Sinking Outside the Box

According to those who frequently organise courses for teachers on managing change, there is always someone in your school who is holding everything back. This person, and the folklore has it that they are white, middle-aged and grumpy, maintains that they have lived through more changes than his or her hearers have had hot dinners and none of these changes have worked. The message is that their pessimism is what is holding back your school in particular and the whole of education in general. Rid yourself of these individuals and the willingness to embrace change will be altered forthwith.

But suppose your teachers come from a different, younger generation and there's still some resistance, what then? Who is getting in the way of 'blue sky thinking', 'pushing open the envelope' and 'thinking outside the box'? Could it be that these teachers have joined others in education who have become distinctly guarded about those people who have recourse to such phrases in the first place? If nothing else, teachers are experienced in the way human nature can manifest itself; many will know children in their classes who become overly enthusiastic about something; who can't understand why others aren't similarly enthused to the exclusion of all other interests but whose passion quickly wanes only to be re-lit by yet another enthusiasm. Many children acquire considerable knowledge in this way and confined to that age-group, and DIY hobbyists, there is little harm done.

In adults who have responsibility for educational planning this enthusiasm for the new, the novel and the different is only too often translated as 'forward thinking' but recognised by teachers for the shallow, transient innovation it so often turns out to be. The impression given is that it is only the new and latest idea that is worth pursuing. Somehow it seems more attractive and exciting than asking questions of the past. Not for nothing has the government set up an 'innovations' unit within education, albeit there still seems to be a distinct fuzziness about its aim and definition. Change *per se* is what is going to get us out of the next problem so why not set up a unit devoted to it?

Education seems to have a disturbing collective amnesia, even for the recent past, so there were some wry smiles recently at OFSTED's new enthusiasm for topic work in primary schools (*Times Educational Supplement*, October 4, 2002) After years of seemingly endless new and ill thought-out initiatives it has appeared there might actually be some merit in examining previous practice after all. This is only a small and isolated example however. It will probably be a considerable time before first and middle schools are re-invented for instance. They are an example of change that was brought about by the insights of experienced teachers and educationists who recognised that change was required to meet the needs of children. Now it seems that the needs of politicians and the business world are those that have to be met. Significantly, 'thinking outside the box' and 'blue sky thinking' etc. were first used in financial and business management circles.

As it happens teachers are not averse to change that directly benefits all their pupils and often welcome it, in contrast to change that is imposed, for example, just to raise SATs scores or boost league table positions. Annoyingly for the government it is a distinction they find easy to make. Imaginative initiatives that meet the needs of ordinary people can often be successful as Michael Young so often demonstrated. He did indeed think 'outside the box' but his fundamental principles were not the same as those who presently advocate this approach as a cure-all. The future of comprehensive education is currently being subjected to this practice in a way that could and is endangering its very existence and perhaps there is a black cloud in the blue-sky thinking that wouldn't mind too much about its demise either. Re-labelling and re-organising schools so that it's hard to tell what it is your child is attending e.g. an academy, a specialist school, a high school, a city technology college etc. etc. is one way of dismantling the structure in the minds of the public. It could also mean that like topic work, a former practice might be reintroduced. Only this time a discredited one, that of secondary modern schools. The ordinary comprehensive will become the neighbourhood secondary modern 'sink' school. It could be a neat trick – after all, except in a few areas, there will be few parents who know or remember anything about them. 'Outside the box' might well be where a significant number of pupils will be finding themselves in a not-so-distant future. And sinking fast.

Annabelle Dixon

New Labour's Policy on Inclusion: will practice match principles?

MARY HOPE

In this informative and critical analysis of the present government's approach to special educational needs Mary Hope, who was a tutor at the former Cambridge Institute of Education, examines the development of one aspect of educational inclusion.

Current Policy

The *Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001*, which came into force this year, was heralded as a reaffirmation of the Government's intent to promote greater inclusion of pupils with special needs.[1] Acknowledgement of 'strong educational, social and moral grounds' for educating children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in mainstream schools was made in one of the Government's earliest White Papers, *Excellence in Schools,* in July 1997. This acknowledgement was accompanied by admission that for some pupils specialist provision would be needed 'at least for a time' (DfEE,1997a, p. 34). A few months later, in the Green Paper, *Excellence for all Children,* proposals were put forward for 'progressive extension of the capacity of mainstream schools to provide for children with a wide range of needs' within a system in which specialist provision would be seen as an integral part of overall provision (DfEE, 1997b, p. 44). In the subsequent action programme, the promotion of inclusion in mainstream, 'where parents want it and appropriate support can be provided' was described as a 'cornerstone' of Government strategy (DfEE, 1998a, p. 23).

Those with long experience in this field have learned to respond to rhetoric with caution. Campaigners active in the disability movement thirty years ago can hear now, in the wake of SENDA, echoes of arguments about accessibility heard after the *Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act, 1970* imposed a duty to provide access to public buildings for disabled persons where 'practicable and reasonable'. Although many children with physical and sensory disabilities are now fully participating members of mainstream schools, some recent school buildings have been constructed still incorporating such features as non-essential steps and narrow doorways. Scepticism is understandable too among those who have been involved for many years in the education of children with learning or emotional and behavioural difficulties. Having been told there was to be an end to categorisation, we have seen

ESN (M & S) virtually replaced by MLD, SLD and PMLD and Maladjusted by EBD. We have witnessed the growth, decline and revival of enthusiasm for behavioural units. Assurances of improved inter-agency collaboration have been given repeatedly. Much of the current talk of 'inclusion' is reminiscent of past predictions of greater 'integration'. If we are to be confident that children with difficulties and disabilities are being genuinely and happily, included in schooling and society, we have to examine carefully the practical consequences of present policy.

The Historical Context

The history of debate about the inclusion of children with special needs in the mainstream of education extends back throughout the twentieth century but has been somewhat obscured by a tendency among politicians and commentators to emphasise the contrast between the enlightened nature of their own views and what they depict as the wholly exclusionary attitudes of the past. In the l950s, however, some official voices were asserting that no handicapped child should be sent to a special school who could satisfactorily be educated in an ordinary school and that the normal field of opportunity should be as open to them as possible. (MoE, 1953, 1954) A section favouring integration was inserted in an Education Act in l976, although it was not implemented because the Government was awaiting the recommendations of the Committee of Enquiry chaired by Mary Warnock. The publication of that committee's report (DES,1978) was accompanied by a great deal of what would now be called 'spin', such that it was popularly supposed to recommend wholesale integration. Similarly, the subsequent *Education Act l981* was hailed as a spur to integrative action by those who wished to interpret it in that way, while others deplored its lack of forcefulness and loopholes left because of the conditions imposed on mainstream placement. (2)

In fact, although pointing out that the majority of pupils with SEN were already to be found in ordinary schools and focusing considerable attention on them, the Warnock Report adopted a compromise position on further integration. In saying that pupils with special needs should be educated in mainstream wherever possible but that specialist provision would continue to be necessary for a few, the present Government's policy documents appeared to accept a similar compromise. Indeed policy makers generally arrive at some version of this compromise because most advocates of inclusion concede that a few children have disabilities so severe that education in mainstream classes is not a feasible option for them. So how distinctive is New Labour's commitment to the

principle of inclusion? Could it be an example of spinning in order to appear humane or to appease the champions of disability rights? Will it really bring about a massive extension of mainstream education for children with special needs and will the children really benefit if it does?

Promoting Inclusion

Although its other aspects are not discussed in this article, the term 'inclusive education' encompasses far more than the integration of children with SEN. It is used to describe education and school culture appropriate to the needs of all pupils, whatever their ethnicity, gender, faith, culture or socio-economic background. By setting SEN inclusion in the wider equal opportunities context, its advocates may well have strengthened their claim to continuing support from a governing party that has given great prominence to its intention to tackle all forms of social exclusion. Since coming to power, New Labour has provided some clear indicators of its determination to pursue this policy. To exert pressure for inclusion in education it has used those mechanisms, some initiated by the previous Conservative administration, that in recent years have enabled the will of central government to be imposed more firmly on LEAs and schools. LEAs are required to publish information about their inclusion policies in their annual Education Development Plans. OFSTED's expectation that LEAs will be moving without delay to implement their inclusion strategies has been made clear in inspection reports. OFSTED has also issued guidelines and instituted training for its inspectors on the evaluation of inclusion in schools. Inclusion is being promoted through another instrument of central direction, official guidance concerning the statutory curriculum, a section on the topic being contained in the handbook for each subject in the National Curriculum 2000. Measures have been devised to facilitate the inclusion of pupils with SEN, and special schools, in the ubiquitous regime of target setting. The announcement that some funding would be available to support inclusion projects was greeted as a significant indicator of seriousness of purpose, particularly by those who recalled the lack of resources to implement the 1981 Act. The DfES has given support for some inclusion-related research and also for the widespread dissemination of the Index for Inclusion (Booth, et al, 2000), a set of materials developed to assist schools in evaluating their own inclusivity and promoting inclusive attitudes and practices. The publication of the guidance document *Inclusive Schooling* (DfES, 2001) in November 2001, together with the revised Code of Practice and new statutory framework, seemed to set the seal on a determined policy for inclusion.

Raising Standards

While aspects of education policy under New Labour appear to have been moving in the direction of inclusivity, measures have simultaneously been introduced, or reinforced, that exert powerful pressures in a different direction. The Government's initial education White Paper announced that one of the functions of the new Standards and Effectiveness Unit would be to ensure the application to schools of a policy of 'zero tolerance of underperformance' which would be 'adhered to unflinchingly' (DfEE, 1997a, p.33) The government presented this refusal to tolerate underperformance as directed at schools rather than as punitive towards pupils and as part of its campaign against a culture of low expectations particularly damaging to poor or otherwise disadvantaged children. However, when school performance is assessed largely in terms of the most easily quantifiable indicators, namely pupils' test results, it is obvious that increasing constraints will be put on a school's willingness to tolerate pupils who fail to perform at a level that enhances its ratings and reputation, especially its reputation among the parents who constitute potential 'customers'. The constraints were reinforced by the Government's decision to continue the practice of publishing league tables, based on a narrow range of indicators, before value-added measures were developed.

The establishment of clear connections between pupil performance and the objectives which were to form part of the process for determining individual teachers' pay and promotion was seen as an important mechanism for raising standards of pupil attainment (DfEE, 1998b, p.8). The Government therefore favoured a type of performance management of staff that would exert pressure on pupils for academic success. That pressure has been intensified by the proliferation of examinations and tests which now overshadow every period of school life from baseline assessment onwards. In these circumstances it is hardly surprising that many schools have found it difficult to create or sustain inclusion-friendly climates, one sign of this being the modifications the Government has been obliged to make to its earlier policy on disciplinary exclusions.

There were hopes that the reform of the 14-19 phase of education, aimed at increasing flexibility and raising the status of work-related learning, would provide more appropriate opportunities for young people with learning difficulties to succeed. However, the Green Paper, *14-19: Extending Opportunities, Raising Standards (DfES, 2002),* was disappointing in that respect. The description of the proposed Matriculation Diploma revealed a restricted view of the education field. It was presented as an 'overarching award' that would 'offer all learners a common, challenging goal', yet attainment of its lowest level, the Intermediate Award, would require the equivalent of five GCSEs with A-C grades. Teachers in those special schools that have well-developed programmes of preparation for leaving, including work experience in carefully chosen settings, already worry that in mainstream similar pupils might be less appropriately prepared for inclusion in the community in adult life. Particularly worrying therefore is the fact that the proposed Intermediate Award is described as providing 'a useful indicator of readiness for employment' and as 'reflecting the usual entry level for employment', thus encouraging the perception that those who have not reached this standard, and have only a locally prepared record of progress, are not capable of performing a job successfully. Since many other Government documents emphasise the message that 'The best defence against social exclusion is having a job' (Social Exclusion Unit, 1999,p.6), this perception could be very damaging for those young people who cannot aspire to reach the academic standard of the Intermediate Award.

Diversity within Unity (3)

For many people a striking example of the Government's apparent lack of awareness of contradictions within its own policies is to be found in the relationship between its

espousal of inclusion and its plans for the 'modernisation' of the secondary school system. These are frustrating times for those who saw inclusive education as part of the comprehensive ideal. Admittedly, the full implications of the inclusion agenda were often not pursued by early supporters of comprehensive secondary schooling. In Robin Pedley's *The Comprehensive School* the Glossary of Terms describes a comprehensive school as 'A school taking practically all the children from a given district (i.e. all, apart from the educationally subnormal, physically handicapped and those attending independent schools)' (Pedley,1963, p.215). The assumptions of that description were widely shared in the l960s. Consciousness of the idea that schools which excluded pupils classified as handicapped could not justly be called comprehensive grew slowly through the l970s and was raised further in the aftermath of the Warnock Report and the l981 Act. Many mainstream schools attempted to widen the comprehensive nature of the education they offered by restructuring their own provision and co-operating in projects with special schools. It was not easy for such inter-school collaboration to survive the impact of the *Education Reform Act 1988*, but some did and it is interesting to hear the Government now advocating similar links as part of the way ahead for special schools. Despite constraints some secondary comprehensives persisted in their endeavours to develop styles of internal organisation and staff deployment that would facilitate participation by their pupils with special educational needs in all aspects of school life.

