothers who are aware of the impact of the Vatican's entrenched misogyny on their own lives and reluctant to expose their daughters to it.' This is discrimination against secular parents and their families. 'What makes it even more astonishing, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, is that it is being proposed by the state. The government has no business promoting religion' (Joan Smith *The Guardian* 28 February 2001).

Conclusions

Religion and Politics

There has always been an uneasy mix of politics and religion in this country, centred around the monarchy and the establishment of the Church of England, with its bishops sitting in the House of Lords. Much has been written about whether Britain can now be described as a Christian country. Certainly, many of our institutions – including many of our schools – have their origins in, or are owned by, the churches. But for many years there has been an unspoken understanding that religion is a private matter, not something for the state to get involved in. 'In the cynical years that followed the war, most senior politicians followed Harold Macmillan's lead and left faith and morals to the bishops' (Roy Hattersley *The Guardian* 30 July 2001).

Not any more. Is it just because Tony Blair is a devout High Church Anglican? Nick Cohen (*The Observer,* 7 October 2001) suggests that 'there is an enormous gap between Britain, which has lost its religions faster than any other country, and the British political class, which has become more ostentatiously godly with each new recruit to the Christian Socialist Movement and Conservative Christian Fellowship'.

Whatever the reasons, there is no doubt that religion has become an important ingredient in politics again. And nowhere is that ingredient more evident than in education policy.

It should not be so. There should be complete separation of religion and state. Recent events surely demonstrate the dangers inherent in this conflation of religion and politics. Religion causes political problems 'when devout Christians, Muslims or Jews think that it is their duty to translate specific beliefs into legislative form' (Roy Hattersley, *The Guardian,* 30 July 2001) and it harms society 'by causing conflicts, wars and persecutions, as everywhere evidenced by religious history including the present' (A.C. Grayling, *The Guardian,* 24 February 2001).

In the wake of the events of 11 September, Tony Blair appealed to all Britons to stand 'shoulder to shoulder' with America. But he seems to have forgotten that one of the best aspects of America is that enshrined in the First Amendment, which ensures that the state is separate from all religions. 'A British first amendment would support religious freedom by … disestablishing the Church of England. It would remove unelected bishops from Parliament instead of chucking in token rabbis and mullahs. It would deal with the pro-Christian bias of the blasphemy law by abolishing it' (Nick Cohen, *The Observer,* 7 October 2001).

Religion and Education

Religion and education are mutually incompatible. Indeed, religion is the antithesis of education, because it 'harms individuals by distorting human nature through repressive moralities and the inculcation of false beliefs, fears and hopes … Children should emphatically not be taught as 'facts' the myths and legends of ancient religious traditions: to do this to anyone unable to evaluate their credibility is a form of brainwashing or even abuse. Public funds should never be used to that end' (A.C. Grayling, *The Guardian,* 24 February 2001).

My advice to Mr Blair, therefore is to close all faith schools (including independent schools) and reopen them as secular state-maintained schools; to ban religious education, except in the context of socio-historical studies; and to disestablish the Church of England and create a secular state in which the practice of religion is protected by law *provided* it is an entirely private matter.

I shan't be holding my breath. The chances of any British Government, let alone Tony Blair's, following such a radical course are pretty remote.

Robert, a nine-year old, goes to a Catholic school in Glasgow. Of the children at the nearby Protestant school, he says 'We call them Proddy dogs and they call us Fenians, and we fight them because we hate them and they hate us. Last winter they put glass in their snowballs' (quoted by Tracy McVeigh, *The Observer,* 30 September 2001).

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For other articles by Derek Gillard please visit www.dg.dial.pipex.com

Addendum

The faith schools debate has moved on since the above was written. A Gateshead City Technology College is now teaching its students 'creationism'. A follow-up article will appear in the next issue of FORUM.

Just Words? A Critique of the KS1 Spelling Test

Last year's KS1 spelling tests were divided into two parts: the first involved spelling the words of features and creatures supposedly to be found in a school 'nature garden' and was presented in pictorial form: part two, for those who managed the first test successfully, read like a dry KS3 exam crib on the life cycle of a butterfly.

Bearing in mind that the majority of children attend urban schools with asphalt playgrounds, the following is offered as a comment on these tests. All thirty-two words that the children were required to spell have been included. These were: boy, log, sunshine, leaf, cloud, beetle, stone, grass, smiling, children, worm, lay, early, taste, discover, feeding, month, fully, hang, thread, colour, all, stretch, bigger, wriggles, this, forms, few, breaks, unfolds, crumpled, waits.

Come, all crumpled children, stretch!
Discover stone, leaf, grass.
Phonetics will not help you pass
A test so alien to your world.
Who knows the dew, the smiling cloud
The early sunshine and the wriggling worm?
The middle class reveals its forms
It's Blyton books you should have read
Which fail you if your taste in these
Just hangs there by uncertain thread.
(And feeding from these sylvan idylls
Is merely there to raise your Levels.)

Your city lives are guessed by few
Who lay in wait to break
The happiness of each May month
By fully testing girl and boy
Upon their ignorance.
Your street-scene life and inner worlds
By giving life to spelling rules
Could meaning bring as skill unfolds.
But specious rural subjects cool
Such interest in a foreign land
Where naught is heard of 'understand'.
The testers' claim to rightness
Colours all they do
And beetling through this barren, bigger fog
They even fail to see
Two worlds revealed in 'log'.

Annabelle Dixon

Childcare Students: learning or imitating?

ELISE ALEXANDER
The writer is an experienced early years teacher and former senior lecturer at South East Essex College, Southend, who has a particular interest in learning and assessment in early years teaching and how early years practitioners articulate their practice. She recently undertook research on this as part of her PhD. It grew out of serious concerns that the training of childcare workers, often young people themselves and who play an important role in the care and education of young children, was poorly understood by experienced early years practitioners, by college tutors and by the students themselves. Her study sets out to examine the ways in which the professional knowledge of childcare students is developed during training on two commonly undertaken courses in childcare and education.

Introduction

The research study on which this article is based was broadly ethnographic and focused on the transformations that occurred in childcare students' constructions of their work with children and of themselves as 'professional' practitioners during their training. Sometimes these constructions are not what the architects of the training courses had in mind, through no fault of the students themselves, and in this article I give a brief insight into how the design of current training in childcare work may be hindering the development of students' abilities to make sound judgments about the children in their care, and indeed about their own lives.

Childcare workers play an important role in the care and education of young children and also have an important role in United Kingdom Government policy. Without a large number of trained childcare workers the Government will be unable to deliver its promises under a range of childcare initiatives, including the provision of nursery places for two-thirds of all three year olds by the end of 2002, the National Childcare Strategy and SureStart. If these policy initiatives are to be successful, then a well-trained, effective workforce is essential. At present there are about 100,000 childcare workers working in the UK (Cameron et al, 2001), but there are signs that the people who traditionally enter childcare employment are choosing other careers. Cameron et al (2001) report this phenomenon and suggest that it may, in part, be due an increase in education standards in recent years. Young women who previously opted for childcare as a career now obtain higher GCSE grades and are choosing to work in better paid office jobs in service industries.

Childcare workers are vitally important in that they care for and educate the children of this country. What they do with children has a profound impact on the shape of children's future lives and on *their* dispositions for learning. Yet the work is poorly paid, demonstrating the low status of childcare work, and conditions of employment, such as long hours, absence of career structure and short holidays, make the work unattractive.

The two most common qualifications for childcare workers are the CACHE Diploma in Childcare and Education and the BTEC National Diploma in Early Years (formerly the Diploma in Childhood Studies). Both these qualifications are gained through attending a two-year course, usually based in a further education college, and include spending about 40% of the time working in a range of workplace settings. The idea behind this practice is that students are able to take the knowledge of procedures, routines and child development theories they have learned in class and apply it to their work with children in the work placements. Both qualifications are broadly competence-based and there are detailed learning outcomes for each unit or module that students study. Every learning outcome has to have supporting evidence to 'prove' the students' knowledge and understanding of the course syllabus, and most of this evidence is in the form of written assignments.

The Students

In the study, the 16 students who participated were a homogeneous group, probably because they were all volunteers; they were all white, aged between 16 and 20 and had all had experience of childcare before entering training. Students enter the childcare courses with a minimum of 3 GCSEs at grade C or above, and so have not generally construed themselves as high achievers in their school careers. In the interview conversations that we had, the students tended to see themselves as 'practical' rather than 'academic', and as being good with children, by which they meant that they had the right personal traits: patience, kindness, ability to work in a team of practitioners. Very early in the study they expressed the view that work placement was infinitely preferable to the college-based part of their training, and that college work seemed irrelevant and a waste of time. Two examples from many were:

- Rosie: 'You don't learn much in college. That's the conclusion I've come to. We may as well just have assignments sent to us in the post to do and just do work experience throughout the whole two years'.
- Jess: 'I don't really learn much in class'.

It was soon clear that the students were experiencing difficulties when they tried to reconcile what they found in work placement with what they were being taught in college. There appeared to be a big gap between the 'idealised' practices they were being taught, and the more pragmatic practices they were seeing in workplace

settings. And, for the students, there seemed to be no way for them to bridge the gap to make use of the things they were being taught in college.

These students were obviously dissatisfied with the college-based part of their course, and they saw written assignments simply as tasks that must be completed to gain the qualification. Indeed, this was how the course providers presented assignments to the students. With each assignment brief, students were given a list of criteria they must meet in order to pass, so that each piece of work is broken down into its component parts, and students know exactly what they must produce to be successful. Obviously, the course providers could argue that the clarity afforded by the extreme prescription of content and assessment in the courses is to the students' advantage, and also beneficial to the childcare industry. The students know what they have to, and practitioners know exactly what they are getting when they employ a newly qualified member of staff holding one of these qualifications.

But I want to argue that this kind of training is pushing students into learning in a very superficial way, and is preventing them from achieving true mastery of the knowledge that forms the basis of their work with children. Without mastery of knowledge about work with children, students cannot think critically about the experiences they have in their training, and so cannot construct reliable knowledge upon which to base their judgements about children. In the study, I used Entwistle's (1997) helpful synthesis of empirical work on deep and superficial learning to help me to understand the students' learning and also drew upon Dweck's empirical work (2000), in which she examines the development of learned helplessness in school children. But in this article I want to focus upon the nature of competence-based training and its inherent epistemological and philosophical difficulties, particularly in the case of childcare workers.

Competence-based training relies on the exhibition and performance of tasks that are taken as providing evidence of underpinning knowledge. Tarrant (2000) deconstructs the epistemological assumptions that underlie competence schemes, such as the ones experienced by childcare workers, pointing out that the two separate features of such a scheme, performance and underpinning knowledge, represent two distinct and incoherent models of learning. He argues that training schemes invoke these two models in an untenable way:

> *The scheme is defining knowing both as an inner causal concept, and then denying any inner causal role by stipulating knowing as an overt performance. Such a position is incoherent. It is to invoke subsequently that which one has previously denied … In distinguishing between performance and underpinning knowledge, and placing the emphasis on testing performances, competence schemes bifurcate precisely where they should consolidate. (Tarrant, 2000, pp. 79-80)*

If Tarrant is right, then seeing evidence, in the form of a student carrying out a task or producing written work that meets the prescribed criteria, may indicate underpinning knowledge, but on the other hand it may not. What competence schemes do, unquestionably, is emphasise performance, or looking the part. I asked a student in an interview what she needed to know in order to be a good childcare worker. Kim replied:

> *Wearing a uniform with a name badge would help, because then the staff don't see you as 'the student'. (Kim, 4:31.12)*

All the students said that it was important that they fit into the settings, and that they should not stand out in any way. This attitude extended to be unwilling to ask questions about practices they did not understand for fear of drawing attention to themselves, and some would not even ask their college tutors. It was as if the students were putting on a performance in which they played the part of qualified childcare workers and in this, of course, they may be imitating even the experienced staff in their work placements.

Perhaps 'performing' good practice is sufficient in some vocational training, and it might be sufficient in childcare if the practice on which the performance is based is of a high standard, and if students were able to reflect critically upon what they have experienced. But my observations suggested that practice in some settings was not always of a good standard, and that students' dispositions towards learning did not permit them to develop a critical approach to their work with children. Therefore it is likely that students adopt the practices that they see in workplace settings uncritically, to the detriment of the children in their care. They may then go on to reproduce poor practice in their work with children after qualifying, and thus to influence a new generation of students in their turn.

This is a very serious matter, not least because student childcare workers are so influential in the lives of our children, but also for the wider limitations that are placed upon the students in their roles as active citizens. The current training schemes prepare students for a prescribed role as employees and equip them with a set of behaviours that enable them to perform as childcare workers. But they do not prepare students to be active in their own professional development, and nor do they encourage them to develop dynamic ways of thinking about their work or their wider lives. Tarrant is trenchant in his philosophical criticism of competence schemes, arguing that a system that concentrates on subverting a student's educational role to the position of a future employee denies her the opportunity to develop a broader conceptual framework whereby she can reflect upon the world and her future in it:

> *Where competence forms the main diet of a person's experience in an institution, such an education is fundamentally an illiberal one … in that it both confines the individual to a limited work role and presents a curriculum which precludes the judgement of conceptual schemes which will enable the person to make judgements about their life and the world. (Tarrant, 2000, p. 82)*

Tarrant's critique of competence schemes is persuasive, and Drummond (1995) makes a further point that reawakens concern about the welfare of young children. (Drummond's work is concerned with teachers, but can equally be applied to childcare students.) She argues that making judgements about children is essentially a moral matter, referring to the work of the philosopher, David

Carr (1993) and his contention that: 'Serious teachers are characterised by the real moral commitment to the goals that they have strenuously debated and defined for themselves' (Drummond, 1995, p. 115). Childcare students also have to make judgements about children, but they have scant opportunity to debate and define goals, as Carr proposes. Neither can they develop conceptual schemes to make informed choices, as Tarrant suggests. And yet they are presumed by parents, tutors and course-providers to be able to make professional judgements and to act upon them.

The early findings of my study suggest that student childcare workers are not learning to be reflective practitioners, and neither are they learning to be thoughtful adults in society. On the contrary, is seems that the system under which they are currently being trained may be helping to prevent them becoming sensitive, reflective practitioners. Instead of developing a coherent body of knowledge that enables them to work effectively with young children, they are developing a set of performance skills that enables them to merely imitate what they see in childcare settings.

To Finish …

Since completing the research, one of the participating students is pregnant at the age of 16 and is planning to complete the course around the birth of her baby. Four others have abandoned their training because they were offered shop jobs instead, and felt that paid employment now was more important than continuing with their courses and investing in the future. Three others are working in day nurseries and are in charge of rooms of children for whom they have sole responsibility. Two have started higher education courses. The remainder are continuing with their training.

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Letter

COLIN RICHARDS

This letter was originally offered to *The Times Educational Supplement.*

Dear Editor

All appointments to the leadership of governmental or semi-governmental agencies are political (in the sense that they are made by ministers) but some are more political than others.

Under the last Conservative administration, for example, the appointment of Chris Woodhead as the second HMCI was quite clearly a 'political' appointment in the fullest sense; he was there to pursue consumer (and party political) interests against professional interests. But interestingly neither of the chief executives of QCA (Nick Tate) or of the TTA (Anthea Millett) was political in the Woodhead way. Neither were tied to party political thinking and so could, if they had wanted, have exercised a degree of independent judgement when advising the government in private and when commenting publicly.

Contrast this with the current situation. Every single one of the national educational agencies is headed by a 'New Labour' acolyte. David Hopkins, David Bell, Heather Du Quesney and Ralph Tabberer would all seem to be steeped in the assumptions, policies and prejudices of New Labour thinking through their previous membership of task forces etc. That is why they were appointed. They are all, I'm sure, very able and talented individuals but how possible will it be for them politically and personally to depart from the party line and offer truly independent advice to their political masters? How far will they be able to make public comment, questioning current New Labour educational orthodoxies and so offer genuine educational leadership?

Time will, of course, tell but the obsession with control of the Blair administration does not give cause for optimism. There is unlikely to be any fundamental reappraisal of government education policy while political sympathisers are appointed to all leadership positions at national level.

Professor Colin Richards
St Martin's College, Lancaster

Male Teachers in Primary Education

THOMAS BALCHIN

As a male junior teacher, Thomas Balchin had his concern aroused by the apparent dearth of other male teachers. In this article she summarises what he discovered in the course of writing his MA which was centred around this problem and offers suggestions for its solution.

Male teachers are rapidly becoming extinct in the primary schools of the United Kingdom. We might read occasional articles about it or see a news story about it, but unless we are educationalists, we just put it down to gender bias problems or low salary levels. Having taught in a junior school for two years and been the only male apart from the Headmaster, I wanted to find out if my experiences were related to common currencies across the country. I needed to find out why the problem existed, if it really mattered and what could be done about it.

Nearly all published information on the subject is contained in news reports, studies and statistical details. The most recently collected data indicates that there is a shortage of male teachers either already inside or entering the teaching profession. This is in a DfEE (2000) *National Statistics Report on Teachers in England and Wales*, completed on the 1st December 1999, but much of the data is from 1998.

First, looking at existing numbers on page 31 of this Report, the data shows that in 1995 there were 439,000 teachers, male and female of all ages, qualified and unqualified, in the maintained (state) primary, secondary and other schools of England and Wales. In 1999 the figure was 443,280.

It appears from this data that teacher numbers have gone up, whereas it is common knowledge that it is not so; the numerous articles that have been written in the press and certainly the huge numbers of advertisments currently in the *Times Educational Supplement* (*TES*) dispute the official figures. Page 31 of the Report shows that, from 1995, when the overall teacher numbers were 439,000, they rose steadily to 440,580 in 1997. Then, in 1998 a steep decline occurred and they fell well under the 1993 figure with 437,980 teachers. The 1999 figure, of 443,280 teachers, however, seems to correct this decline and continue the rise of teacher numbers but it neatly disguises the fact that most are part-timers or the equivalent.

Teacher numbers, (p. 31, statistics for the numbers of primary teachers in England and Wales from 1995 to 1999) show the same rise until a drop occurs in 1998 and a recovery in 1999. There were 212,000 primary teachers in 1995 and 214,390 in 1999. The rise in teacher numbers is however illusory. The real picture is shown by the numbers of qualified teachers in regular full-time service from 1995 to 1999, which went down from 188,010 to 186,590.

The Report does not include 1999 statistics for the numbers of male teachers in primary education, so to gain a cohesive view of the situation I have had to rely on data up to 1998. The number of men teaching in primary schools have gone from 34,000 in 1991 to 32,700 in 1994, and to 30,000 in 1998. This last statistic is shown in stark detail on Page 41 of the report which looks at the numbers of full-time teachers in maintained primary schools in England and Wales in1998.

The numbers show that from 1994 when 18.1% of primary teachers were men and 81.9% were women, the numbers have fallen so that in 1998, just 16.6% were men and 83.4% were women. An extrapolation of these numbers suggests that by 2003 the number of men teaching full-time in primary schools will be as low as 23,285. If the current downward trend for men and the upward trend for women continues, and teacher levels stay the same, it would mean just 7.89% of teachers in primary education will be male in 2003.

This seems to bear out the concern of the former Chief Executive of the Teacher Training Agency. Anthea Millett reported, in an article entitled 'Sir to Disappear from the Classroom?' (1998) that 'male teachers will disappear from primary schools altogether by 2010 if present trends continue'.

The recruitment statistics of both male and female teachers completing the BEd, for both primary and secondary education, (p. 19) show that in 1997 there were 8,420 female and 2,710 men in total. Out of 2,170 male completers, 1,470 had become new entrants to teaching (in primary and secondary, full or part time service) by 31st March 1998. However, the figures for the number of new entrants to primary teaching with the BEd qualification show an alarming fact. Of 5,830 men and women aged from 18 to 50 entering into maintained primary education, full or part time, only 700 were men.

Interestingly, even though there were five times as many women entering teaching overall in the maintained primary, secondary and special schools and the independent schools, the numbers of men with the BEd qualification entering secondary education is on a par with women, (810 women and 670 men) showing the huge inclination of woman toward primary education.

The PGCE completers figures (p. 20) show that whilst on 31st March 1998 there were a total of 3,090 women aged from 18 to 50, full or part time, entering into maintained primary education with the PGCE, only 570 men did the same. However, 2,870 men entered into maintained secondary. (30 also entered into maintained special schools whilst 300 entered into independent schools.) This again shows the trend towards secondary education. The small number of entrants via employment-

based routes also shows comparative figures to the numbers of university completers entering schools: 180 women and only 30 men entered full or part time teaching during the same time period.

Page 41 of the Report shows that the figures for classroom teachers alone (minus heads and deputy heads) reveals another worrying piece of data. 88.3% were women, whilst only 11.7% were men. So just over one out of ten primary classroom teachers are men, the rest are women.

So why does this matter? What is wrong with not having equal numbers of male and female teachers in our primary schools? Indeed why not have just women teaching both boys and girls up to age 11 when they will move onto secondary school?

Educationalists across the political spectrum recognise that boys in primary schools have a definite need for male teachers as role models for boys to identify with, learn from, and realise that education is as important for them as for girls. They believe that the decline of male role models is one of the factors responsible for the current poor literacy and numeracy levels amongst boys.

The National Union of Teachers (NUT) General Secretary, Doug McAvoy, explained in a BBC News Online Report ('Sir to Disappear from the Classroom?' 14th March 1998, p. 3) that 'There is a growing concern that boys are being out-performed by girls, partly because of the lack of male role models in the early years at school'.

A *Guardian* newspaper report in its education section, entitled 'The Trouble with Boys' (21st August 2000, p. 1) showed that over the 1999 GCSE exams, girls performed better than boys. 53% of girls reached the required five passes graded C or above, whilst 43% of boys reached this benchmark.

The report states 'the story for pupils aged 11 is even grimmer, with 61% of girls achieving the expected reading standard, compared with just 46% of boys.'

The DfEE *National Statistics Report on National Curriculum Assessments of 7, 11 and 14 Year Olds by Local Education Authorities* (p. 5) shows that the situation has improved little this year. In most LEAs the percentage of girls achieving level 2 or above in Key Stage 1 Reading tests and the percentage of girls achieving level 4 in Key Stage 2 English tests are both five percentage points higher than the boys. The percentage of girls achieving level 5 or above in Key Stage 3 English tests is more than 10% higher than that of boys in all but 6 LEAs examined.