Now, however, rather than a coherent programme of improvement for comprehensive schools, which many of their supporters would have welcomed, we are confronted instead with the prospect of an increasingly competitive secondary school system, fragmented into specialist schools, advanced schools, faith schools, city academies and technology colleges, schools with varying levels of charitable association or private sector involvement and, of course, 'bog-standard' schools. We are called upon to welcome this diversity among schools, some of which are allowed to select a proportion of their intake, while on the other hand being exhorted as part of the philosophy of inclusion to 'celebrate diversity' among pupils within schools. Many struggle to reconcile these differing interpretations of diversity. Why would a government simultaneously adopt a principle of inclusive education and abandon an ideal of comprehensive schooling? Occasionally, we are given hints of a defensible attempt to reconcile its approaches in terms of an inclusive local education system or better opportunities to facilitate inclusion in the context of improved school ethos. Generally, however, New Labour appears untroubled by awareness of incoherence in its policies. We are left to wonder whether a government, apparently unaware of what others see as paradoxical, has sufficient grasp of the complex implications of its inclusion agenda to ensure that its policies do not backfire, leaving some children with special educational needs worse off.

Shifting Resources

There is a very long-standing suspicion among special educators and parents that integration, and now inclusion, will be used as a cloak for economising on special provision. Despite its assertion that it was 'not about cost-cutting', the l997 Green Paper rekindled that suspicion with its talk of 'shifting resources from expensive remediation to cost-effective prevention and early intervention' (DfEE, 1997b,p.5) and its reference to statementing procedures as diverting or tying up resources that might otherwise be dispersed to more pupils. While central governments determine national policies, much of the struggle for provision is fought out at local level. This Government has declared both its allegiance to the principle of inclusive education and its intention to protect and enhance specialist provision but the task of interpreting and implementing the compromise and reconciling the competing claims to resources falls on local authorities. Theirs is the challenging task of deciding how many and which children in their locality constitute the few for whom specialist provision is required and to what extent segregation is necessary in order to provide it. That task is complicated by the heterogeneity of special needs and the fact that the inclusion of some pupils may threaten the successful inclusion of others, as illustrated by the separate sections devoted to emotional and behavioural difficulties in official documents. LEAs are also operating at a time when arrangements for funding to meet special educational needs are under scrutiny. Particular concern has focused on the criteria used for allocating funds to schools for the support of the large proportion of pupils with SEN who do not have statements. There is considerable pressure for increased delegation of SEN budgets, including funds for children with statements. Such moves are largely supported in a recent report from the Audit Commission, although it does sound a note of caution, questioning the readiness of some schools to take on this responsibility and expressing concern about the possibility of further weakening specialist support services (Audit Commission, 2002, p.44)

Statements of SEN

One option open to local authorities in response to pressure to shift resources is to reduce their number of statutory assessments and statements. The official attitude towards formality in identifying pupils with special needs varied during the twentieth century, formal procedures being sometimes depicted as intimidating and antagonising for parents, sometimes presented as protection for them against unjust classification of their child. The assessment and statementing procedures introduced by the l981 Act have long attracted criticism, notably in reports by the Audit Commission and a recent OFSTED report on LEA strategies which notes that the system can be 'unwieldy, bureaucratic, time-consuming and costly' (OFSTED, 2002). Although cutting back on statementing might release funds for more early intervention and support for larger numbers of pupils, it would not represent a straightforward shift towards inclusion because over sixty per cent of children with statements are now educated in mainstream schools. Some people argue that statements have facilitated inclusion because they have given mainstream schools assurance of provision when admitting pupils with severe needs. Others contend that statements hinder full inclusion because they encourage an individualised and inflexible approach. There is widespread agreement that the complicated procedures have not satisfactorily served all the purposes for which they were intended. The practice in some LEAs

of not specifying as needed by the child, services that are not available or cannot be afforded, has been acknowledged, though often deplored. Delivery is seldom well monitored. There was hope that thorough multi-disciplinary assessment would not only inform the decision about placement and service provision but also enable valuable advice to be given on the teaching and management of the child. However, the value that receiving schools attach to the detailed recommendations tends to be undermined if they find them to be formulaic and repeated on numerous statements.

Nevertheless, for parents the assessment procedures do provide opportunities for participation in the decision-making process and the statement at least represents official recognition of their child's entitlement which can be used, if necessary, to put pressure on the authority. Any attempt to curtail statementing will continue to meet resistance from parents until they are convinced of the effectiveness of more generalised support measures being put in place in their locality. It is difficult to give them reassurance while the implications of the inclusion agenda for teacher training and professional development have not been addressed and therapeutic services contracted from health authorities are often beset by staff shortages.

The Future of Special Schools

In some areas closure of a special school may constitute part of the strategy to promote inclusion and shift resources. Surprise has sometimes been expressed when closure proposals have been greeted by vociferous opposition from parents. However, these parents may have struggled for years to obtain a statement and secure a place for their child in a small school with understanding staff and appropriate learning challenges. Many are deeply apprehensive about the possibility of transfer to a mainstream school where they fear the child might be resented by staff or bullied by their peers. In some cases, children whose needs are regarded as moderate may experience more difficulty in mainstream than others with more severe and obvious needs because their peers, not thinking of them as 'disabled', may be less supportive towards them. The current DfES guidance on SENDA states that where 'parents want a mainstream education for their child, everything possible should be done to provide it. Equally, where parents want a special school place, their wishes should be listened to and taken into account.' (DfES,2001a,p.l). Despite the use of the word 'equally', a requirement to do everything possible sounds considerably stronger than a requirement to listen and take into account. LEAs are obliged to provide services to facilitate the resolution of disputes and parents do have ultimate recourse to a tribunal but the prospect of pursuing the argument that far is daunting, whether their goal is mainstream or special school placement.

Amalgamation of special schools is taking place in some areas. Ideally, this provides an opportunity to improve buildings and facilities and, as suggested in the Green Paper, to develop a staff team that can also give support to mainstream. Initially at least, it may not involve reduction in the number of places or reduction in cost. However, it too can arouse strong opposition, especially where existing schools are functioning well and each values its own school community. Amalgamation causes considerable upheaval for children who find adjustment to change difficult. It reduces options for parents and affects what many parents and teachers regard as a particularly important feature of a special school, its small size. The resultant enlarged special schools are generally promoted as well-equipped centres of excellence. There is a danger, however, that those which are all-age, 'one-size-fits-all-types-of-disability' schools, even if models of their kind, can become perceived, and stigmatised, as places that accommodate all the children no other schools want.

Although the Government says that special schools still have 'a vibrant and important role to play' (Ashton,2002), within special schools there remains some uncertainty about the nature of the role envisaged. They are told they should be outward looking. However, not all special school teachers regard themselves as 'uniquely equipped' (DfEE,1997b) to help their mainstream colleagues to meet complex needs in mainstream settings, at least not without further training themselves. Dual placement of pupils may provide valuable opportunities for some children but they are not unanimously favoured. A report for the Down's Syndrome Association (Bird & Buckley,l994) put forward several arguments against them, observing that 'any child would find this a difficult experience to cope with'. It seems unlikely that an assortment of part-time arrangements, however useful in the short-term, would be

sufficient to have a determining effect on LEA planning for the long-term future of a special school.

There is validity and force in the argument that where special school places exist, children will be found to fill them and that, if we wait until mainstream schools are ready, inclusion will never take place. It must also be admitted that not all special schools have the well-qualified staff and high standards of teaching and care by which many are now characterised. The fact remains, however, that many current special school pupils who have come from mainstream have had bitter, humiliating experiences there and their parents have often been greatly relieved to see them grow in confidence and progress in learning after transfer. In these circumstances, it is distressing to be told by officials that in future children with less complex difficulties will have to stay in mainstream because there will not be enough places for them in special. This is not the inclusive education system depicted in the Government's documents. Rather it evokes memories of the l950s with shortage of special school places and long waiting lists. Enforced attendance at mainstream, regardless of its suitability or preparedness, simply because no special school place is available, is not a satisfactory realisation of the principle of inclusion.

Education for an Inclusive Society?

The introduction to the National Curriculum tells us, 'Education influences and reflects the values of society and the kind of society we want to be.' (DfEE & QCA, 1999 p.10) Are advocates of inclusion over-estimating the power to influence society through schooling and under-estimating the force of contrary values in our society that are reflected in aspects of school life? In recent years, general awareness of issues concerning disability has greatly increased. Progress has slowly but undoubtedly been made in improving facilities and understanding.

Although there are still worrying gaps in the research base for inclusive education, researchers have reported many examples of encouraging progress after the introduction of inclusive practices in mainstream schools. Schools now working with the Index for Inclusion describe enthusiastically its potential for promoting inclusivity. However, it is important to ask just how effective schools can be in fostering inclusive attitudes in the face of the strong exclusionary pressures that exist in society.

The Government could claim to be addressing this issue because inclusive education is only one part of its drive to build an inclusive, cohesive society, an objective emphasised in numerous wide-ranging Green and White Papers. As evidence it can cite the work of the Social Exclusion Unit, Working Families Tax Credit and initiatives such as Sure Start, The New Deal and programmes of neighbourhood renewal. However, the highly excluded prison population is at a record level and the number of young people in custodial institutions is a cause of concern. Press and politicians often appeal to antagonism against asylum seekers or fears of travellers. The media and the entertainment industry, whose expansionism New Labour shows little inclination to challenge, encourage the impulse to exclude. There are television shows, such as the hugely popular Big Brother, that rely on viewers' participation in the practice of exclusion. For every programme that provides an attractive image of a person with learning difficulties there are many more that foster the attitude of 'You are the weakest link, goodbye'. Marketing of cosmetic surgery and beauty products fuels a preoccupation with eradicating physical imperfections. Many people with disabilities fear that developments in the use of reproductive technology promote the idea that impairment renders life worthless. The Government seems increasingly intent on bringing into schools the entrepreneurial values of the business world, but in business the failure to exclude uneconomic workers is generally regarded as a sign of weak management. Schools, especially teachers of PSHE and Citizenship, face formidable challenges in seeking to fulfil the expectation expressed in National Curriculum documents that they will promote respect for difference and teach children to value diversity in society.

New Labour aspires to create a meritocratic society. Michael Young who invented the word 'meritocracy' and used it in a satirical sense, defined the 'merit' aspect as being Intelligence (I.Q.) plus Effort (Young 1958). New Labour seldom uses the contentious term 'intelligence', preferring to speak of ability or talents. We are told it is setting up ladders of opportunity and wants to reach a time when the only rightful place for everyone is where their talents take them. The envisaged society is therefore inclusive but only in the sense that for everyone prepared to work there is a rightful place in the hierarchy appropriate to his or her abilities. In such a structure, few young people with special educational needs, especially learning difficulties, would be likely to climb far, no matter how hard they worked. The abilities they have are seldom of a kind highly valued by a competitive, market-oriented society. In the context of this 'meritocratic' social order, inclusive schooling would be, for some children, merely an ironic prelude to life at the bottom of the heap. We need political commitment to a better ideal of inclusion than that.

Notes

1. The Government's 'Principles of an inclusive education service' are set out on page 2 of *Inclusive Schooling (DfEE,2001)*
2. See the Debate on the Education Bill (Great Britain. Parliament HC Deb Hansard 2 February l981)
3. '… the basic concept of the English comprehensive school – diversity within a greater unity.' (*Pedley, 1963 p.124)*

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The Inclusive Curriculum: an education for the benefit of all young people?

CLYDE CHITTY
Clyde Chitty is Professor of Education at Goldsmith's College, University of London, and co-editor of *FORUM*. In this article he takes a close look at what he is concerned might be 'inclusive' in name only.

The Prologue to L.P. Hartley's marvellous 1953 novel *The Go-Between* begins with the famous statement: 'The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there'.

Looking back over the history of the past thirty or so years, I'm just amazed at the amount of educational and curriculum change that teachers have had to cope with and assimilate – much of it mutually contradictory. A book published in 1984[1]included a table summarizing the major educational and social changes of the period from 1944 to the mid-1970s which included just *three* Education Acts – and none of them with anything to say about the curriculum. By contrast, the period since the late-1970s has seen the passing of over *thirty* separate Education Acts – together with large numbers of accompanying circulars, regulations and statutory instruments.

Yet it is also true that many of the major problems we face today were with us in the early 1970s; and not all the current solutions are entirely new. When I became Deputy Headteacher of a large comprehensive school in Lewisham in 1973 (at the ridiculously early age of 27), the school leaving age had just been raised to sixteen, and in South London, we were facing major problems of truancy and of the small numbers of students staying on in full-time education and training beyond the new statutory leaving age.

At this point, I ought perhaps to stress that while the title of this article is 'The Inclusive Curriculum', my *primary* focus is the curriculum provision for older students in secondary schools. I feel justified in choosing this emphasis in that the last three decades have seen so many major changes affecting the 14 to 19 curriculum, culminating with the publication in February this year of the important DfES Consultation Document *14-19: Extending Opportunities, Raising Standards*.[2]The excellent SHA Policy Statement on *Educational Inclusion*, published in October 2001, ends the section on 'Curricular Issues' by recommending 'the development of a coherent 14-19 curriculum which provides sufficient autonomy and flexibility to serve the needs of each individual pupil, and simplified 'just-in-time' assessment procedures which enable each pupil to progress at the fastest appropriate pace'.[3] Clearly we have a right and a duty to measure the proposals in the recent Green Paper against the yardsticks of 'coherence' and 'inclusion'. How 'differentiated' can a curriculum be before it ceases to be 'coherent' or 'inclusive'? And I'd like to begin by looking at changing attitudes towards the idea of a 'coherent' curriculum since the early days of the comprehensive movement. And in this area of debate, there really does seem to be some justification for Hartley's proposition.