The *Guardian* report states that Theresa May MP (Shadow Education Secretary) believes that one of the reasons for this could be due to the introduction of coursework which seems to suit girls more. The report also claims that boys are regarding serious study as 'uncool'. It is true for many boys that, as they construct 'acceptable' versions of masculinity in the early years of secondary school, 'pleasing the teacher' and working hard are often seen to be synonymous with weakness or effeminacy.

David Blunkett MP (Secretary of State for Education and Employment) comments in the same report that boys are facing problems with the 'disappearance of the old-traditional routes into manual and craft employment in the new knowledge driven economy'. He does however believe that 'under-achievement by any group, gender race or class, should be tackled'. One of the ways he believes it should be corrected is to attract more male teachers into primary schools to provide role models for boys; the effects of which should hopefully be positive enough to counteract negative influences.

A BBC News Online Report 'Why Girls are Beating the Lads' (17th August 2000, p. 1) reports that Dr Mary James of Cambridge University, who has researched the gender issue for OFSTED, said boys were under pressure to conform to a culture created by images in magazines. 'Although people are desperately trying to create role models for them, boys seem to have an extreme amount of pressure on them and it's very hard for them to resist the lad culture.'

Alan Smithers, Professor of Education at Liverpool University suggests 'the problem with boy's relative under-performance originates early on, at primary level. Boys don't get a very good start at school. Some experience failure and then seem to slip further out of the school context.'

Lord Northbourne (Lords Hansard text for 30th November 1998) asked the Minister of State, Department for Education and Employment, (Baroness Blackstone) whether she agreed with his reason for believing 'more men are needed in primary schools as male role models':

> *No one suggests that men teachers are better than women teachers. The problem is that at a certain age, boys begin to ask, 'What does it mean to be male? What does it mean to be a boy?*

The author of the anti-feminist book *No More Sex Wars*, journalist Neil Linden, supports the view that the problem needs to be tackled at an earlier stage:

> *The key factor here is the extinction of men as teachers in primary schools. As a society we've seen it as essential to promote the interests and education of girls. Now, boys are less involved, more likely to be truants, more disruptive and less likely to take part in extra-curricular activity.*

In the Hansard records for House of Commons debates for the 18th February 1998, Charlotte Atkins MP (Staffordshire, Moorlands) seems to share this point of view and highlights the seriousness of this problem with an amusing, yet cheerless anecdote.

> *Does my Hon. Friend (Mr. Blizzard – MP for Waveney) agree that a key problem, certainly in primary education, is a lack of male teachers? We are concerned about the gender imbalance in terms of achievement which, as the Select Committee identified, starts as early as seven or eight. There seems to be a complete lack of positive male role models in the primary sector. When my husband goes into my daughter's school to help run the chess club, many children call him 'Miss'. As he is 6ft 4in with a beard that is rather strange, but it shows how few men there are who can be appointed. As the chair of governors at that school I have found it impossible to appoint male teachers because acceptable candidates do not come forward …*

With the steep rise of one-parent families, it is possible that boys need men in their schools during their early years more than ever before.

Professor Anthony Clare points out in his book (*On Men – Masculinity in Crisis*, p. 167) that children growing up without fathers are more likely to fail at school, drop out or have emotional or behavioural problems necessitating psychiatric intervention. He quotes H. Abramovich's book, *The Role of the Father in Child Development*: *images of the 'father' in psychology and religion* (p. 21):

> *Boys growing up without fathers reportedly experience difficulties in the areas of sex-role and gender identity, school performance, social skills and the control of aggression.*

So, it looks as if we are further failing a whole generation of boys who desperately need male role models to help them recognise/shape their own masculinity without the help of a father at home.

Clare also elaborates an important point made in M.E. Lamb's (1987) book, *The Father's Role: cross cultural perspectives* (pp. 3-25) that the child's experience of growing up viewing their father through their mother's eyes 'effectively alienates them from their own sense of themselves as men. And it effectively ruptures the natural transmission of the role model of being a resident father such that many boys and young men now face their future with progressively reducing social pressures or social training to become responsible and competent fathers.'

Although no outsider of a one-parent family can replace the stability that having both genders present brings to a child at an early age, I believe that, considering that the vast majority of one-parent families are headed by women, positive male role models at the child's school will go some way toward addressing the balance. Boys need a daily role model to help support their masculinity and avoid simply copying the often brutal, macho images presented by the media.

So why, considering that it is recognised that men are needed in primary education, are the numbers of men entering primary education so low and in decline?

First, it is perceived as a feminine job. The BBC News Online education section for 25th August 1998 shows that a study involving 1,036 sixth-formers at single sex and mixed schools, done by Dr Johnston of the School of Education at the Queen's University of Belfast, found that male sixth-formers are put off going into teaching as a career because they see it as a job for women – even though they hold it in high esteem. This study showed that in a list of 10 professions, teaching was highly rated for its value to society, its potential for job satisfaction and its reliance on personal skills, but it was regarded as the profession most suited to females. The other nine careers were: computer programmer, lawyer, engineer, journalist, accountant, doctor, politician, electrician and nurse.

Fifteen percent of the sixth-formers, male and female, identified teaching as their first choice for a career, but that average was made up of 20% of the women and only 12% of the men. Twice as many men as women (39%) said they had never considered teaching. Of the small proportion of men who did seriously consider going into teaching, less than a quarter would want to work in primary schools – whereas most of the women chose primary schools. This data reflects the DFEE recruitment statistics given earlier in this article.

Dr Johnston's study concludes: 'if these teenagers' perceptions are borne out by their eventual choice of careers, this would reinforce an existing pattern which is perceived as damaging for the education of young boys, given the lack of male role models in primary schools.' 'Primary teaching … tends to be seen at present as mother's work or an extension of it.'

Anthony Clare's book, *On Men – Masculinity in Crisis*' (2000, p. 202) uses a reference to psychologist Liam Hudson's book *Bodies of Knowledge* (1982, p. 19). In it he observes that men seem naturally to adopt an 'instrumental' mode of address to the world about them:

> *Wherever a culture offers a choice between activities that are a matter of impersonal manipulations or control and one of personal relationship and caring, it is men who are drawn to the first, women towards the second.*

An excellent study completed by Janet Smith of the University of Canberra, Australia, asks the question that 'considering many young men believe that to be a man means doing nothing feminine, why would they risk identification with characteristics and codings traditionally associated with femaleness?' (*Boundary Crossing: males in primary teacher education*, 1995, pp. 1–9).

Young men are now asking themselves very seriously whether they really need voluntarily to make themselves susceptible to potentially harmful allegations by seeking work in primary schools. The *TES* Members Online Update for the 20th October 2000 states that, according to research by Dr Mary Thornton at Hertfordshire University, male trainee teachers are now worried that their actions will be misconstrued.

Dr Thornton studied another report on male teacher recruitment presented to the British Educational Research Association annual conference in Belfast by Dr Johnston. She commented that physical contact seemed to be a key concern for BEd students. She quotes a first-year student as saying he was 'afraid of being called a dirty old man' for wanting to work with young children. Many men are now afraid of close physical contact with young children.

Janet Smith's (1995) study quoted above encapsulates this well. She interviewed six males in the primary years of the BEd primary course. One of them explained:

> *The disadvantage of being a male is public opinion of males in that you can't give a kid a hug, a cuddle, you can't be alone with a kid, whether they be male or female. I can understand the reasons, but it makes it so hard for males to show that little bit of affection which kids want. They want it from an adult – they're not interested whether it's from a male or female. They're looking for that comfort zone which comes from an adult.*

The protective actions now promoted for teachers such as avoiding all touching of children and never being alone with children may help some teachers from being accused of ulterior motives, but they are not sufficient for all. COSA, the American group who are concerned with falsely accused teachers make this statement in their

Newsletter (*Falsely Accused Teachers*, vol. 5, June/July 1998, pp. 3–4):

> *It is tragic that a teacher cannot comfort and clean up an injured child, lend a support to the deeply distressed, reward an achievement with a pat on the back, or offer physical support in gymnastics without being accused of 'inappropriate touching'.*

It is true that teachers may well find themselves alone with pupils no matter how hard they try – certainly, in my own experience, a child may enter the classroom where I am working alone during break in preparation for a lesson, and some parents have asked me to supply individual tuition. For those who care a great deal about the children they teach, it is very sad that they are pulled back from giving the best of themselves by this climate of suspicion generated by the actions of a tiny minority of people who have abused children.

Hysterical news stories recently culminated in the *News of the World* naming paedophiles. This led to unprecedented scenes in Portsmouth especially, where houses of alleged child abusers were attacked by mobs. For me, one of the saddest scenes was seeing young children, brought along with their parents, wearing T-shirts and carrying placards with slogans on them.

These parents were perhaps justifiably angry that a larger proportion of paedophiles seemed to be located in their area. However, a result of this, that could so easily happen, would be that a child might play on this sweeping distrust of men who wish to work with children and make false allegations against any teacher that he or she happens to dislike.

Whilst children at primary school age are generally thought to be unable to understand the concept of abuse, I worry that the exposure that has been recently given to it may lead some children to half-formed ideas that result in what they might see as a weapon for their use: it is all too easy for children to make wrongful allegations and be uncritically believed. Pointing the finger at a teacher would give a child incredible power if they are angry with him/her and want revenge for being disciplined.

It is hardly surprising then that so few men wish to choose primary teaching. Smith (1995) suggests a number of very possible reasons for doing so, which have significance when proposing solutions to the problem. First, it could be because they believe they have the qualities normally regarded as feminine: patience, empathy, nurturing skills, flexibility, tolerance, kindness, compassion, gentleness and affection.

Secondly, they might wish to reject the idea that males should go into caring roles.

Thirdly, some men have a desire to be cast as a 'hero', entering into a non-traditional career – they may do it to be different.

Fourthly, they may believe that it is possible to fast-track through the system. Page 41 of the 2000 DFEE statistics shows that in 1998, 57.3% of heads in primary schools were male, even though as shown earlier, there are many more women than men in primary schools. This seems to indicate that either men are going into primary education and rising to managerial positions quickly for reasons of greater competence than women, or that they actively wish to 'fast-track' to become a headmaster and minimise their exposure to a nurturing/caring role that the primary teacher must play. Maybe they feel that they can be more effective in a more traditional male role.

Some men stumble into the career by default, possibly as a second option as they have not gained requisite degrees to follow the pathway that they chose earlier on in their education. Page 46 of the same Report shows what class degrees graduate teachers in service had in March 1998. Male primary and secondary figures were combined, so I could not see separate figures for primary, but it is interesting that male teachers in primary and secondary education with first class degrees in any subject numbered just 2,490. A very much higher percentage gained second class honours degrees – 55,380.

This trend is mirrored in the women's statistics. 4,300 gained a first class honours degree whereas a huge 116,610 gained second degrees. If a first can be seen as an indicator of success for young graduates, then it may be that young males may not wish immediately to ally themselves in the job market with a profession that they perceive successful people tend not to go into.