Many of the early champions of the comprehensive school argued in favour of really large secondary schools on the grounds that they could offer a vast array of courses and options to their 14-year-old students. In his influential book *The Comprehensive School*, first published in 1963, Robin Pedley cited with approval the diversity of subjects and courses available to fourth-year (Year 10) pupils at a large mixed comprehensive school in South London, with its 18 forms ranging from 4S and 4K for the scientists, down through 4N for the engineers and 4R with the emphasis on catering, to 4X for the Christmas leavers and 4Y for the Easter leavers. 'Such provision', argued Pedley, 'exceeds in diversity anything a normal grammar or 'modern' school can offer.[4]

The 1966 ILEA survey of London comprehensive schools (published in 1967) came to the conclusion that 'a great deal of care is taken in most schools to ensure that the courses and variety of subjects on offer in the fourth and fifth years will, within the resources of the school, meet the needs of all the pupils and give each one the choice his (sic) interests and abilities require'. It was further claimed that many London schools could offer such a wide variety of courses and such a large number of possible combinations of subjects that 'no two pupils need necessarily be following the same timetable'.[5] I'm rather ashamed to admit that, in a *Forum* article published in the Autumn of 1975, I was also making the case for large comprehensive schools on the grounds that they could offer wider subject programmes and cater for 'minority interests', particularly at the fourth-, fifth- and sixth-form levels.[6]

Looking back, I realise that I underwent my 'road to Damascus' conversion in the second half of the 1970s. In 1977, I moved to Leicestershire to work in a new well-resourced 14-18 community college; and by 1979, I was arguing, again in *Forum*, for a common 'entitlement' curriculum for all secondary students to the age of sixteen. In that 1979 article, I wrote:

'If we accept that the comprehensive school should seek to maximize the life-chances of every pupil, we need an alternative to the differentiating principle which has dominated our thinking for so long. If our state secondary schools are to be truly 'comprehensive', they will meet the

needs of their pupils, not by fitting them to a bewildering variety of courses, or curricula, or activities, but by introducing them to a set of common experiences.[7]'

It is not difficult to find an explanation for this fundamental *volte-face*: by the late 1970s, I had been convinced by the HMI case for a common curriculum based on key 'areas of learning and experience'. I was profoundly influenced by the three HMI Red Books published between 1977 and 1983 and, in particular, by a passage in Red Book Three which provides a neat summary of the conclusions that HMI had reached after a decade or more of curriculum enquiry and debate:

It seems essential to us that all pupils should be guaranteed a curriculum of a distinctive breadth and depth to which they should be *entitled*, irrespective of the type of school they attend, or their level of ability, or their social circumstances, and that failure to provide such a curriculum is unacceptable. … The conviction has grown that all pupils are entitled to a broad compulsory common curriculum to the age of sixteen which introduces them to a range of experiences, makes them aware of the kind of society in which they are going to live and gives them the skills necessary to live in it. Any curriculum which fails to provide this balance and is overweighted in any particular direction, whether vocational, technical or academic, is to be seriously questioned. Any measures which restrict the access of all pupils to a coherent wide-ranging curriculum or which focus too narrowly on specific skills are in direct conflict with the 'entitlement curriculum' envisaged here.[8]

All this, of course, presupposes the existence of a five year 11 to 16 framework for curriculum planning. (It was not until 1985 that the Inspectorate published a discussion document covering the years 5 to 16[9]Then, in the early 1980s, something very curious happened. Education Secretary Keith Joseph came under the influence of a powerful group of politicians and industrialists, often referred to as 'the Conservative Modernizers', which stressed the idea of a 14 to 19 continuum or framework and wanted to see technical and vocational subjects assume a more prominent role in the secondary-school curriculum.

The group was particularly influential while David (now Lord) Young headed the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) between 1982 and 1984, and it was in this period that it succeeded in giving the Education Secretary a new set of priorities. One of its main aims was to see the secondary-school curriculum restructured in order to prepare 'non-academic' students for the so-called world of work. Where the curriculum is concerned, we tend to associate the MSC with the introduction of the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI). This was launched as a series of fourteen pilot projects in a number of carefully selected schools in the Autumn of 1983 and was specifically intended to involve students in the 14 to 18 age range.

By 1986, the TVEI Scheme involved around 65,000 students in 600 institutions, working on two- or four-year programmes designed to stimulate 'work-related' education, make the secondary curriculum more 'relevant' to post-school life and enable students to work for valued and nationally recognized qualifications in a wide range of technical and vocational subject areas. The Modernizers disliked the prestige attached to the academic curriculum offered in public and grammar schools; but it would be wrong to conclude that their approach to educational provision was in any sense 'egalitarian'. Their vision of the ideal system of education and training was, in fact, neatly summarized by Lord Young in an article published in *The Times* early in September 1985:

'My idea is that there will be a world in which 15 per cent of our young go into some form of higher education … roughly the same proportion as now. Another 30 to 35 per cent will stay on after the age of sixteen doing the TVEI, along with other suitable courses, and then ending up with a mixture of vocational and academic qualifications and skills. The remainder, about half, will simply go on to a two-year YTS (Youth Training Scheme).[10]'

The National Curriculum clearly represented a defeat for *both* the curriculum thinking of HMI *and* the model for education and training for 14 to 19 year-olds put forward by the MSC in its heyday. All of a sudden, we were back to the idea of a subject-based eleven year 5 to 16 curriculum. As an example of the rejection of the MSC approach, it is interesting to note how the TVEI Scheme fared in plans for the new National Curriculum overseen by Kenneth Baker. This Initiative was awarded many column inches in the 1985 White Paper *Better Schools*; but it warranted only two brief mentions in the National Curriculum Consultation Document published in 1987. Nowhere in the Document was there any mention of the many new subjects, such as hotel and food services, robotics, microelectronics or manufacturing technology, which teachers had been able to introduce – for at least *some* of their older students – as part of the TVEI Project.

As things turned out, the HMI approach to curriculum planning was certainly dead in the water; but the ideas of the Modernizers were not to be dismissed so lightly. Many teachers argued that it would not be possible to implement the Key Stage Four curriculum in its original form; and as general economic prospects seemed uncertain, there was still considerable support for some of the underlying assumptions of the New Vocationalism. In other words, the battle for the high policy ground was about to be fought all over again in the changed conditions of the 1990s.

By 1993, the Major Government was looking to Sir Ron Dearing to help it out of its difficulties; and the Final Report of the Dearing Review, published in January 1994, recommended that the minimum National Curriculum at Key Stage Four should be reduced to about 60 per cent of the timetable for some students. When I interviewed Sir Ron Dearing for an Open University unit, *Generating a National Curriculum*, published in 1996, he admitted that one of his main aims in carrying out his 1993 Review was to resurrect the MSC agenda of the 1980s. Indeed, the Final Report argues that 'it will be a particular challenge to establish how a vocational pathway which maintains a broad educational component might be developed at Key Stage Four over the next few years *as part of a 14 to 19 continuum*.[11]Bearing in mind the need for improved progression across the age 16 barrier, it was, as John Dunford has pointed out[12]something of a mistake on the part of the Conservative Government of 1995 to invite Sir Ron to produce a report on 16 to 19.

This brings me on to the recent Green Paper with its vision of post-14 education for all. It needs to be conceded that there are a number of laudable aims in the

Government's new Consultation Document. It seems eminently sensible (though this also represents a change of heart on my part) to promote the idea of the 14 to 19 period in a young person's life as *a single phase* – with all students enabled to develop at a pace best suited to their abilities and preferred ways of learning. At the same time, given adequate resources, there is obviously so much to be said for the Government's plan to increase and broaden participation in higher education so that, by the year 2010, 50 per cent of young people aged between 18 and 30 will go on to university – with access widened in particular for those whose families have no previous experience of higher education.

As part of this evolving vision for greater coherence in the 14 to 19 phase of education and training, the age of sixteen loses its traditional status as a major 'break-point' in the lives of young people. In the process, the GCSE, which has been with us since 1986, will become a 'staging-post' during the 14 to 19 phase, rather than, as at present, a publicly-recognized 'finishing-post'.

This is an area of curriculum and assessment where I would go much further. For the past five years, I have consistently argued for the abolition of the GCSE.[13] It seems to me that it is pointless for that growing proportion of young people who move on to advanced qualifications and then some form of higher education; and it serves little purpose for those who leave school at sixteen. It stands in the way of reaching the goal where eighteen is the effective school leaving age. At the same time, there seems to be considerable evidence[14]that because the performance tables concentrate on the percentage of students achieving the 'top' grades, schools are more or less forced to concentrate their efforts on their 'average' students while neglecting those youngsters thought incapable of contributing to the five A* to C grades benchmark. In other words, schools find it necessary to 'ration' their attention in order to concentrate on those students at the 'borderline' between grades C and D. I realise that this is a controversial issue for headteachers, many of whom might argue that the problem would be solved if the Government simply agreed to abolish the relevant league tables.

The Government is surely right to want to create greater 'parity of esteem' between 'academic' and 'vocational' qualifications. The Green Paper proposes ending the practice whereby GCSEs are labelled 'general' or 'vocational' (page 30), and is prepared to consider dropping the vocational label from A Levels as well (page 35). These are steps in the right direction; but we need to move away from the mindset which sees vocational courses as suitable only for those who cannot cope with more traditional 'academic' courses.

In his address to the SHA Annual Conference held in March 2001,[15] John Dunford pointed out that the designation of A Level Law as an 'academic', rather than a 'vocational', subject is a good example of traditional 'academic snobbery'. Interviewed in *The Observer* in February this year, just before the publication of the Green Paper, Estelle Morris emphasized that new vocational GCSEs and A Levels did *not* mean that 'education is getting easier'. She went on: 'There are many people in this country who every time a university launches a degree that has a vocational label, it is accused of 'dumbing down' and lowering standards. If only we viewed medicine, law and accountancy as *vocational* courses, maybe academic snobbery would end. But, of course, these subjects are regarded as straight intellectual academic qualifications.[16]

There is cause for concern that the National Curriculum at Key Stage Four is being further dismantled, with modern foreign languages and design and technology no longer being 'required study' for all students from 2004. The figures from a recent survey carried out by the Association of Language Learning[17]showed that nearly 30 per cent of schools questioned planned to abandon compulsory language lessons for their older students, beginning in September *this* year (2002). It is particularly worrying that the majority of these schools are situated in inner-city areas, raising fears that learning a foreign language will soon become an 'elitist' activity, confined to middle-class schools.

The Green Paper's proposed structure for a new 'matriculation diploma' is deeply flawed. Three diplomas are proposed: at intermediate, advanced and higher levels; but there is a wide measure of agreement that the absence of a foundation level diploma, below the intermediate level, sends out all the wrong signals to those students who are 'most difficult to motivate'. In conclusion, I would want to say that while there are proposals to applaud in the Green Paper, I'm still not convinced that the Government knows what a coherent, inclusive 14 to 19 curriculum should look like.

Notes

[1] Finch, J. (1984) Education as Social Policy. London: Longman.

[2] This Consultation Document was the subject of a collection of articles in the last number of Forum (Volume 44, Number 2) by Clyde Chitty, John Dunford and Denis Lawton.

[3] SHA (Secondary Heads Assocation) (2001) Educational Inclusion: A Policy Statement. Leicester: SHA, p. 9.

[4] Pedley, R. (1963) The Comprehensive School (1st edn). Hamondsworth: Penguin, p. 90.

[5] ILEA (Inner London Education Authority) (1967) London Comprehensive Schools 1966. London: ILEA, p. 65.

[6] Chitty, C. (1975) 'In Defence of Large Schools', Forum, Volume 18, Number 1, Autumn, pp. 22-24.

[7] Chitty, C. (1979) 'The Common Curriculum', Forum, Volume 21, Number 2, Spring, p. 62.

[8] DES (Department of Education and Science) (1983) Curriculum 11-16: Towards a Statement of Entitlement: Curricular Reappraisal in Action (HMI Red Book 3). London: HMSO, pp. 25, 26.

[9] DES (Department of Education and Science) (1985) The Curriculum from 5 to 16 (HMI Series: Curriculum Matters 2). London: HMSO).

[10] The Times, 4 September 1985.

[11] SCAA (School Curriculum and Assessment Authority) (1994) The National Curriculum and its Assessment: Final Report of the Dearing Review. London: SCAA, p. 47.

[12] Forum, Volume 44, Number 2, Summer 2002.

[13] See, for example, Chitty, C. (2000) 'Why the GCSE Should be Abolished', Forum, Volume 42, Number 1, Spring, pp. 28-30.

[14] See, for example, Gillborn, D. and Youdell, D. (1999) 'Weakest not at the table', The Times Educational Supplement, 26 November; Gillborn, D. and Youdell, D. (2000) Rationing Education: Policy, Practice, Reform and Equity. Buckingham: Open University Press; Berliner, W. (2002) 'Break for the Border', Education Guardian, 19 March.

[15] Reprinted, in an abridged version, in Forum, Volume 43, Number 3, Autumn 2001, pp. 131-2.
[16] The Observer, 10 February 2002.
[17] Reported in The Times Educational Supplement, 24 May 2002.

This article was first given as a keynote lecture at the SHA Conference on Friday, June 28th 2002.

Times Educational Supplement, 4 September 2002

Drama – Coming Out of the Wings? A post-National Curriculum Overview of Drama in Education

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Drama as a subject in Primary Schools has had a raw deal over recent years but it seems that the educational tide could turn for a number of reasons.