It is not just a problem of recruitment, but of retention. No data was available for this in the latest DFEE statistics for 1999 but during the periods from 1996 to 1997, 6,710 men retired and during the following year 6,910 men retired. The equivalent number of women retiring was almost exactly double for both years. Given the proportion of men to women we have already seen, this is a very worrying trend. It is a sad comment on the teaching profession as a whole that problems with male teacher recruitment seems to follow success in the economy which opens up more opportunities, especially in the high-tech industries.

The BBC News Online from 14th March1998 reports (in the article previously quoted 'Sir to Disappear from the Classroom?') that Anthea Millett, believed that we should concentrate on attracting men by emphasising the worthiness of the job: 'We need to convince more people that teaching is second to none when it comes to making a difference to peoples' lives'. This potential remedy may well have some merit, but how can this be done? Creating a better public image to boost the status of the male teacher using the media is a possibility, but I believe that simply hoping to attract men through enticement without further offers or concessions is not viable.

The House of Commons Hansard Debates for the 18th February 1998 records Theresa May stating that she does not believe that advertisment campaigns will be effective:

> *Some say that the General Teaching Council will answer the problem of professionalism in teaching, but … from what we have seen so far the GTC cannot be seen as the answer to the problem of increasing the status of teachers. It is a sad comment on the Government's reaction that the response is … a cinema advert on the value of teachers.*

The 1997 'No one forgets a good teacher' campaign did win a string of advertising awards for advertisers Delaney Lund Knox Warren but teacher recruitment numbers have dropped by 16% between 1996 and 1999. It does not look as if the Government is prepared to consider other ways to spend money allocated to tackling teacher teacher shortage, however, according to Leala Padmanabhan,

commenting on the Government's new £7 million advertising campaign in the *TES* ('Hard Sell Follows Past Failures', 3rd November 2000, p. 4), 'The warm fuzzy approach has gone. Now they're going for the hard sell.'

'Beer mats, bus tickets and sandwich bags. These are the latest weapons in the battle to beat teacher shortage'. writes Karen Thornton in an article entitled: 'Message on a Beer Mat' (*TES*, 3rd November 2000, p. 4). 'Can you lift spirits?' drinkers are asked. For hungry office workers the question is 'Can you get your teeth into something more substantial?' Commuters are challenged to 'Find a better way into work'. The new message: 'those who can, teach' has already been criticised by teacher unions who insist that only higher pay and improved working conditions will attract more people than publicity campaigns. Doug McAvoy agrees, saying that 'the Government remains complacent about the recruitment and retention crisis in teaching whilst handing the advertisment agency the impossible task of promoting a job which is plagued by excessive workload and high levels of stress'.

Highlighting prospects of better career structures, terms and conditions would be more useful. Dom Antony Sutch, Headmaster of Downside School commented in the *Daily Telegraph*, ('Chris Woodhead Was Part of Our Problem', 8th November 2000, p. 40) that his staff were 'increasingly subject to the intolerable pressure of mountainous paperwork, red tape, and a system of outside scrutiny which is often pitiless and mechanistic'. He states that he has nothing against the demands being made of teachers, as long as they are reasonable, but within his five years as headmaster, he has been 'astonished by the extra burden that has been imposed upon excellent, conscientious teachers … [they] now spend too much time battling through the undergrowth of form-filling and too little time teaching children'.

Those outside the education world hear daily complaints like this in the press, and it surely must affect recruitment levels. Sutch echoes the view that I have heard many times during my research:

> *The vast majority of (heads and teachers) to whom I have spoken draw an explicit link between bureaucracy and low morale and the exit of so many teachers from the profession. One told me that fear of Ofsted inspections had led directly to teachers leaving the profession … I recently visited a well-run primary school with a highly acclaimed head teacher whose energy and capabilities kept her in teaching. She produced a 'policy list' – an inventory of the school 'policies' she is required to draw up in mind-numbing detail. There were more than 65 headings … that were mind-numbing to read. Imagine what they are like as the reality of your day-to-day working life. For the policies are real and burdensome to teachers.*

Prospects of a job, therefore, which require less bureaucratic clerical work than the existing state of affairs, must be one solution. To prepare, mark and deliver a full timetable of lessons is demanding. The introduction of non-teaching staff to carry out low-grade tasks which do not require graduates might help recruit more potential teachers who are put off the profession by the widely publicised burden of paperwork.

Recently Estelle Morris, the Schools Standards Minister, revealed that £1 million is to be spent in supporting teachers, by offering undergraduates and unemployed graduates placements as 'teacher associates' in ten education action zones which will act as pilot studies. She said that the extra support would benefit teachers and also pupils, who would receive extra personal attention. This announcement on the 26th October 2000 came a day after the Conservative Party published a report suggesting that there would be 31,000 vacancies for teachers across the country unless the Government does more to stem the recruitment crisis. Theresa May, who commissioned the research from the House of Commons Library, said that 'the projected figures are appalling. They show the crisis that is facing the nation's schools.'

On top of the issues already listed that men have to face when considering entering primary education, they have to face the fact of the bureaucracy which surrounds schools at the moment and the attempt by central Government at control, especially the insistence on telling teachers how to teach, which has resulted in the stifling of initiative and creativity within the classroom.

This may well have a negative effect on recruitment itself, as many young people who are thinking seriously about taking the BEd or PGCE are attracted to it initially by parents or friends who are teachers. Hearing their complaints, about the growing amount of paperwork that fills their days and evenings on top of a full timetable, potential teachers might be put off altogether.

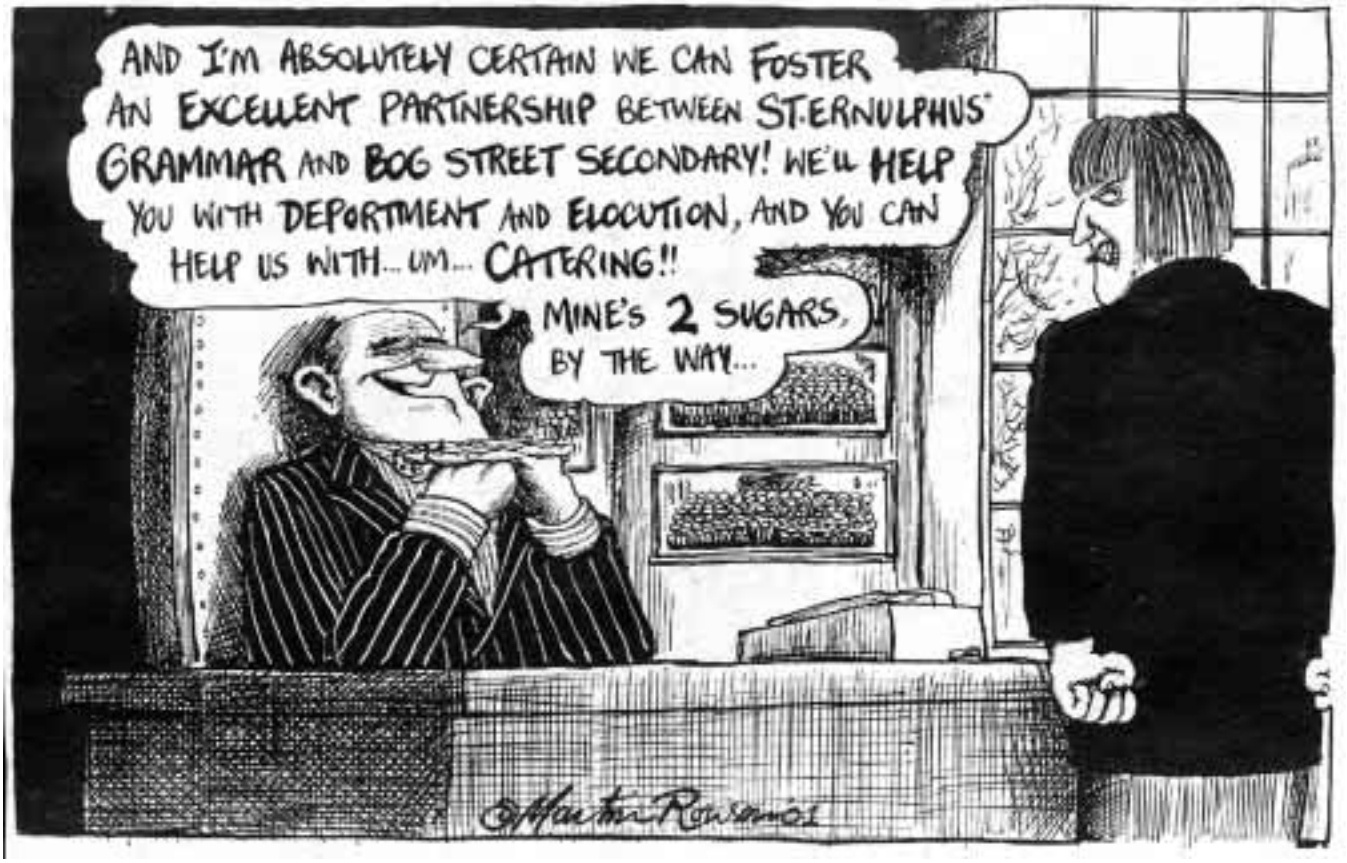
Pay for teachers is also widely known to be unattractive. On p. 24 of the DFEE statistics for 2000, a study into salary ranges and the average salary of new entrants to full-time teaching shows that the average salary paid to both male and female new entrants on March 1998 was £15,050. Both sexes were paid almost the same (men were paid £40 more).

Page 58 of the Report shows the salary bands and average salary by sector, age and sex. The average salary amount of £21,030 is shown for full-time men in primary education over all ages (and £23,930 in secondary schools). Again, women are paid roughly the same. Theoretically, if men were offered more money than women to work in primary education, it would entice them back into teaching. This raises an interesting paradox about equality issues; on one hand it clearly is not right that women should earn less than men, but on the other hand if it did mean that boys gained more male teachers for the reasons already mentioned, could it be just as unfair as a pay difference between the sexes, that women seeking equality of pay inadvertently create an inequality of teacher gender?

I conclude that it is essential to attract more young men to primary teaching; the latest DFEE statistics on the ages of full-time teachers in regular service for March 1998 (p. 49) show that most men in primary teaching are over 30. In 1995 fewer than one in ten men were aged under 30. Almost two thirds of men were aged between forty and fifty-nine. The Teachers Organisation Home Page (26th October 2000) argues that 'the poor prospects for teachers in pay throughout their teaching career are major contributory factors relating to the age imbalance of the teaching profession'. This must be true; men are increasingly deciding that they do not want to work for what they view as a 'second wage'.

I conclude also that better legal protection must be offered to male junior teachers to protect them against the

possibility of allegations. Although this will surely be difficult to successfully install, given the current climate, (wherein it is possible that male teachers might be 'presumed guilty until proven innocent' at the first hint of unprofessional practice) it would go some way to alleviating the worry that male primary teachers are leaving because they feel unsupported, and that potential entrants are being discouraged by 'scare stories'.



Do Boys Need Male Primary Teachers as Positive Role Models?

ELIZABETH BURN
A lecturer in primary education at the University of North London, Elizabeth Burn offers a radically different analysis to that of Tom Balchin. She considers that the invisible female primary school teacher (and her female pupils) need to be inserted into the debate and that established stereotypes have contributed to the maintenance of a highly gendered workforce.

Introduction

> *No country should pride itself on its educational system if the teaching profession has become predominantly a world of women. (Langeveld,* The Year Book of Education *[1963], quoted by Agnew, 1989, p. 67)*

Does '"We need more male teachers" mean we don't need women teachers?' Sylvia, a mature white working-class female primary teacher, asked me this question when I told her about my present research interest concerned with male primary teachers. I feel her question deserves an answer. I also believe that Gillian Plummer's (2000, p. vii) identification that '… the greatest national concern at the present time is the underachievement of boys … The educational failure of working-class girls is hidden' needs to be further addressed by feminist researchers who have focused on gender and education and not offered an accompanying class analysis (Skeggs, 1997, p. 6). hooks has also criticised feminist research for marginalising black and white working-class women (hooks, 1984, p. 18) and their particular experiences of exclusion (see also Thompson, 2000, p. 14). Yet, feminist researchers have carefully critiqued the simplistic notion of male 'role models' for disaffected boys, making visible the reassertion of hegemonic masculinity. Pepperell & Smedley (1998, p. 344) point out how:

> *Concepts of role model and socialization theory are widely challenged in the literature on gender, but used rather unproblematically in the 'common-sense' comment around teacher recruitment in the press.*

See also Epstein et al (1998), Raphael Reed (1999, p. 101) and Thornton (1999, p. 50) for further discussion of the 'role-models' debate.

What I sense has not yet happened is a synthesis of teachers' voices; an exploration of the stereotypes surrounding primary teachers; and a recognition of the political, social, and economic specificity of present calls for 'more male' primary teachers.

Fusing both seemingly light-hearted images (always the most dangerous) and lived teacher voice together has the potential to create a way to address both Sylvia's question and Plummer's (2000) concerns. It may also provide material to provoke government policy makers to reject the spin-doctor approach to teacher recruitment. Their expensive campaigns are seen as insulting and totally unrealistic by most of the teachers and students I listen to. They serve to further marginalise and silence women teachers and girls: many of the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) pamphlets are dominated by glossy images that suggest that the vast majority of teachers are men (many are also apparently black men).

Behind this 'topical' article is a serious purpose: it is concerned with teacher as well as pupil exclusion in our schools. We need 'good' primary school teachers in our schools and to suggest that only one 'gender' (or any other essentialising label, including age) can fulfil this role is to maintain and perpetuate damaging stereotypes.

In the main part of this article I will offer a review of more 'traditional' teacher stereotypes, which are equally unrepresentative, but have serious consequences for present recruitment and promotion patterns in English primary schools. I intend to insert the voices of female and male primary teachers themselves, attempting to make visible complex and contradictory notions of 'ideal type' primary teachers. I explore the historical origins of these stereotypes, and review relevant research findings. Finally, I draw some conclusions for future advertisement initiatives that are more equitable and socially just. Recruitment campaigns that do not rely on unproblematic 'commonsense' appeals for '*more men*' but instead listen to teachers' views and draw from pertinent research evidence.

Debates and Discourses that Surround the Role of the Primary Teacher

This section is written to make more visible and thus open to challenge (Duncan 1996, p. 169) the complex and often contradictory discourses that inform the present government and media campaigns to recruit more male primary teachers (Teacher Training Agency [TTA], 1996, 2000) in England and Wales. The TTA slogan:

> *Every Good Boy Deserves Football (advert 1999)*

well illustrates the on-going linkage made between football, male teachers and boys. Skelton (2000, p. 15) has

researched how dominant masculinities are still constructed in primary schools though the employment of football to engage boys' interest, 'football was a crucial feature of hegemonic masculinity'.

The TTA slogan was supposedly aimed at recruiting more primary teachers in England and Wales, but the focus is undeniably on boys and men. Raphael Reed (1999, p. 102) argues that:

> *… calls for increasing the employment of male primary teachers to counteract the feminising effects of primary education and provide positive role models have failed to ask questions about the type of masculinity being reproduced by male primary teachers …'*

In an occupation where only 16.4% of primary teachers are male, with a marked decrease in the 21-29 age group (Statistics of Education Teachers England and Wales 2000) the need to re-introduce male authority is increasingly concerning the media and the government. This discourse is inter-linked with the media attack on single parents and serves to further stigmatise female teachers:

> *Nursery boys 'devalued' by female teachers. (Leake, 2001)*

This sentence in the *Sunday Times* headlines an article that argues the 'predominance of women in nursery education is making boys feel inferior'. It quotes statistics to show the vast majority of nursery teachers are female and expresses great concern over the lack of positive role models for boys and thus any encouragement for boys 'games and sport'. The male journalist suggests that women teachers favour girls and reports that the government is to set targets to recruit more men in order to tackle this serious issue. The article discusses how men must also face the worry of being accused of child abuse in this sector of schooling. The tone and content of the report valorises men, assumes women and girls do not play sport and once again positions the female teacher as deficit. We see the male teacher written as 'hero' needed to rescue the boys from these discriminatory women teachers and their young favoured female pupils who have 'superior verbal abilities'.

These public images that continue to surround the role of 'primary teacher' are deeply embedded within English cultural traditions and their long-term usage continues to influence recruitment, subsequent promotion patterns and increasingly government education policy. However, as Weber & Mitchell (1995, p. 5) write, 'These images have remained largely unexamined and their significance unnoticed'.

These images at the present time define men as an asset in primary classrooms (Pepperell & Smedley, 1998, p. 342), whilst women are increasingly seen as deficit (Miller, 1996). It is clear that public beliefs and promotion patterns continue to reflect the historical themes that Langeveld (1963) drew on in his text: themes that greatly devalue women teachers and girls whilst, affirming male authority and boys interests. Yet, as Skelton (2000, p. 12) also reminds us, '… not *all* men teachers position themselves within footballing discourses'.

In my own interviews with female and male inner-city primary teachers (Burn, 1999, 2000, 2001) I have listened to anger from the men who do not want to be defined in such an essentialist way as sports/discipline men:

> *I'm* not *their father! Even when I was still on teaching practice, the female year six teacher sent me the 'naughty boys' to discipline. I was teaching in year four … they had found out in the staffroom I had been in the army … (A mature white working-class male teacher)*

Issues of race and class are implicated in these gender stereotypes:

> *It's very isolating … at times you are just assumed to be a strong male teacher … I was given a year 3 and 4 class. I was the only male with the team … I had a disproportionate number of boys with behaviour and emotional problems … only 9 girls … at least 70% of the boys were black. I don't know how they thought I could manage such a large group of boys [he was in his first year of teaching] as it turned out I really couldn't. (A black working-class male teacher)*

These rejections of 'discipline man' are not supported by all the male teachers I listened to; instead they employed the stereotype for career advantage, 'Children were getting used to the females shouting at them. Males have a deeper voice-it's a weapon' (white early-years male teacher). These claims to being more able to control the children (and also gain respect from parents and governors) are supported by direct reference to physicality:

> *I believe you get 'easier' discipline if you are a man … I think it is an advantage … especially the boys … parents come in and they can see my size … I'm quite tall and 15 stone and I can use it as well … if the children are fighting I can get in their space. (A white working-class male teacher)*

All the women primary teachers I have listened to have commented with anger on the status given to male teachers due to this 'discipline man' image. An image that translates into the idea that 'we need a man' (a white female head teacher).

> *… men* are *favoured and they are perceived as being the authoritarian figures within the school … (A white working-class female teacher)*

> *I think kids come into school and if they've got a man in the classroom they respond differently. They think they can't get away with as much … (A mature white working-class female teacher)*

These notions of male authority are not new; twelve years ago Grant's (1989, p. 46) research presented a female primary teacher discussing her experience of being interviewed for senior management. The excerpt below demonstrates how the discipline discourse is applied to 'strong' men who employ their physicality:

> *John who got the headship, he is 6ft 2, 15 stone, has a loud voice. He plays – he is a bully – and he plays a very hard line in that school. Now within Carlton Green there is the perception that it's a tough school and it needs a big strong man.*

It would be informative to hear John's version of why he was appointed to the post, would he ascribe his career success to his masculinity and his ability to be 'strong'? These images of 'discipline man' were echoed in the conversations of other women teachers that Grant interviewed, and similar views were reported by Acker (1994).

I suggest from my own experience of teaching in primary schools for seventeen years, that the discipline man discourse is central to maintaining unfair staffing and promotion patterns in this sector of education. I was told as long ago as 1979, 'of course you know they want a man' just prior to interview for deputy headship in an inner-city primary school, by the male Chair of Governors (a young man was appointed).

The increasing feminisation of primary teaching itself over the last twenty years has not been marked by more equitable promotion patterns; in fact, now scarcity seems to further advantage any male teachers who apply for the job. Thornton & Bricheno (2000, p. 203) carried out a recent review of English primary school staffing and promotion patterns. Their statistics confirm continuing male career advancement, '… men in primary teaching work in an increasingly female and low status profession, but within it they achieve disproportionate power and status'.

The feminisation of primary school staffing 'does not equal feminist' (Coffey & Delamont, 2000, p. 48). Skelton (1991, p. 284) found male teachers were well aware of their career advantage. Conflicting views emerged from the male teachers she interviewed; David discussed a sense of having 'no control' over promotion paths, 'Men are pushed into deputy head, headships because they are men'.

Whilst, Andrew drew on traditional ideas of masculinity, stating, 'Men after all, first of all, are men and therefore the sort of society we live in alas, expects them to be slightly superior and able to do this'.

In my own research I have listened to male primary teachers complaining bitterly about being expected to 'go up the greasy pole' in terms of management. The role of management as a masculine preserve is further reinforced by the new market place ideologies that are now increasingly influencing primary school organisation and practices. Ball (2000) writes of the advent of a business culture ethic in education, and eleven years previously Al-Khalifa (1989, p. 87) had identified the beginnings of this shift towards a technicist model of management within primary school management.

A management model displaying: 'characteristics which are commonly depicted as "masculine": analytical detachment, strong task direction, "hard-nosed" toughness.' Notions of female and male difference frame the present 'ideal type' of primary teacher and the accompanying retention and promotion patterns within the internal labour market (Evetts, 1989). The 'new work regimes' (Mahony & Hextall, 2000, p. 97) that are increasingly impacting on primary teaching, invite what is seen as a hard masculinist model of management. Teachers refer to this when I interview them, but they do not always see these new roles as being filled by male teachers alone, 'That's the new image, suited folk with ring binders under their arms and clip boards. Its management' (a mature white working-class female teacher).

This 'image' of the new young management man or woman does not fit easily with football man/dim mother. However, it does exemplify how 'masculinity and femininity' are themselves notional concepts rather than essential sex differences (Francis & Skelton, 2001, p. 11). In this new image 'suited' women can occupy the corporate management role as well as men, but again only certain 'types' of women fit this stereotype. One female teacher defined them as: 'Mrs Thatcher's women'.

The division between the early years and the junior sector is also highly significant, 'as the proportion of men increases, women's representation at headship level decreases' (Grant, 1989, p. 36).