When the National Curriculum was introduced, specialist drama practitioners eagerly awaited the National Curriculum for Drama. They are still waiting. Admittedly teachers' shelves were bending under the weight of new National Curriculum subject ring binders but there was no logical reason to suppose that with Music and Art having been published, that Drama (and Dance) would not follow suit. Drama has, after all, been an established subject since the time of the Ancient Greeks. Rumour had it that there was a working party slaving away at the task. Before the task was complete however, shouts of 'Enough – Curriculum overload!' were heard and this was one of the inadequate reasons given when a drama folder did not appear !

Cynics were heard to mutter that with an assessment driven curriculum emerging, process based drama would be too problematic for SCAA (as it was then) to deal with. Assessment in drama has always been tricky as so much happens cognitively and emotionally during the drama process, that is not easy or even possible to assess. Assessment records were being revealed as lists of statements of attainment tick boxes and needed to be based on easily observable, extrinsic outcomes. Drama specialists were not sure they wanted such a meaningful and aesthetic art form dissected in this convenient and atomised way. Theatre and performance could be made to fit more easily (as they are intended for an external audience) but assessing Theatre is subjective as well as objective and narrowly defined tick-box assessment lists would also have undervalued and misrepresented the humanistic and aesthetic aspects of Theatre.

At this point there were two main schools of thought amongst drama teachers. There were those who thought that if assessment was going to be the name of the game, then drama could and should be made to fit, in order to ensure its place in the new curriculum. And there were those who breathed a sigh of relief that drama did not fit and had been left outside the new curriculum, where at least it would allow a greater freedom of practice and content, within the broader curriculum. 'Drama in Education', 'Process drama' or 'Context drama', as it has since become known, with its cognitive, spiritual, cultural, social, personal and emotional dimensions did not fit the emerging assessment models.

Paranoids joined cynics in asserting the theory that as process drama was a forum for encouraging, stimulating and liberating individual and collective thoughts it was possibly considered undesirable at a time when a content based curriculum was set to become defined and prescriptive.

Publications

What appeared eventually for drama (apart from an enlightened and sadly, low impact HMI curriculum booklet 17) were two published items. The first was an Arts Council booklet entitled 'Drama in Schools' which attempted to fill the curriculum void. Many drama in education practitioners felt that it made a gentle and narrow stab at attainment targets and statements of attainment for drama. It may have been used by some schools as a substitute national curriculum for drama in the absence of the real thing but most schools just filed it on their shelves. It was after all not an agreed or adequate substitute and did not give sufficient attention to the way drama was effectively being taught as a process based learning medium in primary schools. Predictably, it being an Arts Council document, focussed attention on the extrinsic and theatrical aspects of the art form, rather than educational drama. Tellingly, the school linked illustrative photographs tended to be of professional theatre groups working with children rather than children themselves working in and through the process of experiencing and making their own drama. The Arts Council of England has recently decided to have this publication rewritten. It will primarily be available on the web probably by Summer 2003. They have invited back some of the original writing team to rewrite 'Drama in Schools' with a small number of

additional writers. This has already received a very mixed and volatile response from those who were not happy with the original document and were not given the opportunity to tender for the rewrite. It may have been more advisable for the Arts Council to put out to open tender the writing of a completely new and innovative, 'definitive' document. The document will need to be acceptable to a range of drama educators this time. For many drama educators, drama in schools (particularly Primary Schools) is about the development of dramatic, cognitively linked play skills, the gradual introduction of drama strategies and theatre form linked to the expression and communication of children's own ideas. It is about children as devisers and creators of their own drama, which may or may not include performance to external audiences. It is not simply about developing children as budding actors.

The second official publication published for drama was a large poster entitled 'Drama in the National Curriculum'. Using the national curriculum subject colour scheme e.g. yellow for English, purple for History etc. the poster sought to convince teachers that drama was already to be found in the national curriculum. How could they have missed it? For example in the History curriculum working in role could have been used to encourage empathy. As it happens, empathy has since been removed from history anyway in the revised curriculum …

It is difficult to imagine Literacy or Numeracy appearing only on a poster as within other subjects and not being recognised or taught in their own right because they are used for example in Science! What were the implicit messages that the DfEE was giving about the value they gave to drama? Most teachers did not even see the drama poster, let alone have their own copy. If they did have it, it gave them nothing that was not already in ring binders and it did not in any way recognise or support continuity and progression in drama. It also was too big to display in most staff rooms and too big for the photocopier. It was almost an insult. It was certainly ill thought out.

Funding and Training

Drama teachers, not surprisingly, were getting a little suspicious by this time that drama was being surreptitiously removed from the curriculum. The funding and training implications of this were, and still are, catastrophic for drama. Educational funding and training was linked directly to the new statutory curriculum and before long drama was suffering. Erosion of drama skills and expertise amongst teachers set in. School drama co-ordinators disappeared almost overnight, as did LEA Drama Advisers and advisory teachers. Drama courses became few and far between, relying more and more on professional organisations, which were and are run voluntarily, by increasingly stretched full time teachers and lecturers. Initial teacher training institutions started to drastically reduce the time they spent on drama. Students had little or no idea about how to teach drama and were becoming less and less likely to pick up these skills in schools from diminishing numbers of drama teachers. The specialist Primary drama teacher, who today could make a valuable contribution to the development of innovative and creative teaching and learning styles, was all but wiped out. Creative Partnerships, a DCMS flagship project led by the Arts Council is now actively seeking a hundred Advanced Skills Teachers for Creativity and the Arts (including Drama) in Primary Schools.

Teachers' workloads increased and teachers had less time and funding to attend courses that were not directly national curriculum linked. It was as much as most teachers could do to keep up to date with the tide of the new national curriculum, never mind take on drama. Drama was part of the non-statutory guidance for English and was increasingly avoided, as teachers felt less and less confident about teaching drama and were not statutorily required to do so. Potential new drama teachers could no longer readily access LEA training opportunities. Longer award bearing courses that had produced a steady supply of skilled drama teachers, such as the RSA Diploma in Drama in Education ceased.

When the curriculum was reviewed, in a constrained and disappointingly limited way by Dearing, the new approach seemed to be to make drama statutory without appearing to add any more curriculum areas. Dearing tinkered. Drama became statutorily part of English, within Speaking and Listening (which leaves mime and image theatre in a no-mans land but let's put that aside for now). Drama placed within statutory Speaking and Listening met with a mixed response from the diminishing but stubborn and determined world of drama in education practitioners. Some celebrated the 'fact' that drama would now *have* to be taught. Others were quick to point out that there was a fundamental flaw here. There were few trained drama teachers left. The reality has been, that hardly any drama is happening (in Primary) despite the fact that it is deemed statutory. Difficult to believe that a statutory strand of a core subject can be ignored and not even monitored by Ofsted but this remains the case. Drama was not part of the Ofsted's standard inspection brief. Incredibly, primary schools wanting drama inspected were expected to pay for the service. Not many were likely to do that. Few inspectors were able to adequately inspect it and it was erroneously inspected and reported under PE on one occasion as a 'satisfactory' PE lesson …

For a while there was a naïve expectation, that with drama now statutory within English, training implications would at last have to be centrally addressed. They were not and still have not been addressed.

In secondary schools many English teachers were concerned. English teachers are not necessarily drama teachers and many do not consider themselves trained to teach drama, other than the study and analysis of playtexts. A further consequence of the placing of drama in English has also been the enhanced representation and influence of English teachers associations at consultations on drama. The latest NLS development of drama materials has not as yet involved the main drama subject association at all.

Effects of National Literacy Strategy

With drama now statutorily within English, and a 'lighter' post-Dearing curriculum that teachers were told would be left alone for five years, there was supposedly some time being freed up within the curriculum. Just as drama might have had some time and space available to it, the National Literacy Strategy swept in and took up any supposed slack. Speedily, a massive national training programme with a vast array of supporting multi-media materials and enormous time and training implications arrived. The NLS Framework became effectively new English Curriculum

and drama, buried within speaking and listening, was forgotten. The NLS framework was just reading and writing. Speaking and listening is the very cornerstone of literacy but it was absent in any explicit or developmental way from the Primary 'Literacy Hour'. It is now being acknowledged several years on that speaking and listening suffered as a result. This was only too predictable and voiced loudly at the time by teachers.

The omission of Speaking and Listening from the National Literacy Strategy was only acknowledged in a limited way though. Following the introduction of the NLS and before the revised Curriculum 2000, a useful QCA publication was produced entitled 'Teaching Speaking and Listening at Key Stages 1 and 2'. It offers a framework for speaking and listening, term by term for each National Curriculum year group. It sits well alongside the NLS framework. However it was not sent automatically to all schools and many schools and most teachers do not have it. Many headteachers are not aware that it exists. When at last a document containing the seed of a framework for drama came out it had to be ordered and purchased at the cost of £6, despite the fact that this is a QCA publication supporting the teaching of a core statutory subject. This was in the wake of the flood of free NLS materials in schools. Apparently the document was not disseminated direct to schools, in order not to overburden them. In that case, why could they not receive it free of charge on request? The Secondary NLS Framework has since had Speaking and Listening presented as part of it.

Within the NLS Framework itself, drama was thin on the ground, lurking predominantly within playscripts (especially Shakespeare) and a bit of puppet work. Intrinsically however, to the almost extinct drama specialist the text level strand was rich in drama possibilities.

Drama methodology provides a powerful, established way of actively considering the motives, actions and viewpoints of characters through working in role. It enables the exploration of text and subtext through responding to and through image, words and movements.

Some teachers immediately recognised the power of drama for teaching of literacy and used it. Others were proficient in drama but felt that the NLS team would not allow them to use this approach. Many headteachers would not support teachers in what could be viewed externally as deviation from defined strategy teaching methods.

The good news is that the present NLS team seem increasingly open to considering and promoting drama methodology and process as a means of teaching literacy. It could well be expected to raise standards and provide an inclusive approach as long as it is backed up by training. However, teachers may now be resistant to deviating from their learned NLS teaching styles and drama was barely in evidence on the original NLS training videos. They may feel safer doing last year's lessons again in the same way. This is a non-developmental attitude to teaching and learning that can lead to stale teaching and bored pupils (particularly kinaesthetically orientated boys). Teaching methodology in relation to learning should be dynamic and evolving and never allowed to become fixed.

It now seems that the NLS team and QCA team for English are working together at last. At present 'Teaching Speaking and Listening at Key Stages 1 and 2 is being updated/rewritten as 'Teaching Speaking, Listening and Drama at Key Stages 1,2 and 3.' It will link to the NLS. English associations were invited to be involved in this rewrite rather than drama associations, which is irritating to drama specialist associations, but it is nonetheless likely to be a useful and timely document.

As the national strategies came in, the Foundation subjects tended to receive minimal coverage and the Arts were a casualty. There wasn't even enough time to cover the Art or Music curriculum, so most schools claimed that there was certainly no time for drama now. Also, additional literacy materials were emerging which required more time for some targeted pupils, which was being taken from other subjects. These pupils were often the very ones that needed active and multi-sensory teaching and learning approaches that drama can provide. This was followed by the profile of literacy within other subjects being raised at the expense of the non-verbal and non-written. Arts exam pupils were being increasingly expected to write about the arts. Pupils who struggled with literacy but were more successful practically, suddenly found that they were downgraded and demoralised if they could not write about drama.

New developments

There is thankfully a shift developing now into looking at learning again, rather than just focussing on teaching. There is much being discovered now about how children learn best, how each brain is wired differently and what inclusive approaches will support pupils' own thinking (including creative thinking) and learning. Future teaching and learning must take into account recent neuro-scientific brain research, work on emotional intelligence and learning (Daniel Goleman), multi-sensory learning and the multi-intelligences (Howard Gardner). There is a burgeoning interest in the development of children's thinking skills (e.g. Carole Mc.Guinness, Robert Swartz and Sandra Parks, Robert Fisher etc.) .

This is an exciting time for drama specialists who are abreast of current educational thinking, as drama as a practical teaching and learning medium fits current research findings and learning theories like a glove. For example, as more is learned about the infusion approach in relation to teaching higher order thinking skills, the parallels with drama methodology are striking. Drama teachers can offer an existing, well established, inclusive, multi-sensory methodology based on flexible, adaptable, transferable strategies and conventions, which are readily accessible to all learners, visually, verbally and kinaesthetically.

There is almost a sigh of relief that at last the educational and neuro scientific research and thinking has caught up with and given empirical credence to the skilled drama in education practice. With enlightened understanding drama specialists ought now to be able to communicate their practice more effectively to others. National Drama is intending to link the research in these areas and develop further focussed research on drama, thinking and learning (see www.nationaldrama.co.uk)

Dramatic play is important and necessary to children. It is a natural, brain-friendly learning medium which children bring with them to school and which is under-utilised by educators thereafter, yet drama is established as

the most motivational subject in secondary schools (Harland). 'All Our Futures' had already clearly recognised the importance of drama, both as a creative teaching and learning medium and as *the* most powerful pupil motivator:

'OFSTED data on pupil response to learning indicates drama to be at the very top in motivating learning' (Page 77). Drama in education can help pupils learn and understand whatever is required, in ways that are emotionally, aesthetically and cognitively connected and meaningful to children who are natural dramatic players.

Children enjoy drama in part because of its humanistic teaching style. As well as teaching specific content through imagined situations and experiences, it also infuses thinking and learning about aspects of being human, social, emotional, spiritual, aesthetic and cultural beings.

Since the curriculum has become content driven, there seems to be a growth of humanistic 'bolt –on' subjects and areas e.g. PSHE, Citizenship, Circle Time, School Councils etc. There is undoubtedly value in the specific teaching of these areas but they need to become infused within the learning and life of the pupils being taught.