The female dominated infant school, as Evetts (1989, p. 192) records does provide more promotion opportunities for women. Acker's research findings further confirm this pattern of promotion (1994, p. 108). In 1992, 99% of infant head teachers were female: whilst, in junior schools 75% of primary head teachers were male. This staffing divide was referred to in Leake's (2001) article that so criticised female nursery teachers, 'just 1% of Britain's 215,000 nursery teachers being men'.

It is worth comparing these figures to previous historical periods where, '… in the early years of the nineteenth century the majority of teachers of infants were men' (Steedman, 1987, p. 120). So the 'immutable concept of the woman teacher as a married woman, with small children' (National Union of Teachers [NUT], 1980, p. 54) needs to be set in a specific social historical context. In 1849, 68% of pupil teachers in English elementary schools were male and only 32% were female (Tropp, 1957, p. 22). The gender and social class composition of teachers in primary schools has altered throughout the last century due to a complex range of social, political and economic circumstances, including wars and changing global labour markets (Copelman, 1996).

Today over 80% of all primary teachers in England and Wales are female (Coffey & Delamont, 2000, p. 46). However, underlining all these changes has been the centrality of women's continuing domestic role. This is implicated in the present dominance of women in the early years, since:

> *Caring has been led by a nurturing model, nurturing itself being principally defined as like mothering. Early childhood services have to a greater or lesser extent been seen as offering mother substitutes. (Cameron et al, 1999, p. 165)*

I also suggest that new 'management man/woman' market ideologies may be attempting to replace these more traditional stereotypes. However in the early years we still find a 'deviant man' (Skelton, 1991) discourse used to keep men 'out of the kitchen' so that women can become 'mother-made-conscious' (Steedman, 1992, p. 179).

Again my own interviewees refer to these maternal stereotypes, sometimes refuting them and sometimes claiming them in order to gain status, '… they feel that I am there to bring up their children and be a surrogate mother … I am *not* there to put their children on the toilet' (a mature white working-class female early years teacher).

Women early years teachers are well aware of their lack of status and authority:

there's an under-currency that you go and take the Early Years and Reception because you can cope with the child wetting themselves and you need to tie their laces, its: 'Penny you go and deal with this child that's just fallen over'! (a sing-song voice). *(A young white working-class female early years teacher)*

However, if the familial stereotype places the female teacher as 'substitute' mother, then the male teacher is left with the role of 'father', especially for the single parent family. Cameron et al (1999) also identified the discourse of the male as being needed to compensate for the absent father in single parent families. The team of researchers comment on how male early years workers are seen as 'naturally' being more interested in sport, ball games and playing with vehicles by the female staff. Thus the gendered norms are written into the multiple stereotypes that continue to surround male and female teachers in England. Stereotypes that impact on maintaining gendered staffing and promotion patterns within the profession. It again evidences 'the patriarchal division of private and public'(Dillabough, 2000, p. 169) with 'female' work defined as merely an extension of the domestic domain with the accompanying status of 'non-worker'. I have lost track of the times I have been told that primary teaching was ideal for me as it 'fitted' into my domestic commitments (I had three children) an extension of my private household duties.

There seems to have become established over the years an immutable concept of the woman teacher as a married woman, with small children, who is uninterested in promotion. As far as can be ascertained, all women teachers, single, childless, old and young, are related to this concept with inevitable and disastrous consequences for their career prospects. (NUT, 1980, p. 54)

In the same way that women are viewed through their childrearing potentials, men are viewed as providers and protectors who must be given authority and status. The common gendered construction of primary teaching as 'caring' and thus an extension of the 'mothers' role, is discussed by King (1998, p. 8) in his American study, 'In the case of primary teaching, we so consistently talk about what it is (caring) to conceal what it cannot be (male)'.

Male primary teachers must therefore not occupy the 'caring' role, they are positioned as having different roles to inhabit in the wendy house: roles that continue to replicate the patriarchal norm. This is a defining feature of the many stereotypes that surround the occupation. The persistence of these discourses contributes to valuing, 'traits stereotypically attributed to men' (Grant, 1989, p. 47) but only if men demonstrate them.

These stereotypes that still shape recruitment, staffing and promotion patterns today, despite TTA publicity campaigns have developed from early ideas concerned with the role of women (and by association their female pupils) in England. In 1912 the London County Council Woman Teachers' Union campaigned for separate education for girls, 'The appropriate education of those who will ere long become the mothers of the Empire' (*Women Teachers' World*, 31st January 1912, p. 640, quoted by Copelman, 1996, p. 221).

This quotation is a good example of how the maternal discourse was situated within the colonial one and translated into a continuation of Louisa Hubbard's earlier campaign in 1870s to recruit women teachers who embodied the nineteenth century 'solid middle-class domestic ideology' (Widdowson, 1980, p. 31). This discussion of 'appropriate' behaviours for female teachers has been in the news again eighty-nine years later.

The *Times Educational Supplement* (*TES*) (1 June 2001) editorial referred to an on-going media debate concerning a young white female teacher who was taking part in a television game show. The *TES* concluded that 'the naked teacher' as they named her, had let the school down. This popular teachers' weekly newspaper held a poll to see if other teachers believed that she should be sacked for 'lewd' behaviour: teachers supported the female teacher, rather than the press. Once again in this media debate, we can trace the continuation of the Victorian discourse that positioned the female teacher as a 'moral guardian of the nation'. The same image was made visible in Walkerdine's (1989, p. 78) description, 'She must strive to counter the effects of bad mothering to secure democratic rather than rebellious citizens'.

The idea that the teacher has to set an example to society (provide a role model) is also embedded in Hoyle's (1969, p. 25) book aimed at teachers and student teachers in England and Wales. In his book, concerned with primary and secondary teachers, social class norms as well as sexual mores are part of the teachers' role to uphold in society:

By virtue of his occupational status the teacher is 'middle class,'… Furthermore it is expected that these will be the norms which he will embody and seek to transmit to his pupils.

In this excerpt we see how gender and class and race are implicated in the stereotype of teacher as role model. The 'teacher' in this book is always assumed to be a white male and in transmission mode. The rare mention of any 'female' teacher is clearly accompanied by a nurturing role discourse and an early years label (Hoyle, 1969, p. 49). The female teacher has herself a specific function to perform as a 'socialising agent':

The concept of the infant school teacher as a mother figure is an appropriate one since one of her main tasks is to wean the child away from its psychological dependence upon the home …

The male junior teacher in his primary role of 'instructor' is also defined by sex-typed characteristics (Hoyle, 1969, pp. 65, 66). In Hoyle's book the ideal type of the male teacher is presented as a 'father' who is efficient in carrying out his 'tasks'. The book then offers a further set of teacher types. The roles are male and they are all are set within the context of the patriarchal family. Teacher as grandfather; teacher as elder brother; teacher as uncle; teacher as cousin, 'The image here is of a rather wayward cousin. He has much to teach his pupils, but he is not greatly interested in them.' Oram's (1989, p. 31) analysis of the primary school as an institution modelled on the familial structure is clearly evidenced throughout Hoyle's book. She comments, 'The younger the children the more apt is women's place as their teacher. The sexual division

of labour in the profession has emphasized this familial structure.' Hoyle's stereotyping of the paternal male teacher who 'instructs' Junior pupils is in clear contrast to the maternal, 'weaner' of children found in the Reception classroom.

The present gendered stereotypes concerning primary teachers are not just found in English culture. Research in other countries also reveals the establishment of the female 'nurturers' and the male 'managers' who control and protect them within schools whilst having to provide positive role models for the boys. The widespread notion that 'we need a man' for instance, is apparent in a young male teacher's account (Bill) of why he clearly assumes a leadership position in his Australian early years workplace (Sumsion, 2000, p. 137):

> *… he anticipates using his privileged male status to utilise existing structural gender inequalities to enhance the status of early childhood education.*

Bill is carefully employing his masculinity to gain career 'advancement' claiming he intends to help gain 'public credibility' for this sector of education. Yet as Sumsion's analysis argues he embraces a 'complicit masculinity' by taking on this role. Bill strongly denies this interpretation, which sees him conforming to a conventional masculinity, despite his non-traditional occupation.

Sumsion's research refers to many teacher stereotypes that are similar to the ones I have already discussed. The need to 'compensate' for too many women teaching in this sector of education and the positioning of the role as primarily women's work with a focus on nurturing and maternal discourses is clearly present. Sumsion (2000, p. 130) further alludes to the stereotype of the gay man or the male child abuser being attracted to teaching young children. The man who wants to teach young children is simultaneously positioned as 'wimp or pervert' as well as 'hero and sportsman'.

These may be different stereotypes than those that surround female primary teachers but they are similarly damaging, revealing essentializing practices that seek to fix and naturalize groups. People are classified according to a mythical 'norm' and those who transgress these boundaries are censored and stigmatised. Hall (1997, p. 258) writes 'another feature of stereotyping is its practice of 'closure' and exclusion. It symbolically fixes boundaries, and excludes everything that does not belong.'

Francis (2000, p. 15) has identified a list of attributes that demonstrate how notional ideas of femininity and masculinity in western societies still operate in English schools. Her research was concerned with secondary pupils; my reading of the many stereotypes that still surround the occupation of 'primary teacher' reveals the same gender dichotomy is applied to teachers.

King (1998, p. 3) likewise acknowledges damaging male stereotypes in his study of seven men teaching pupils in American primary grade classrooms, 'A public perception is that men who teach primary grades are often either homosexuals, paedophiles, or principals in training'. Notice King's inclusion of the clear promotion advantage that is also built in to male teacher career paths in England.

In New Zealand, Duncan's (1996, p. 160) research study similarly indicated pay and promotion patterns for female teachers' of young children that favour men. Duncan (1996, p. 165) found identical teacher stereotypes that reveal, 'links between women's work and women's nurturing' Duncan (1996, p. 167) employs Foucauldian notions of discourse and power in order to make visible how these assumptions about the nature of women's work continue to reinforce dominant regimes of truth, and creates a composite 'for the sake of the children' discourse. 'A teacher in this discourse must become a paragon of professionalism, forsaking all and placing the future of the country as her/his goal and the "children first" above all else.'

It is interesting to ask whether male early years teachers, who are not part of this nurturing/work typification can inhabit this role without conflict? Do men, such as Bill in Sumsion's (2000) analysis, have to position themselves within the dominant gender divide in order to flourish in the workplace? The image of the fairy tale is invoked, with male teachers cast as champions/managers of these helpless, hysterical female teachers. Women infant teachers who are seen as endlessly engaged in the stereotyped maternal role for the 'love of it'. Women teachers' who strive to fulfill Walkerdine's (1992, p. 19) 'impossible fiction' of the mother made conscious who must always meet the individual needs of the individual (male) pupil.

In her first novel, written in 1938, Ruth Adam who had also been a primary teacher, drew from some commonly held teacher stereotypes in the1930s. Adam's (1983, p. 275) may have written about the public perception of: 'a stuffy old school-marm' yet, the storyline reveals a range of women teachers who do challenge this narrow stereotype. I did not read Ruth Adam's story the way Steedman (1992, p. 52) interpreted it and it is important to recognise teachers' own sense of agency in responding to the images offered. Middleton (1992, p. 20) reminds researchers that women teachers are not 'passive victims' and they are not a homogeneous group (Burn, 2001; Osler, 1997). In the same way we need to recognise male teachers from marginalised groups in society will also attract damaging stereotypical assumptions linked to their particular ethnicity, sexuality, or social class that can serve to exclude them from status and power in the school hierarchy (King, 1998, p. 115).

It is important to recognise the 'interconnecting relationship' of class and race as well as gender (Reynolds, 2000, p. 82). How does the Black, working-class male infant teacher negotiate his work identity for instance and what stereotypes are ascribed to him? (Osler, 1997). One teacher I interviewed told me:

> *They looked at me and saw a stereotype. (A mature black working-class male teacher)*

It is important to avoid further stigmatising the teacher occupation with these images: whilst, at the same time striving to uncover their existence and impact on role constructions and policymaking. Teachers like myself may well attempt to contest and disown them, but others will still view us through their lens. We will have been judged as fulfilling or challenging the expectations that these stereotypes set. Pupils as well as other staff, governors and families will operate within the accepted definitions of the 'ideal type' of teacher, unless those 'types' are discussed critically. Johnston et al (1999, p. 61) in their Irish research found that career officers reinforced the notion of 'dim teacher':

primary school teaching is regarded as low level work lacking in intellectual demands.

The male researchers gave a questionnaire to 334 BEd trainees (15% male) that asked them to respond to attitudinal statements that were very similar to the stereotypes I have already discussed e.g. 'It is inappropriate for males to teach young children'. The results when combined with the focus group interview data indicated general agreement that the role is an extension of being a mother. Their research also showed that male trainees placed more value on the notion that 'you need a man' in schools. The same discourse has been increasingly employed in the present 'failing boys' debate. A notion that Johnston et al (1999, p. 60) describe as: 'akin to a moral stance'. The 'we need a man to save the failing boys' discourse employed by the press and TTA campaigns continues this 'moral' stance.

This article argues that these well-known teacher stereotypes are not insignificant; although the lack of systematic research into their construction suggests that they are of little importance. My colleagues and I have lived with them all our working lives; and when you are often told you 'look just like a teacher' the first thing you reflect on is which of the many stereotyped discourses is the speaker actually drawing on.

Government attempts to redefine the role of primary teachers without reference to these well known stereotypes with their inherent gender dichotomies of nurture neurotic woman verses rational management man avoids acknowledging the many subtle ways traditional patriarchal power relations continue to be replicated and re-affirmed within the staffing hierarchy of English primary schools. A staffing pattern that has been developed over the last century and is further sub-divided between infant and primary schools. This pattern is evidenced in all of the popular teacher stereotypes that I have explored in this article. The frustrated spinster to be pitied (Beddoe, 1989, p. 27) of the 1920s may have moved on to the dim mother of the 1990s (Miller, 1996, p. 13) but both stereotypes are still part of the gendered discourse that Miller carefully evidences in her book. A discourse that advantages male primary teachers, providing that they too accept their prescribed authority roles. At the present time the authority role is being refocused on the disaffected boys. Male teachers, especially the black ones, must provide role models to re-engage boys in the 'curriculum of the dead' (Ball, 1994, p. 28). The 'failing girls' as Plummer (2000, p. 200) reminds us do not even exist in present government policy priorities.

Conclusions

In this article I have offered a necessarily partial and personal review of commonly held assumptions and stereotypes that operate to maintain the traditional patriarchal staffing order in English primary schools. I illustrated this review with teacher voices and research in the field. I have drawn from Weber & Mitchell's (1995) views that we can profitably interrogate these taken-for-granted stereotypes, with the intention of challenging them. 'We' includes primary teachers as well as teacher educators such as myself. Researchers must aim to produce scholarly and accessible evidence that can be used by educational policy makers in order to better inform their recruitment strategies. Teachers' own voices must be inserted into government educational policymaking that so impacts on their work reality. I have shown the TTA slogan, 'Every good boy deserves football' to a wide range of inner-city female and male primary teachers and students, and their responses have been unanimous – rubbish! I do not use this emotive word lightly.

I personally find the present government recruitment slogans, such as:

Can you battle with the Roundheads and win?
Can you manage a football team?
Can you teach?(Seen on a billboard London underground station, 2001)

insulting and excluding in their content. Teaching is not 'war' any more than a male preferred sport. Whilst visual images used by the TTA, which are exemplified by a close-up featuring half of a young black boy's face with a flame in his eye needs to be looked at (Hall, 1997, p. 225) in the light of high black male exclusion rates in our state schools (Sewell, 2000). What messages are these images giving to the public?

However, in this initial attempt to '*ignite*' a discussion involving teachers as well as policy makers; rather than '*light a fire*' (another TTA slogan) I have focused on the traditional stereotypes that my research data suggests still operate to define primary teachers. Since qualifying as a teacher in 1970, I have seen too many excellent female and male primary teachers suffer discriminatory treatment because they do not 'fit' in to or accept these stereotypes. They refute the idea of a dim mother or a deviant/ discipline/ sportsman. In the light of this latest TTA recruitment campaign I think Sylvia's question is a reasonable one. Government policy makers need to reflect on her question and start to address it in future publicity campaigns.

Meanwhile, my memory work (Davies et al, 2001, p. 168) is full of scenarios that evidence the way these seemingly trivial and light-hearted stereotypes have affected colleagues and been used to exclude them. I believe that the most treacherous discourses are the ones we do not notice or think are not worth challenging; their 'innocence' adds to their power. The mature white female teacher, told by her young 'management man' male head, 'you're past your sell-by date' when she applied for a well deserved promotion; the post went to another young man. The young black male student, who wanted to teach early years, being mocked by the female students, 'it's for us really, we're better at it'.

This article concludes that present TTA publicity and recruitment slogans, further reinforce notions of a certain 'type' of teacher and they need to be rigorously challenged by all of us involved in education in England and Wales.

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The Issues Facing Men Working in Early Childhood Education

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In August 2000, Estelle Morris, then Schools Minister, announced that the Government 'wants to see more male applicants becoming primary school teachers as boys benefit from positive role models' (BBC, 23 August 2000). She was supported in this by head teachers' leader, David Hart, who saw an increase in the number of male primary school teachers as the means of addressing 'the problems of the lad culture which is clearly having an impact at GCSE'. While I do not disagree with them with regard to the need for more male primary (and nursery) teachers, they are both guilty of over-simplification. Neither Morris nor Hart suggest that there might be other reasons for training more male teachers for this sector, nor does either attempt to explore the assumptions about gender which are implied within their statements.

Gender identity is a powerful social construct and determines how we behave within a range of social and work settings. Construction of gender identity begins early. Indeed, research cited by Hoyenga & Hoyenga (1979) suggests that adults react to infants differently on the basis of their gender and Rheingold & Cook (1975) and Hughes (1991) record the sensitivity of both boys and girls to the gender stereotyping of toys. The pressure to conform to gender stereotype is powerfully exerted from birth and in the case of boys is strongly reinforced by fathers and male peers (Langlois & Downs, 1980). In later life, men are further constrained by limited choices in clothing, lifestyle and career options. It becomes a 'lived-in experience' for us all and determines the way we respond in the workplace, in the home or at leisure and may determine how well we are accepted in every context. However, it is not my intention to explore in great detail all the gender issues relating to education but I will propose that there are other models of 'masculinity', which need to be considered within the context of primary education. If as a society we fail to consider the prejudices which affect men who choose primary school teaching as a career and fail to address these in a mature and strategic manner, no amount of rhetoric will achieve an increase in the numbers of men choosing to train and work in this sector.

At present the number of male teachers working within the primary sector is extremely low: around 16.4% of the total workforce (DfES, 2001) and there is an apparent decline in the number of male teachers under the age of 30. Numbers of males choosing to work in Key Stage One and Foundation Stage are lower still. Research into the reasons for this is comparatively limited, but Cameron et al (1999) provide a useful account of the principal issues within the context of nursery provision in the non-maintained sector. Most of the reasons they advance are likely to be applicable to the maintained sector, with the possible exception of low pay. Issues which they identify include the relationship between early education/care and mothering, routes into education and childcare, working conditions, role models, relationships with parents and issues of risk and child protection. In addition, there is also an apparent reluctance on the part of Government to recognise the gendered nature of primary education and take positive action to address many of these issues. By way of contrast the governments of many Scandinavian countries have recognised this as an issue and there is a general acceptance within their societies that there is a need to address the issue as a means of reducing inequality between men and women as well as 'improving gender equality for children' (Cameron et al, 1999). In Norway, the Government has set targets for increasing the number of male workers in addition to developing a strategy for achieving this. As Cameron et al point out, the situation in Britain is not as well advanced and suggests that we are 'still asking *whether* rather than *how*'. Within this article I examine some of the issues identified by Cameron et al from a personal perspective as a former nursery teacher and propose a way forward.

Issues Related to the Training and Employment of Male Early Years Teachers

In early childhood education, there are long established links between education and care, a link which has been underpinned by the approach defined by the Macmillans and Maria Montessori, both of whom saw care and education as being inextricably linked. Bowlby's theories of attachment in the 1950s served only to reinforce this connection. This connection between mothering and care has contributed to the predominance of women working within lower primary education. However, the link between care and mothering is one which needs to be challenged, as within it there is an implicit assumption that women are naturally inclined to be better at caring for and meeting the needs of young children. However, as Smale (2001) points out, 'fathers have always been involved with their children' and that, in general, 'they are sensitive and responsive to their young children'. Research cited by Tizard (1986) suggests that in about 30% of all cases the

young child's main attachment is to their father. Despite this, men have largely been excluded from the care and education of young children outside their own families. To an extent, this has arisen from the industrialisation of the Western world, leading to an image of the man as the main 'breadwinner', with the mother taking prime responsibility for care of the children. But as Monasso (2001) points out, this division of labour has not always been the case and the 'world of the family was also once the father's world of work'. This division of labour along gender lines also no longer reflects the reality of many peoples lives as patterns of work change and, according to Smale (2001), up to 36% of fathers in dual income families take responsibility for the care of children. Despite this the link between gender and the education and care of young children is still maintained and to a very large extent determines the choices of both men and women who opt to work within the field of early childhood education. In my experience, I have been aware of the tendency for secondary schools to promote both child-care courses and work experience in nursery settings to their female students, particularly those who are academically low achievers. This is the first step in the 'natural' progression for women into careers working with young children. According to Cameron et al (1999) similar routes are largely unavailable to male students, presumably based on well-established views about the suitability of this area of work for males.

It is this connection between the care of young children and mothering that provides the biggest obstacle to men who want to train as teachers of young children, as there is an implicit assumption that they are 'emotionally unsuited' to this type of work. It also seems likely that this association with mothering causes many men to reject lower primary teaching as a career because of the challenge that this proposes to their gender identity. Dr Christine Skelton at Newcastle University (*Times Educational Supplement* [*TES*], 5 October 2001) found that 'several of the upper-primary men distinguished between themselves and those who worked with younger children. Reference was made to the idea that working with younger children is not 'proper teaching' because of its association with childcare, and is, therefore, not appropriate for 'real men'.

As I have suggested, this impacts directly on the experiences of those who choose to go against the trend. Cameron et al (1999) report that unlike their female counterparts, the majority of men in their study did not follow traditional routes into working with young children. Although this may have been beneficial by broadening their horizons and allowing them to make considered career choices, it also closed down options at an early stage. For many of them, it was not even available to them as an option whilst at school and the decision to train and work with the under-fives was arrived at much later in life and in a very considered way. Having made their decisions, the majority of the men interviewed found their choice questioned by family and friends. This is closely paralleled by my own experience.