There is at present a growing concern at the lack of opportunities for focussing on 'teaching for and with creativity'. 'All Our Futures – Creativity, Culture and Education', an innovative and inspirational advisory document, highlighted the need to recognise and develop the creativity of all pupils and to enable creative and innovative teaching. This document, produced by the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education, was intended to inform Curriculum 2000. It contains many recommendations, some of which are now being developed e.g. Creativity across the Curriculum Project (QCA), Creative Partnerships (DCMS/ACE). This report was not sent to all schools, although it was free on demand. It is now out of print but available on line via the DCMS website.

Most schools' curriculum now involves teaching the strategies and the QCA schemes of work. Teachers need to be supported to be inspirational and creative in the way they teach these. Hopefully the QCA Creativity across the Curriculum Project materials, 'Creativity: Find it, promote it!' and any other new strategy materials will support and encourage creative approaches with a strong and well deserved emphasis on drama. The trial pack materials include examples of working in role across the curriculum and the pack is expected to be generally available from Summer 2003.

What is needed now, more than ever, is the recognition at last of drama both as an art form and as a teaching methodology, backed by resources, funding and training, with face to face professional development for all Primary teachers. Drama training cannot be met appropriately through online CPD. Teachers do not just need a toolbox of drama tricks, strategies and lesson plans, they require a professionally sensitive, human, skilled transfer of an established teaching and learning methodology and art form, by drama specialist teachers and advisers. They need to experience for themselves the power of drama in order to teach it. Ironically (and thankfully), the DfES is now searching for advanced skills teachers of Primary Drama linked to the ASTs for 'Creativity and Arts', through Creative Partnerships. Let us hope that there are enough trained drama specialists left in schools to answer the call.

Patrice Baldwin's next book, *Teaching Literacy through Drama – creative approaches*, written with co-author Kate Fleming [University of Brighton] will be published by Routledge Falmer in Autumn 2002.
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The Global Classroom and Learning School Projects: making it real. An account of two innovative school-based projects

GREGOR SUTHERLAND
An MEd student at the University of Cambridge, Gregor Sutherland describes two innovative high school projects of which he was co-leader.

I can trace the events that led to my becoming involved in the Global Classroom and Learning School projects back to my own student days at Anderson High School (Shetland Isles), but it was late one evening in early 2000 that I realised the new millennium could hold much in store for me. That night, a former teacher of mine began to describe the projects he had initiated in the school since I had left, and how he was looking for someone in my position, with my knowledge of the school and an interest in education to help lead the projects over the coming year after my graduation from university. I listened with interest.

The Global Classroom Project

I knew something about the Global Classroom project. Over many years Anderson High had developed an extensive network of partnerships and exchange schemes for senior students with schools as far away as Japan and South Africa. I had never been involved in them as a student at the school, but I was always interested. I was, I suppose, too shy to really bite the bullet and sign up for a term in another country, living with families I knew nothing about and might not even be able to communicate with. I recall watching the students who visited Anderson High with considerable interest however, and imagining what their lives were like and how their experience of adolescence must be so different to mine (growing up in the remote Shetland Islands). The Global Classroom project was established to satisfy this sort of curiosity (in part at least), to link young people growing up in the middle of the North Sea with their contemporaries all over the world.

In 1997 Anderson High hosted the first 'Global Classroom Conference' where senior student delegates, representing the member schools of the Global Classroom partnership congregated in the Shetland Islands for a week of events and activities which allowed participants to get to know about each other and to learn from each other. Delegations of up to ten students, accompanied by teachers came from each school with presentations prepared on each of the pre-agreed conference themes. Evenings of music and dance followed days that alternated between sightseeing and activities, and weightier days in workshops and discussion groups. Visiting students and teachers stayed with the families of local students and school staff, giving them an insight into home and family life in the Shetland Islands. The conference was deemed so successful and such a powerful and worthwhile learning experience for young people that it was decided to make it an annual event, to be hosted by each partner school in rotation. The sixth annual conference was held this summer in Zlín, Czech Republic – the last conference in the first rotation. (See Table 1 for more information about Global Classroom partnership schools and annual conferences.)

Year	Host School(s)	Conference Themes
1997	**Anderson High School**, Shetland Islands, UK	Education, Environment, Employment, Social and Personal Issues
1998	**Bobergsskolan**, Ånge, Sweden	Democracy, Equality, Environment, Local Development
1999	**Harold Cressy High School** and **Wittebome High School**, Cape Town, South Africa	Prejudice, Youth Unemployment, Human Rights, Culture
2000	**Nara Women's University Secondary School**, Nara, Japan	Tradition and Technology, Human Relations, Education
2001	**Graf-Friedrich-Schule**, Diepholz, Germany	Future Threats to Human Society, Mutual Coexistence, Education
2002	**Gymnazíum Zlín**, Zlín, Czech Republic	Media, Gender, Health

Table 1

Partnership Activities

Annual conferences are just one feature of the partnership's activities. All through the school year students can take part in long or short-term exchanges with

partner schools. Short-term exchanges are typically from ten days to three weeks in length and are for groups of students. These visits give students an insight into aspects of life and education in other countries, and a chance to meet people and develop friendships with their international contemporaries, without interrupting their formal studies too much. Long-term term exchanges can be for up to a full school year, with students taking formal examinations in the country they are visiting. Some exchange students have attained excellent exam results at Anderson High, which have helped them gain places at universities in their home countries and here in the UK. Long-term exchanges are a good opportunity for students who want to improve their foreign language skills. I know of students from Japan and Czech Republic who speak excellent English with the distinctive Shetland Islands accent. It goes without saying that living for an extended period of time with a family in a different country gives students a unique insight into family life and culture which visiting as a tourist does not often afford.

It is not only students who take part in exchanges in the Global Classroom partnership; teachers also visit their colleagues abroad, giving them the opportunity to experience the teaching of their subject in different systems and cultures. It is planned that teacher exchanges will become a key feature of the second phase of the Global Classroom project. This type of diverse networking can stimulate teachers' thinking about their practice. The diversity of teaching which exists across such a global network provides a rich range of approaches and practices for practitioners to be challenged by, learn from, contemplate, adopt and adapt.

Some teachers have taken the initiative to incorporate international collaboration into the courses they provide. For example Anderson High School's History Department offers a course on South African history in conjunction with a South African school. They share resources, and students in both countries use ICT to discuss themes and issues. Students from Anderson High visit their global classmates in Cape Town, where they conduct research and prepare their dissertations on aspects of South African history – making the course part of the school's commitment to global learning.

Drawing on their international education experience over the years, Anderson High School has recently submitted a proposal to SEED (Scottish Executive Education Department) Future Teaching and Learning programme, to share teaching and learning in certain courses using ICT within the Global Classroom schools partnership. Students across the network will soon be able to choose specially designed courses being taught in partner schools abroad, and by using the latest ICT the students will be part of a virtual international class. Students will be given laptops to use where and when they like in order to link them to their colleagues and teachers around the world beyond the classroom walls. It is intended that the courses will follow Higher and Advanced Higher level SQA (Scottish Qualifications Authority) guidelines.

The Learning School Project

The Learning School idea was new to me. My former teacher described the pilot year which the school was conducting. I was handed a piece of A4 paper with words on both sides, and I struggled to read them while trying to listen to the rich description of the project. The Learning School: International Student Research Project.

The project began in 1999, adding a research aspect to the Global Classroom partnership. I understand that its origins lie in comments about the school that were made by international students visiting Anderson High, their descriptions of surprising experiences of life at the school and the contrasts with their schools back home. Teachers were quite taken aback by the interesting and insightful information these visitors could provide them with. They were seeing the school through a new lens as outsiders with different experiences of life and learning and uncovering much about the school that could be very useful to its development. They took nothing for granted and picked up on aspects of school life that interested them but which others simply accepted as 'the way things are'.

The Learning School project brings together senior or post high school students from the Global Classroom partner schools (and beyond) to form a small international research group which spends ten months investigating aspects of teaching and learning in each of their schools. My role in the project was to co-lead the group of 9 young people who represented the 7 schools taking part as we visited each school in rotation and conducted our research.

Our group, Learning School 2, chose to investigate motivation. With help, we prepared a questionnaire with the question: What makes you want to learn? at its core. The research which the first Learning School group had conducted inspired us to develop other creative ways of collecting information about motivation. The Learning School researchers observed classes in specific subject areas and built up detailed notes on motivational influences and pupil behaviour. Later they interviewed those they were watching in order to get a deeper understanding of what was affecting their desire to learn (or not). Some researchers became skilled in the art of shadowing, where they would spend up to two days closely following a volunteer pupil in order to experience, and take notes, on school life. Those being shadowed were given spot-checks to complete, which are like brief questionnaires designed to gauges changes over time. When we compiled the data into graphs and related them to our notes and interview comments, we could see how students' motivation changed during the school day and how they explained it.

Around 5 to 8 weeks were spent in each school. Typically, we would arrive and introduce ourselves and our project to staff and pupils then get on with distributing questionnaires and recruiting willing pupils to take part in the more intensive and qualitative aspects of our investigation. A great deal is owed to the goodwill of the teachers who allowed Learning School researchers to join their classes to watch pupils and to absorb their learning experiences.

Projects that cast students in the role of researcher are not unheard of (though they are relatively uncommon) but the Learning School project goes a little beyond most of those projects in two ways. Firstly, taking part in the project is a very intense experience as the student researchers devote their time and effort solely to the research cause and become 'full-time' researchers. Their research becomes quite consuming; they develop a deep understanding of their work and become 'experts' in their

fields of enquiry. The fact that 17 and 18 year olds can present their work to universities, education departments and schools all around the world, defend it, and genuinely enlighten their audiences is testimony to their achievement and self-acquired expertise. Secondly, the Learning School project does not confine its enquiry to one school, or even one country. The researchers experience a variety of educational settings and, importantly, the social, economic and cultural contexts in which they exist. Some team members are familiar with the school being investigated, others are not, and by working together and taking advantage of these multiple perspectives fascinating discussion about education takes place. The diversity of people's values and experiences challenges everything that might otherwise being taken for granted. Schools taking part in the project are keen to hear from the researchers and to learn how things differ in other countries, how their school compares and what they might adopt or learn from others taking part.

I think the Learning School project has two basic purposes. The first, as I have described above, is the research purpose. Young people make great researchers as they often have keen, enquiring minds, sharp eyes, an understanding of what it is like to be a pupil (as compared to a teacher or inspector) and the ability to gather unmodified information from their research subjects because of their closeness in age and 'power'. The research that is carried out can have tremendous impact on a school if the conditions are right and if the school is receptive to the feedback. Schools are busy places where teachers' time and flexibility are competed for, so the fact that research is conducted does not automatically mean that change will take place as a result. The Learning School's second purpose is to offer participating researchers a rich learning experience. Their ten-month adventure of living and learning together, as a group, and with host families in each country they visit, is intense, varied, stimulating and challenging and offers unique opportunities to learn in ways that traditional forms of education rarely do. The quotations from Learning School researchers below illustrate the kinds of experience they have had:

> *'One thing that Learning School did for me and probably for everyone else that has done a similar thing is that it has opened the doors in my mind and I now believe that I can do anything.'*
> *(Swedish researcher quoted in MacBeath et. al., 2002)*
> *'The more I have learnt about other people this year, the more I have learnt about myself.'*
> (Scottish researcher quoted in MacBeath et al., 2002)

About the research group …

> '*I sometimes wonder how a group can come together, almost complete strangers, coming from such contrasting cultures and become so close and intimate with one another. Then I think to myself, maybe this is the way things should be.'*
> (Scottish researcher quoted in MacBeath et al., 2002)

About a host family …

> *'They called me 'Tea slave' as a joke and I was making their tea every time they drunk. The last night in Cape Town, I gave them a thank you card and wrote 'The graduation of the tea slave.' They were almost crying. The next morning that I left, the breakfast was prepared on the table. The moment that I saw it, I was almost crying too because there were 4 cups of coffee, which I have never seen in the breakfast table.'*
> (Japanese researcher quoted in MacBeath et al., 2002)

The Global Classroom and Learning School projects continue to go from strength to strength. More and more schools and countries want to take part in what they see as an exciting way of educating young people and developing schools for tomorrow's world and not just for today's, or yesterday's. The Global Classroom and Learning School project models attract increasing attention from policy makers and practitioners around the world as education struggles to cater for the needs of young people becoming citizens of a rapidly changing and uncertain global society.

[For more detailed information about the Learning School project, how it works and the results which three years of students' enquiry have generated, please see the book about the project: (MacBeath et. al., 2002)]

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The Reintegration Centre at the City of Ely Community College: working with students

DAVID REEVES

Leader of the re-integration centre at the City of Ely Community College, David Reeves describes the kind of work that is being undertaken with students now that the centre has moved from a reactive to a proactive model of intervention in order to reduce exclusions.

The City of Ely Community College established a Reintegration Centre in 1998, although its roots go back to the peripatetic work of a support teacher in 1993–96 and the forerunner of the Centre was in a classroom between 1996–98.

The Centre was established to try to respond to the problem of a high number of short-term exclusions and to try to reduce the number of permanent exclusions. Exclusions at Ely tended to be associated with pockets of significant social deprivation, although exclusions do not come only from those areas. As part of its overall catchment, the College takes students from one such area in Ely and from another in the village of Littleport.

The Centre is situated on the same site as the mainstream school but is separate from it. This siting is crucial to its success. Whilst access to the Centre is relatively easy for those students who have urgent, but unscheduled, difficulties, it is not part of any regularly used through route in the school. This means that students can use the Centre with comparative ease but do not become automatically stigmatised.