In common with most of the men referred to by Cameron et al (1999) I came into teaching as a mature student having spent six years working in the City of London. My decision to train as an Infant specialist was a conscious one, shaped I think by my experience within a large family. I had been exposed to babies and young infants for most of my life and had found the experience both enjoyable and rewarding, but, despite this when I announced my intention to train as an Infants teacher, many of my family – who I considered to be open minded – suggested that teaching Juniors would be a more suitable choice. The questioning of my choice didn't stop there.

Despite being accepted onto the course, I soon discovered that as a male, a number of obstacles were placed in my way, including a firmly held view by a minority of tutors that I should be training to teach juniors. Thankfully, there were sufficient staff who encouraged me to continue and I also enjoyed the support of the majority of female students on the course. As an intending infant teacher and a male I was obviously deemed by some to be lacking in the necessary skills. This in itself is somewhat ironic as I have always been a better carer than a disciplinarian. It is probable that these entrenched views resulted in the higher level of scrutiny that I experienced whilst on teaching practice – the senior supervisor visited me every time and it is fair to record that the female students on placement with me also enjoyed the same level of supervision – possibly in the interests of equality.

With the benefit of hindsight I can see that this was a consequence of deeply held views about the respective roles of men and women in education. Caroline Benn cited by Sikes (1993) identifies that 'historically, there have always been two distinct teaching functions: the first an extension of mothering, and reserved for women: the second an extension of power and authority, reserved for men' (p. 15). It is this very image of men as sources of power and authority that appears to lie behind the Governments' concern to increase the number of male teachers in society, but the way in which Ministers have articulated this has served only to portray women teachers as 'deficient'.

Elizabeth Burn, in her article elsewhere in this issue of *FORUM*, challenges the stereotype of the male Primary teacher proposed by a series of media campaigns (Teacher Training Agency [TTA], 1996, 2000) and like her I feel uncomfortable with the image of the male teacher that they portray. If we are to make any headway in the recruitment of men, we need to examine the stereotypes we hold as well as those held in wider society. The fruits of a failure to do so in the past can be seen in the current concerns over a lack of 'suitable' role models for boys and this is clearly exemplified in the attacks in the media on lone mothers in the late 1990s and the more recent suggestions that female teachers are in some way responsible for the underachievement of boys. Such views are not only based on prejudice; they are also unjust and do little to alter the status quo. I would also suggest that they are derived from rigid concepts of what masculinity is. From a personal perspective, I find it hard to identify with the tradition model of the authoritarian, unemotional male who is obsessed with football. One of the male nursery workers interviewed by Cameron et al reports a similar experience finding that the 'role apparently expected of him is to embody notions of masculinity that were not in character' (p. 87). I suggest that the prevailing male role model is one with which a significant number of boys also feel ill at ease and that they need to be shown that there are other ways of being male that are also acceptable. This can be achieved only by giving both boys and girls access to different models of masculinity. It is for this very reason

that I support an increase in the number of men working in the early years of education; equal opportunities for boys should be as a big a concern as their GCSE performance.

However, challenging the traditional model is a risky business as it carries with it a strong pressure to conform and a risk of social exclusion – though not in the Blairite sense. Perhaps it is unsurprising that this is the case, in a society where all the positions of power – government, media and big business – are male dominated but there is still a need for the assumptions to be challenged. Cultures of masculinity are so deeply rooted in society and are based on an over simplistic model of what constitutes male and female behaviour. To challenge such stereotypes requires men who are secure in their own gender identity. As Dr Skelton (*TES*, 5 October 2001) puts it, 'no man wants to put himself in a position where his manliness is questioned. You have to be confident for it not to be an issue'. This is an attribute which characterises all the male teachers and nursery nurses in my experience as well as the subjects in the Cameron et al study. It also requires an awareness that gender attributes are not as simple as male/female. The reality is very different and anyone who has worked with very young children, before the stereotypes become ingrained, will recognise that gender identity is more of a continuum. I have never worked with children who conform to absolute models of maleness or femininity; they have always shown a wide range of traits. Take, for example, Holly who was always dressed (by mum) in very feminine clothes but who loved climbing, playing ball and painting, or Saqwadin, a Somali boy, who was equally at home playing football or sitting in the book corner reading. However, as children grow older, it becomes increasingly difficult for them to step outside their traditional gender roles and the role of school in masculinising boys and feminising girls has been well documented (Askew & Ross, 1988; Ross & Browne, 1993; Thorne, 1993). Society encourages males and females to behave in different ways, at times forcing them to adopt roles in which they feel uncomfortable. In order for children to access education fully, they also need to feel a sense of self-worth but this will be compromised if they are forced to adopt roles with which they are unable to identify. Children need access to teachers who provide role models, which reflect reality rather than an artificial norm – 'male teachers particularly, need to help boys by offering them another model of a way of being and behaving. Unfortunately many men in school do not offer this and do not see any reason for doing so' (Askew & Ross, 1988).

Stereotyped views not only affect young children; they also impact on adults and particularly intending – and practising – male early years teachers. Stepping outside a traditional role inevitably exposes an individual to scrutiny in which they are compared against an internal model of what is 'normal'. It is perhaps only natural that in the light of commonly held beliefs about male roles, parents will have initial concerns about men working with young children. However, in the main these appear to be short lived with parents and co-workers recognising the individual characteristics of male early years workers. On a personal note, I recall some initial concerns raised by a couple of parents about the appropriateness of having a male teacher but these were addressed by the Head of Infants and soon vanished. Cameron et al report a similar pattern in the nursery settings they investigated.

Working with parents is another aspect of working with young children, which is potentially problematic for male teachers. In the majority of cases it is still mothers who bring their young children to school, although this is beginning to change as work patterns alter, and while women teachers and mothers have their gender as a common starting point, the same is not true in the case of male teachers. Additionally, the nature of our society renders relationships between men and women more complex. However, I believe that by recognising that working with parents is an important aspect of early childhood education then it is possible to establish a point of common interest upon which a relationship can be established. It was on this basis that I discovered I enjoyed working with parents and built up a good working relationship with them based on mutual trust and respect. Somewhat refreshingly none of the single parents, and there were several including one father, conceptualised my existence as a 'father substitute', nor indeed did I see this as my role. This was not a view shared by many teachers however and I still find myself mildly irritated by those who sought to justify my existence as role model to the poor boys who 'only had a mum'.

Interestingly, most of the issues relating to my masculinity came from members of the profession. In my second year, I found that the timetable had been arranged, at the insistence of the male deputy head, so that I could take football and cricket with the Juniors on a Wednesday afternoon. Apart from being forced to do something that I disliked intensely I recall being concerned that it was deemed acceptable for my mixed Reception/Middle infant class to be handed over to someone else so that I could publicly demonstrate my 'masculinity'. I remain indebted to the teacher who helped me escape this uncomfortable role by involving me and several parents in playing netball with the year 6 girls.

Expectations similar to those outlined above appear to characterise the experiences of men working with young children and do not differ significantly in certain respects from the experiences of the men in Cameron at al's study, where respondents reported an expectation that they would prefer certain types of play or provide firmer discipline, particularly for the boys. From a personal perspective I have always tried to avoid being complicit with such expectations and at times have openly challenged them. There are times when some of the expectations placed on male teachers can be uncomfortable and require a degree of soul searching, for example the expectation that men will be seeking promotion with a view to reaching the top of the hierarchy. To fail to do so can imply to others a deficiency, i.e. that you are not up to the job, with all that follows: closer scrutiny, competence procedures or a perception of a lack of ambition. Most women teachers are free of such expectations although many aspire to and achieve headships. On the other hand to seek and achieve promotion as a male in an area where you are in a minority serves only to reinforce the stereotype and I recall a great deal of soul searching when applying for the post of head teacher of a nursery school.

In Conclusion

In this article, I have explored some of the issues relating to men working with young children of nursery and school age and have attempted to identify some of the issues

which may hinder or even prevent them from doing so. Perhaps the most significant of these is the perceived link between working with young children and mothering. If we are to increase the numbers of men applying to train and teach our youngest children, I believe that it is essential that this link and the reasons for it are explored. It is, in my view a link which is deliberately sustained by those who seek to perpetuate links between 'masculinity' and 'power' and also that it serves to disenfranchise large numbers of children and those males who would otherwise choose to work in this area. Over time it has provided a barrier to boys who are excluded at a comparatively early age from taking up courses of study in child-care. Unlike their female colleagues they have no natural route into early education and care with the result that they have limited opportunities to see it as a career option. In the 1980s there was a focus by a number of teachers and the Inner London Education Authority on working with girls, with a view to widening their horizons and making them more aware of the range of alternative career options. I suggest that there is a need for a similar initiative directed at boys many of whom are faced with options for which they may feel ill suited and even uncomfortable.

To be successful, any initiative would need to consider the needs and interests of males at all stages of their education. In the early years, thought needs to be given to challenging stereotyping through a careful choice of images and role models, particularly as young children are highly dependent and therefore more susceptible to pressure from adults to conform or behave in a particular way. Planning and provision need to consider issues of stereotyping and avoid presenting both boys and girls with a limited range of options. *Flour Babies* by Anne Fine provides a fictional account of secondary school boys learning to care for a 'baby' and highlights the emotional conflict and benefits this project brings to the boys concerned. Nursery schools and classes can also have a more direct impact by working in partnership with secondary schools on projects to involve adolescent boys in working with very young children in a supportive environment. A current project at Robert Owen Early Excellence Centre in Greenwich, South London involves disaffected teenage boys working with young children. All the teenage boys, who are supported by a mentor, spend 2 afternoons working in a class with a child aged between 2 and 4, in order to develop their understanding of the overall needs of the child. Although the project has not been fully evaluated, there are some indications of success; with a number of the boys reporting increased self-esteem and some going on to train to work in child-care.

Colleges offering courses in child-care or Primary Initial Teacher Education need to review how supportive they are of male students who wish to specialise in the early years of education. Janet Moyles (*TES*, 14 September 2001) suggests that male students may need more support than their female counterparts, particularly as they tend to have 'unrealistic expectations of courses' and 'don't really seek help with problems'. Courses need to address gender issues in a direct but supportive way, as it is a sensitive subject, which calls the gender identities of all participants into question. Male students may need additional support with regard to issues related to 'sexual deviancy' and the potential abuse of positions of power and care, as these have the potential to place them in a position of vulnerability. It may also be that male students need to be better prepared for school experience where they are often put off by the reality of a female dominated school.

Finally, I have argued for a different type of male role model from that proposed by Estelle Morris, the TTA and David Hart. I firmly believe that all children have a right of access to a range of different models of masculinity, including ones which can demonstrate that men can be gentle and caring as well as at times strong and capable of exerting their authority. This is after all what they are able to see as models of femininity within the school context. It is only when boys have the opportunity to see that there are other role models open to them, that we can hope to increase the number of male applicants into Early Childhood Education. Current emphasis on reinforcing the macho male role model is guaranteed to be counter-productive and will contribute little to the creation of a fair and just society.

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