The Centre is not an onsite unit with its own rationale and a curriculum different from the mainstream school. Students who use the Centre are supplied with work by the teachers from whose lessons they are away. I decided on this principle – it seemed to me that to have a Centre with its own curriculum might lead to being labeled as 'a unit'. I should say that I had no idea at that time of the existence of other centres, or what they might be offering in terms of an alternative curriculum. What I did know about was the Pupil Referral Unit in Cambridge that I was head of for eighteen months 1995/96 and the educational side of a residential children's home where I worked from 1987–89. Both of these provisions, attempting to educate the most difficult and challenging students, had a curriculum very different to a mainstream setting – I am certain that this is not the way forward. As much as is possible needs to be done to normalise students who feel themselves to be outsiders at the time they come to the Centre. Any possibility of transfer and integration is handicapped from the outset, if this expectation of normalisation, particularly of the curriculum, is not there. The fundamental strength of the Centre is that it is not a unit – students miss as little as possible of their usual lessons and the expectations of the Centre are based around a mainstream work ethic, although it is recognised that sometimes students will not be in a fit state to work.

Some Centre Users

Enter Tom, Geography work in hand, fuming. He sounds off about life in general, his Geography teacher in particular and slumps into a chair at the far end of the 'Mobile' (the familiar term for the Reintegration Centre). After a chat (a monosyllabic exchange on his part), it transpires that his parents have had yet another furious row as he was getting ready for school and basically he can't cope with their stuff much longer. He took his frustration and anxiety out on the teacher he knows and trusts – she does Geography. So, he chilled out for a while in the Centre, got himself together and tried his next lesson. No Geography done, but he did have a fifteen minute one-to-one session with me. I make a mental note to ring Mum (you ring mothers in the Fens) to go out and talk. Tom was helped to make an apology to his teacher. (I checked, he did.) A year 9 student arrived one morning, work in hand, but was getting more upset with every minute that passed. I left her to sit quietly with a box of tissues until a quiet moment. Once we could talk quietly she told me that she was pregnant. No-one else,including her mum knew at this moment. The work involved thereafter is worthy of a short article in itself. She had the baby and got back to some year 10 work. Unfortunately her brother got involved in the drugs scene very heavily and she spent most of year 11 trying to help him. Not everything goes as you thought it might.

Organisation of the Centre

The Centre is divided into two areas: a formal section furnished with tables, chairs, laptop computers(removable at the end of the day to deter burglars), printed resources and bookcases, approximating a classroom setting. The other part of the Centre has armchairs and small tables. This less formal area is used for meetings and extra-curricular activities as well as being a suitable setting for one-to-one work with students. A youth group uses the Centre on one evening a week and the doors are open every break and lunchtime for Snooker/Pool, table tennis board games and general sitting around by up to thirty students in a general relaxed youth club sort of atmosphere.

Ground rules are fairly straightforward; I expect from everyone normal civilised behaviour and that they observe the particular rules of the College (uniform, punctuality, etc.) I believe that a simple reminder about normal civilised behaviour toward one another is far more potent than continual harping on specifics.

The Centre's Aims

There is one main aim:

- to help prevent permanent exclusions from the College.

Other aims are:

- To try to reintegrate into mainstream students excluded from other schools in the area. To offer one-to-one support for students in difficulties.
- To try to reduce fixed term exclusions.
- Some students arrive from outside 'the catchment area' to use the Centre for assessment and immediate transfer to mainstream, whilst others, with learning or emotional problems, have wanted to base themselves in the Centre for a longer period of time and make more tentative moves towards full integration. Assessments of these students are the joint responsibility of the SENCO (who may have administered assessment tests), Head of Year and me. Students are involved at every stage of the process. I believe that ownership of their situation is a big part of a successful outcome. For instance a Year 10 student arrived recently with attendance problems at his previous school. Once supplied with a typical timetable and having sorted his options, we were able to sit for a morning on and off to negotiate which lessons he thought he could manage. After a few false starts and substitutions, he is now coping with a 40 per cent timetable. Hopefully he will increase this percentage as the term develops.

The major principle which underpins all the work and ethos of the Centre is that every student is a mainstream student. However large or small his or her use of the Centre may be, the overall aim is to return the student to mainstream education as quickly as possible.

Establishing and maintaining contact in informal moments (breaks and lunch times) with some students who are referred to the Centre and others, who may not be referred but who are nevertheless vulnerable, is a very useful function of the Centre.

Crucial to the Centre's existence alongside mainstream and as a part of it, is the principle that the mainstream ethos should not be compromised. The same expectations regarding behaviour, attitude to peers and adults and observance of school uniform and school rules exist in the Centre as in the main school.

What is different is the response to student difficulties – what may be seen as a breach of classroom discipline in the main school has sometimes to be allowed in the Centre for effective one-to-one work to take place. Deciding what constitutes acceptable deviation from the rules requires careful judgement in a paradoxical situation. An example of a small infringement is a girl who always comes into the Centre chewing gum. Intially, I ignored this because I felt there were more important issues to deal with, like building some kind of relationship with a student who was teetering on the edge of exclusion because of her very poor attitude to female staff. Two weeks later I can now stand at the door, bin in hand as she enters. Gum in bin. It's a sort of unspoken ritual and effected with good humour. Hopefully she'll get the message soon and things are better with her teachers too.

Swearing is another problem. I confront it everytime I hear it and usually say 'I don't swear at you or in the Mobile, so please don't you do it'. Mostly, I get an apology, and if not I spend more time with the individual and talk about attitude with him or her.

Fighting however has only one outcome and I refer the students on for disciplinary action no matter who they are. Fortunately, or more probably, through careful management, it has only happened a couple of times!

General Arrangements

The Centre manager currently undertakes the one-to-one support work. Two members of staff who help part-time in the Centre enable this to happen. They are teachers in the main school when they're not in the Centre. One expressed an interest in the work and the other one was appointed to spend some time each week in the Centre. She comes from a Special School (PMLD).

Some students use the Centre as a form base, for a variety of reasons – being nervous of a new school, having to use the Centre for a part-time reintegration after exclusion. The register is transferred to the school office one week retrospectively and students' attendance details are transferred to the main school register.

There are fortnightly inter-agency Support Team meetings when students who are giving cause for concern are discussed. These are important meetings for the exchange of information and the development of Pastoral Support Plans. 'Students giving cause for concern' is a fixed agenda item on Departmental and Year team meetings. Names from these meetings are brought up at the inter-agency meetings thus, hopefully, ensuring that all students who may need some sort of help and support are quickly identified.

Students returning from exclusion have a programme of attendance in the Centre. This attendance is tailored to individual requirements, ranging from full-time presence in the Centre for a fixed time, reducing to just occasional sessions. These arrangements can easily be modified in the light of experience until full reintegration is achieved, typically after two weeks. Key Stage 4 students often start an extended work experience programme at this stage. These placements are in local firms and I have a short list of employers who are willing to give students with difficulties a chance. One of the Centre staff telephones at least once a week and someone will visit at least once a month. A work experience diary is encouraged but not always completed although I do use conversations with the students and employers to build up some record. A regime of Centre attendance, school attendance and work experience has been very effective in reducing exclusions.

One striking example is of a student who used to come over to the Centre to tell me all her troubles on a regular basis. Home was awful (she was always having rows with her mum) school was worse because she thought she was thick (her word). The only way forward to solve this impossible situation, as she saw it, was to get pregnant. Everyone would either love her or take pity on her and so

she would be happy. Weeks of careful persuasion to drop some subjects, pick up some work experience (at a health and beauty salon), paid off and she gradually began to see some point to it all again. She left at the end of year 11, not covered in academic success but not pregnant, with a job to go to (the salon) and a bit more hope. Such individual arrangements are made in conjunction with the Head of Key Stage 4 or the Year Leader and parents.

The College has gradually moved from a reactive to a pro-active model of intervention in order to reduce exclusions. There have been unforeseen advantages in establishing the Centre. Because it is student-centred there has developed the sense in the student body that problems other than those connected with exclusions can be addressed. Thus another group of students, quite unlikely ever to be excluded, has received help and guidance. Attendance problems, lack of motivation and Child Protection issues are a regular feature of conversations with a small but significant clientele. No mention is made formally about this function of the Centre to students – it just happens and therein lies its strength. Students hear, on their own grapevine of contacts, what help might be available.

In this academic year there has been a move towards more home contact. Thanks to a DfEE grant the manager has been able to embark on on a regular programme of daytime home visits to parents of students who use the Centre – this is much appreciated by parents and is a very useful tool in helping to reduce exclusions.

Numbers

During the academic years 1999/00 and 2000/01 there have been over 120 students using the Centre in a variety of ways. Sixty per cent of these are girls.

Two Further Examples of Centre Use
(Names have been changed)

Bill
Bill, a year 9 student, came to Ely in September 2000, having been excluded from a Pupil Referral Unit some months before.

He started with one-hour attendance in the Centre each day, increasing to two hours after a fortnight. No demands, apart from regular attendance, were made on him. After this trial attendance, he came to the Centre for afternoons only for three weeks and was asked to wear uniform. Having successfully completed this phase he was asked to come all day two days a week and to begin to do some academic work, similar to the year 9 middle sets in English, Maths and Science. By the end of the first term he was going into several mainstream lessons and attending a mixture of Centre and school full-time. After the Christmas break he would be expected to attend all lessons in mainstream , which he did. There have been some problems – Bill doesn't do much work as yet but progress for him is measured in terms of lack of fights, arguments and exclusions. Work will happen when he is confident enough to make mistakes.

Tasha
Tasha is now a year 11 student who has used the Centre, and the classroom base before that, for four years on and off. She only came to the Centre for a couple of lessons a week and would use the time to talk about her difficulties. Last year she went through a particularly low time and like other students contemplated finding a solution to all her problems by getting pregnant. She too believed that everyone would then love her and her problems would be solved. Careful work with her to dissuade her from this course of action was successful. Although not a very good attender this year she has taken up a work experience placement, a post -16 College in-fill placement and will sit a few GCSE exams this summer. There have not been any outbursts of violence, which characterised year 9 and some of year 10, resulting in fixed term exclusions.

Three unsuccessful attempts to keep students have been due to drug misuse. Cannabis and teenagers do not go well together and it is Ely's experience that such drug use makes students confused, bad-tempered and very unpredictable as well as dishonest; these qualities soon get them permanently excluded.

Literacy Strategy: meet the Simpsons

Helen Bromley
is an experienced primary teacher and presently freelance consultant in language and literacy. In this article she describes an unusual and imaginative project on autobiography which drew on the expertise children had accumulated while watching one of television's best-loved cartoons.

"Year 6 Term 1: Non-Fiction (i) autobiography and biography, diaries, journals, letters, anecdotes, records of observations, etc. which recount experiences and events."

This article explores how children in a Y6 class investigated the differences between biography and autobiography, using their knowledge of, and materials based on, the popular TV cartoon family. 'The Simpsons'. It is important to note that the children in this class were used to handling a wide variety of texts to support their work in the literacy hour. Amongst other televisual texts, they had analysed 'Eastenders' in order to write play scripts and had viewed the recently shown Rolf Harris series about famous artists as part of a project that linked the work of Van Gogh and that of the sophisticated picture book illustrator, Anthony Brown.

The session that I had with the children, which lasted just over an hour, was the culmination of work on writing about people's lives that they had been carrying out with their class teacher, Helen Dwyer. The aim of the session was to build on the children's ability to distinguish between biography and autobiography, and ultimately to help them to translate the biography of a character from 'The Simpsons' into an autobiographical style. The work would also give the children an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to write confidently in the autobiographical genre.

I chose 'The Simpsons' cartoon series because I felt it was something that the children would all feel that they were experts in. I wanted to motivate and excite them about the written task ahead, and to engage them in the work from the outset. I also have to admit that I myself, being quite a fan of 'The Simpsons', was excited at the prospect of using such material as a stimulus for writing.

Initially, my idea had been to lead the children into writing autobiographies by using drama techniques such as hot seating and role-on-the-wall; but on reflection I soon realised that I would not have enough time to do this type of work as thoroughly as I would have liked. I decided, therefore, to adopt a different approach on this occasion: I would start by looking at some examples of biography.

The print publications that are linked to 'The Simpsons' TV cartoons are excellent, and provide a rich source of material for teaching non-narrative writing. However, in this instance I decide to look at the Simpsons web site as a source of inspiration. This can be found at www.thesimpsons.com. I was not to be disappointed.

A Wealth of Characters

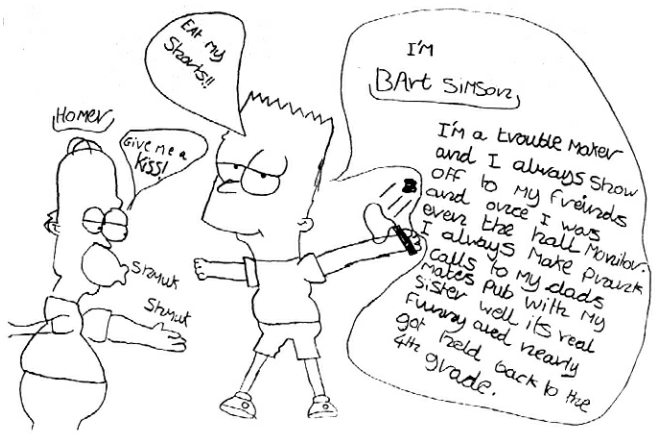
One of the links from the home page of 'The Simpsons' web site leads directly to biographies of many of the personalities that the children know and love: not only Homer and his family, but also many of the other pivotal characters from the series, including Side-Show Bob, Mr Burns and Principal Skinner. I chose a selection of biographies, including those of Bart, Lisa, Maggie, Side-Show Bob, Mr Burns, and of course, Homer. For the whole-class session at the beginning of the workshop, I made sure that each child had a copy of Bart's biography. I also made numerous copies of the biographies of the other characters, so that the children could choose a character of their own to work with in the independent part of the lesson.

As soon as the session opened, it was apparent that the children were as excited as I was at the prospect of using the material from the web site. I gave out the page relating to Bart, and asked the children to decide whether it was a biographical or autobiographical piece. They clearly had no trouble with this, and we had a discussion about use of the third and the first person in texts about people.

With highlighter pens that they had been provided with, the children then looked for pieces in Bart's biography that he would or would not be pleased with. I wanted to raise the issue of reading texts from different view points, and to encourage the children to contemplate this when they transformed their chosen texts from biography to autobiography.

There was some debate amongst the children as to which aspects of his reported life Bart would or would not be pleased with. One passage of text particularly interested them: '*and he brought down an illegal French Winery during his brief semester abroad...'*

At first, many of the children felt that this was an achievement of which Bart should be proud, until one of them read the text very closely and focussed on the word *illegal*.



I don't think that he would be pleased to have this written about him, Miss. Bart would like illegal goings on, from what I know about him.'

This comment was typical of the children's contributions, and it was evident from this discussion that they had the prior knowledge and understanding necessary to pursue the next part of the lesson. I would also add that, along with knowledge and understanding of both the series and the genre, they also had confidence in their knowledge. Here was a group of children who felt themselves to be Simpsons experts, and I have no doubt that this contributed significantly to the ultimate success of the lesson.

The Vital Element of Choice

Following the whole-class discussion about Bart and his life, the children were offered some choice as to how they proceeded with their work. They were all used to the notion of working alongside a talk (response) partner, and they were reminded of the usefulness of this strategy. Then they were told that they were going to write an autobiography for one of the Simpsons characters, and that for this they could either collaborate with their partner, or they could write on their own, but using their talk partner as a resource to help with ideas, drafting and editing.

The children were also offered a choice of character to write about, and this was crucial. I was surprised (although I shouldn't have been) at how important it was for the children to have the character of their first choice. The most popular characters were those that provided most interest in the series; I very quickly ran out of copies of the Side-Show Bob web page, and many boys had to be content with Mr Burns. None of the boys was happy to settle for any of the female characters, though the girls, whilst tending to want Lisa or baby Maggie, would settle for a male character if necessary. This difference is interesting, given the very strong links between writing, role play and identity.

The Role of Illustration

The children set to work to transform the biographies of their chosen characters into an autobiographical pieces of writing, ready to read them out to the class in the plenary session at the end of the lesson. It became clear that the illustration of the writing held as much status as the transcriptional elements of the task, and indeed, for many children, being asked to include illustration provided an enormous motivation to complete the task.

I did not put any constraints on when the children drew or wrote: for some it was important that they drew their character first; others were happy to write some text and illustrate it. It was quite clear that, for those children for whom illustration was a priority, the drawings provided a way in to the task, a support for the writing which was to come. It also underlined my concern that drawing should not be sidelined as a less important activity than writing, particularly in the literacy hour. Looking at the examples of work here, you will see how it augmented the quality of the work. You will also see that the aims of the lesson were achieved, even though time was found for drawing.

What the Writing Showed

All the children in the class of 30 completed the task successfully. Shown here are some examples of their work (shown before final proof reading for spelling, punctuation, etc.).

Charlie chose the character of Lisa, Bart's somewhat over achieving sister. Building on the content of the original 'bio' provided on the web site, she augments this with more information and very much makes the text her own. She introduced the piece with a very strong voice, and gives information about 'her' family from her own perspective. In offering opinions about Bart, Homer and Marge (the 'neatness freak'), Charlie shows how well she is able to construct this new text using her prior knowledge. In this instance, the original text has acted as a springboard for her own writing, not just a model. It is also interesting to note how Charlie writes in a very American tone, using phrases such as '24.7', and talking about becoming President. In the words of the NLS, she certainly does adopt a 'distinctive voice'.

Like Charlie, David also uses the speech bubble as a presentational device when he writes about Bart. It is

Lisa Simpson

Lisa Simpson can't wait for college. She's only 8 and already reads at a 14th grade level, and has written a number of application-quality essays, one of which won her family a free trip to Washington, D.C. Her favorite activities include playing her saxophone, attending school and reading Non-Threatening Boys Magazine. A fan of Malibu Stacy, Lisa tried unsuccessfully to create her own talking doll, Lisa Lionheart. Unfortunately, no one wanted to buy a talking doll that was as judgmental as Lisa. Lisa wants everyone to know that she is a vegetarian and that if she could have one thing (besides world peace), it would be a pony.

interesting to note just how many of the children chose to use this device, despite the fact that it is not modelled for them on the web page. (N.B. if you visit the web page on line and run your mouse over the characters that frame the page, both thought and speech bubbles pertinent to that character will appear – another possible stimulus for work!)

David links his written work more closely to the or5iginal piece than Charlie. However, his work is not lacking in originality, and he is able to personalise his piece through his drawings and his entirely appropriate use of cartoon style conventions for written language. Bart speaks his autobiography, including one of his most (in)famous catch phrases, '*Eat my shorts*', whilst Homer is portrayed, not only demanding a kiss, but puckering his lips. The use of '*shmuk, shmuk*' is entirely appropriate to the context of this work. The drawings bring this piece alive and how much David understands about the relationship between the two characters. Putting all this into prose would not have been nearly so effective.

I like the way that the children comment on their own writing in role, as if through 'asides' – a device often used in comics such as *The Beano*. Comments such as '*Well, it's really funny*' (in David's writing) and '*Well, enough about them*' (in Charlie's piece) show how the children have a grasp of the dialogic nature of writing, and of how it can be used as a tool for expressing thought and comment.

A Sense of Audience

The potential of writing as a powerful tool for dialogue and persuasion and as a means of expressing points of view is, for me, underlined by Matthew's piece about Side-Show Bob, Bart's arch enemy. In his writing, Matthew clearly understands the requirements of his audience and his purpose; and, by subverting the way in which the text is written, he writes a very humorous, multi-layered piece.

Matthew uses the original web page for inspiration, but produces a piece which shows that he understands the need to not only write honestly but also to write what an audience might want to hear. Look at how he realises his 'mistake' when he has written about destroying Bart. '*I mean, the charming little boy Bart, and his lovely little family…'*. The understandings of the tensions that writers face is clearly displayed. In the words of the NLS, the children are clearly able to consider what is of public interest, what is in the interest of the reader, and the selection and presentation of information. For the children in this class, this selection and presentation quite rightly includes the use of illustration.

Writing and Discussion

The character of Mr Burns provided the children with a rich source of points for debate. During the time which they were given to write their autobiographies, I tried to pick out those who seemed to be using language and/or illustration effectively and asked them to share their work with the rest of the class. This kind of intervention supports those children who might still be unsure of the task and reassures and encourages those who have made a tentative start with the work.

I chose Dean to read his opening lines about Mr Burns because I felt that he had made an interesting start, considering the character he had chosen. With the rest of the class listening, Dean began:

> '*I'm a nice kind person, and I like to share all my money with the people of Springfield. I own the nuclear power plant, and people cannot wait to come and work for me…'.*

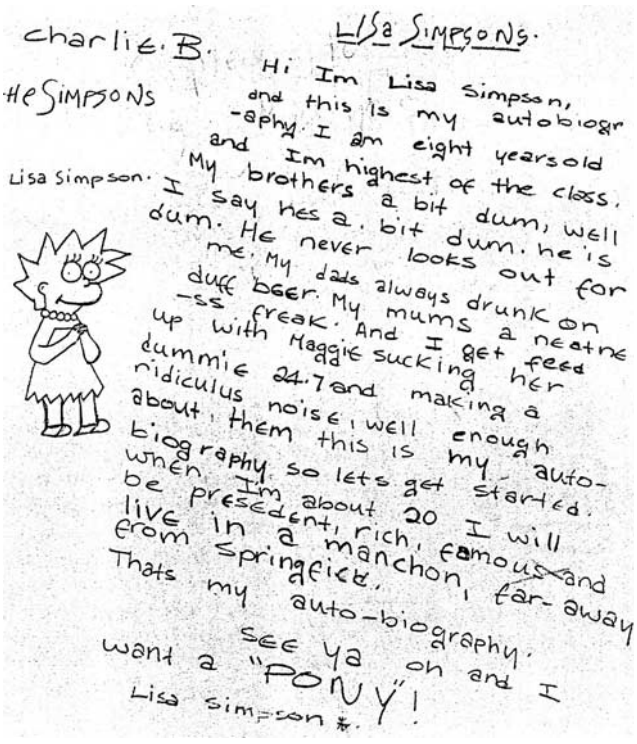
Before he could read any more of his work out, there were cries of protest:

> '*But, Mr Burns isn't nice!'*
> *'Who would want to work in the Nuclear Power Plant?'*
> *'That's all lies…'*

These were some of the comments that greeted Dean. However, he was able to justify his use of such language perfectly. In reply to his critics, he retorted

> '*But I'm writing what Mr Burns would want you to hear… I wouldn't be putting the truth, would I?'*

We then had a discussion that related back to the whole-class session at the beginning of the lesson, when we had spent some time considering what Bart would have wanted others to read about him. After this, it was apparent that many children looked at their piece of writing in a new light, contemplating the voice in which it had been written and how it met the needs of the character and the expectations of the audience.



Technical Talk

In the plenary session, we looked at the various ways in which the children had transformed the biographies into autobiographies and at the similarities and differences between the two forms. I also felt it was important to draw

attention to the way in which their work had incorporated illustration as well as a variety of textual devices.

The children's pride in their work was very evident, with many of them wanting to take the work home to show, or to take home their web page biography, '*so I can do it again at home to show my mum…'*. It is worth contemplating, therefore, what prompted this level of involvement.

There is no doubt that the use of 'The Simpsons' was very significant. The children felt (quite rightly, as it turned out) that they were experts in this area. The NLS talks about composition based on research. For these children, the research had been watching a well-loved programme. Programmes such as 'The Simpsons' invite response from their audience in which children, as viewers, are encouraged to see the story from a variety of perspectives. Different points of view are clearly presented in each episode, and these points of view are always good for a debate. As in comics, characters 'think aloud, commenting on what is happening to them, not blindly accepting their fate. To me, these techniques have a great value in prompting children to produce dialogic writing of a sophisticated standard.

I also feel that the children were supported by being able to see an end to the task. Yes, autobiographies and biographies can be lengthy tomes; but for these children, quality of writing came not through length, but through the precise and clever use of language combined with illustration. It would have been worthwhile to follow up this session with a look at a piece of autobiographical writing, for example *Clarice Bean That's Me* by Lauren Childs, which is an example of writing which effectively combines text and graphics.

Conclusion

I feel that when motivating children to write it is important to use texts which are authentic and inspiring. I am increasingly concerned by the vast numbers of children who read a wide variety of texts at home – *Teletext, Ceefax, Playstation* magazines and the Internet (to name but a few) and yet in school are often presented not with 'real' texts, but with those produced by publishers in order to 'teach' a specific genre. With the best will in the world, these texts cannot connect with the children in the same way that those taken from 'real life' can.

Finally, children need to feel that they ownership of the tasks that they are given to do, and they need to be able to bring their prior knowledge to bear on it. Using texts which they recognise in the way that they recognise 'The Simpsons' is one such way to facilitate this.

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The Foundation Stage: a problem of competing philosophies

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'Wisdom' says Robert Fulghum, in *All I really need to know I learned in kindergarten',* 'was not at the top of the graduate school mountain, but there in the sandpile…' (Fulghum 1989)

The foundation stage, for three- to five-year-old children, in England is a product of its time. Because it encompasses both school and pre-school provision, it needed to balance the desires, philosophies and best practice of early years professionals and the political constraints of the education system at the beginning of the twenty-first century. It is a stage based on explicitly stated principles: early education should start from children's existing knowledge, talents, needs and interests; practitioners need an understanding of how children develop; parents are important partners; and education should be exciting, stimulating, playful and inclusive of all. It is also a stage that culminates, at the end of the reception year, in goals to be reached (by most children). It is a compromise, but it seems to me to represent the best that could be done in the prevailing political climate. There were many who argued that it is a poor compromise, that the curriculum will be dominated by the early learning goals rather than growing from children's own interests. Many argued that the best policy would be a revision of the statutory school age, a move towards a later start to school with early years provision taking place entirely outside the school system, and without the political constraints under which schools operate.

Opinion is changing, gradually. In Wales, the foundation stage, when introduced, will encompass the early years through to the end of key stage 1, when children are seven. The Northern Ireland Assembly is also reviewing key stage 1, with proposals to make it much more flexible. The arguments for extending the foundation stage are gathering force in England too, (see for example EYCG 2002). But the introduction of assessment at the end of the reception stage has the potential to undermine much of what is important and to move us towards a curriculum that is dominated by the early learning goals.

In my view, this debate is about much more than early years education: it is about the philosophy underpinning the education system as a whole. And the reception class plays a vital role in the debate, because it is here that schools are confronted with the principles and practices of the foundation stage. It is the place where competing philosophies are made obvious, and where values and principles are queried. This is not new, but the development of a foundation stage, pitting early years ideals against school pressures, seems to me to introduce a new dimension. There is much wisdom that an early years perspective can add to the wider education debate; wisdom which comes from reflective practice and thoughtful dialogue. All of this takes time – a commodity in short supply according to a recent survey which showed that only seven per cent of those surveyed had been given any extra non-contact time in response to the introduction of the foundation stage (ATL 2002). But it is vital, not only for the sake of children but also for the sake of education.

The Child and the Child-In-school

I would like to begin where all good education practice should begin: with the child. In the reception class, we are forced to consider the tension between the child as child and the child-in-school. The child-in-school is expected to learn a whole new 'school language' of curriculum and subjects, break times and lessons.

> **Lessin**
> *What does a lessin look like?*
> *Sounds small and slimy.*
> *They keep them in glassrooms.*
> *Whole rooms made out of glass. Imagine.*
> From *First day at school*, Roger McGough, 1981)

Children-in-school must conform to school routines, learn to accept them and to see them as a normal part of life. They learn to work and then to stop work at set times, rather than at times appropriate to the learning. They learn that going to the toilet is only really acceptable at particular times, and the same is true for eating. They learn to line up. Quietly.

The child-in-school is expected to conform not only to the routines but also to the expectations. Right and wrong are more than moral judgements; 'getting it right' or at least not getting it wrong is part and parcel of the school day. The importance of 'good' marks becomes obvious, and children soon learn that the definition of 'good' behaviour depends in part on the context. This school-child is expected to reach certain levels and targets, and may receive early and additional support to 'boost' their 'performance'.

In the foundation stage, however, we meet children who are not yet school-children. We are given the opportunity in reception to provide a curriculum and a school day akin to the nursery, rather than one that looks like key stage 2. Mostly, these children do not arrive with

targets or labels attached. They are caught between school and home, and we see them in the context of home and family in a way denied to teachers of older children. Within their own self-initiated play it is possible to catch a glimpse of who they really are. We know that these children have already learnt a huge amount before they set foot in the school. We also see them as learners.

These tensions, between the child and the child-in-school, are laid bare in the foundation stage successfully implemented in the reception class. The children are in school but, in the best instances, not yet constrained by the routines and expectations. According to foundation stage principles, practitioners should not 'make a distinction between play and work'; they should give children 'time to become engrossed, work in depth and complete activities'; they should 'encourage a positive attitude and disposition to learn, and aim to prevent early failure' (QCA 2000: 11). The foundation stage practitioner is meant to put the child at the heart of the curriculum, providing secure foundations to underpin their future learning.

In many schools however, the reception class is still a time of preparation for the beginning of year 1. Concerns expressed in a recent survey of members of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) included that '*Foundation stage children are noisier, less able to listen and pay attention, less about to sit still. They weren't as ready to work for sustained lengths of time when entering Y1.'* (ATL 2002) Teachers' expectations, because of the pressures they themselves are under, can often sit badly with foundation stage values. These tensions are not resolved for us by the foundation stage – in terms of literacy and numeracy for example the foundation stage guidance requires preparation for the strategies in key stage 1. This is not a tension that can be resolved purely within the foundation stage.

The reception class teacher has a foot in both camps, caught between nurturing the child as an individual, a real human being, and preparing that child for school life. This becomes most obvious in the transition to key stage 1, but it is an issue for the whole school: at what point does the child become child-in-school? What characteristics of this school-child are actually necessary, and to whom should this decision be entrusted? What would schools look like if, instead of preparing the child for school, we were to consider preparing the school for the child? This is not new: what is new is the support which reception class teachers now have from being part of the foundation stage. Those principles which underpin the stage enable the reception teacher to come to this debate on the side of children as children, and to challenge others' assumptions and expectations from this basis. Although the foundation stage provides foundations for future learning, this is not necessarily the same as preparation for school.

Learning and Learning-In-school

This distinction throws up a further tension: that between learning and learning-in-school. Learning-in-school has become very performance and outcomes-based. We become preoccupied with outcomes, some of which are in the very distant future, so that childhood becomes a preparation ground for adulthood: children are the clay from which, if skilfully handled and following proper instructions, good adults will be formed. In the Government's Green Paper 'Schools: Building on Success' (The Stationery Office 2001), the early years chapter ends *'…children will begin their primary education better equipped than ever before'* (2001: 27), and the primary education chapter ends '*… children will be better prepared than ever before for secondary education'* (2001: 41*)*. Every stage of education is a preparation for the next. As for the end product, the Government's stated aim is, amongst other things, '*to achieve:*

- *increased employability for all young people, whether before or after higher education;*
- *more rounded students with a broader education, who will be more motivated and more responsible citizens and workers, able to contribute to a productive economy'* (DfES 2002)

Outcomes for learning-in-school come in the form of test scores and targets to be met, whether those set by the school, or nationally at key stage 2 and GCSE. Assumptions are made that the earlier children are encouraged to learn something, the more proficient they will later become. (EYCG 2002) Learning-in-school becomes about pace and rigour. 'Pace' says Julie Fisher, 'often causes teachers to be intent on their own agenda rather than the children's, to cover the curriculum and its intended learning outcomes and to move children on – not because they are ready – but because otherwise they will fall behind their targets. When adults constantly drive the pace of teaching it can mean that golden opportunities for learning are missed.' (Fisher 2000)

In the foundation stage, outcomes are rarely clear-cut. A particular child may not know something today, which they appeared to know confidently yesterday. What young children know and what they can tell you may be two different things. Their knowledge and skills can depend on context; on the children they are with and on their own state of mind or emotion. It can be difficult to provide proof of what children know. Activities and future outcomes are not always obviously linked: speaking and listening, painting the wall with water, and hammering nails into a model boat (not to mention the now infamous example of feeding the fish) all underpin children's writing. Children have their own plans and outcomes too, expressed initially in terms of the concrete and the here and now. As for outcomes in the distant future, those who work with three-, four- and five-year olds will know better than most how impossible it is to predict the future these children will inhabit. It is important then, particularly from young children's point of view, to consider learning in terms of process.

For the child, learning comes naturally. From birth, they are learning about those around them, learning to recognise familiar adults, learning to interact. Their curiosity leads them to find out about their environment, they imitate others and are rewarded for it, thereby reinforcing their learning. They learn about themselves, their skills and talents, strengths and weaknesses. They begin to learn about others and about themselves in relation to others. The foundation stage, even within school, begins from this premise: children have learnt things; they are already learners; they have a concept of

their own identities as learners. The child's experience of learning may be a confusion of positive and negative experiences. Some children will believe that they will stay as 'clever' (or 'not clever') as they are now; others that they can become cleverer if they work hard. These things are important to a child's view of themselves, particularly of themselves as learners.

The foundation stage firmly pronounces the importance of learning in terms of process, within sections on learning and teaching for each area of learning as well as in the generic section at the beginning of the guidance document. But by focusing on learning and teaching, as opposed to teaching and learning, the foundation stage also states the primacy of learning. It is about children's learning, based on the children's agenda, first and foremost, and all else flows from that: teaching, curriculum, assessment are all rooted in the importance of learning. 'Learning for young children is a rewarding and enjoyable experience', according to the foundation stage guidance (QCA 2000: 20), and 'a never ending quest to make sense of what is new, incomprehensible, fascinating and compelling, and to be making connections with what is already known and understood.' (Fisher 2000)

In the foundation stage, learning is closely intertwined with development. Four of the six areas of learning have development in the title: personal, social and emotional development; mathematical development; physical development and creative development. The first of these, arguably, underpins all other learning. The principles require 'practitioners who understand that children develop rapidly during the early years – physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially.' (QCA 2000: 11) This learning is about fundamental change. Physical changes take place in the brain as children learn, constructing connections and pathways that can be reinforced and built on. Learning involves changes in children's bodies, as they become increasingly controlled and coordinated. There are changes in their behaviour, particularly as their learning involves more and different people, situations and challenges. Learning also involves fundamental change to children as people, to their identity and self-concept: there is nothing superficial about learning in the early years. But learning as development is not about random change. It is about growth, incremental change towards rounded human being.

The reception class, of course, is the point at which the two positions are straddled, where starting from the child-as-learner must be balanced against where it should all end. Children may be natural learners, but learning is eminently forgettable, and it may be that learning-in-school, with its focus on performance and outcomes, is counterproductive. But this too is an issue for the whole school: what is the best balance between learning outcomes and the learning process? How can we best work with children's skills and interests alongside the demands of the curriculum? There is an increasing trend towards considering learning as process, children's learning, as a counterbalance to the focus on an outcomes led model of learning-in-school, with many teachers becoming interested in 'brain-friendly learning', multiple intelligences and learning styles. Foundation stage professionals come to this debate with an informed understanding of the importance of children's learning. More important, in my view, is the fact that this position is officially sanctioned by the foundation stage guidance – many teachers in ATL's survey (2002) emphasised the importance of the foundation stage in reinforcing knowledge and beliefs which have always underpinned their practice. In terms of life-long learning, school-learning is a very small part, but an influential and distorted one. The child as learner needs to be heard, to balance the debate, both in schools and on a national level.

Child, Learning and Assessment

Outcomes in themselves are not necessarily the problem, and I am not advocating a return to the mythical days of education which were supposedly unplanned and unstructured. The foundation stage treads a fine and sometimes uncomfortable line between beginning with the child and having an eye on the end product. A tension arises when outcomes become high-stakes and assessment becomes distorted; when teachers become accountable for specific and measurable outcomes and feel unable to meet children's needs; when 'value for money' becomes more important than valuing children. Tests (at key stage 2 or GCSE) provide the kind of statistical data that makes headlines and that can apparently show both improvement in teaching and the impact of government policy, among other things. This high stakes testing of course leads to further assessment at stages along the way, and a proliferation of so-called 'optional' tests in the primary school to ensure that children are on track to reach the levels. In some instances, this kind of assessment is carried out on a termly basis, and teaching becomes an operation to ensure children reach the 'right' level. Teachers become adept at teaching to the test, and children learn to take tests. The learning process, and the child as an individual, takes second place.

The foundation stage starts from a premise that children have different needs. They will have varied early years experiences before entering the reception class, perhaps spending time at home with or without siblings; being with a childminder; attending pre-school, playgroup, nursery class or nursery school. The reception class itself may contain children who vary in age by almost a whole year (even if it is not joined with a nursery or year 1 class). Early years practitioners know that for young children a few months in age, or access to a few books, can make a huge difference to children's development and learning. The foundation stage guidance outlines just a few of the different experiences children may have had, and also reminds practitioners of the different ages at which children may start at any of these settings. The principles underline the importance of building on what children can already do. And there is both a separate section about meeting the diverse needs of children and reminders in each area of learning.

Assessment during the foundation stage is a logical extension of this focus on children's needs. The foundation stage guidance suggests the purposes of assessment include giving 'insight into children's interests, achievements and possible difficulties in their learning from which next steps in learning and teaching can be planned. It also helps ensure early identification of special educational needs and particular abilities.' (QCA 2000: 24) Equally important, according to the guidance, are 'working with parents… in the assessment process'; 'identifying the next step in children's learning to plan how to help children make progress' and 'using assessment to evaluate the quality of

provision and practitioners training needs' (ibid). The guidance is intended to help practitioners to assess by identifying examples of what children do, to help 'to identify *when* knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes have been achieved by individuals or groups of children, and to plan next steps in children's learning.' (QCA 2000: 5 – my italics). Assessment as laid out here is directly about the child, and the child as learner. It is about following and extending the child's development as learner: it is not about measuring up to pre-specified outcomes. This is assessment for learning; assessment *of learning*, not assessment of performance.

How will the foundation stage profile affect the delicate balance which is the foundation stage? Children will soon be assessed at the end of reception: an assessment of whether a child has reached specified goals at a certain point in time, rather than of *when* a child has achieved particular knowledge, skills and attitudes. Alarm bells ring as we consider possible uses for the information gained from this kind of assessment. It is likely that data will be collected, and be used to plot children's individual achievement against a national or local picture. They could be used to show how achievement in the foundation stage changes year on year, or to 'enable' teachers to measure their own performance. We could swiftly move to a position where accountability takes centre stage from the very beginning of school life. The reception class, and in fact the whole foundation stage, is in very real danger of shifting from a focus on children's needs to one of accountability and testing.

But the foundation stage profile was initially described as an assessment that would 'provide a fixed reference point within a continuous process in which practitioners and teachers gather knowledge about individual children's learning needs' (QCA 2000a: 2), suggesting that the fixed assessment and the continuous process might have equal weighting. A continuous assessment enables teachers to build up a comprehensive picture of children's achievements, and not just a limited view within an arbitrary structure. This could be a 'real' profile – a growing picture of a child's achievements, strengths and interests. Instead, I am concerned that we will be using a deficit model, where assessment measures how far a three year old has gone towards being a five year old. ATL has argued previously that the Government should 'fund, support and research ongoing assessment during the foundation stage, with a view to enabling teachers and others to provide concrete evidence of the progress that children make' (ATL 2001) as a basis for the fixed reference point. Instead, and regrettably for reasons which in my view are political rather than educational, we are starting from the end, and in danger of allowing the assessment of outcomes to become the most important assessment.

This is perhaps the most pressing area of concern for reception teachers. In a year's time, the profile will be in place and its effects will begin to be seen. Will it change, irredeemably, the focus of assessment in the foundation stage? At what point should the balance between assessment of *when* a child achieves and assessment of *what* tip towards the fixed-point assessment? Is it possible for continuous assessment to influence the end of stage assessment, or will end-of-stage assessment always take precedence? This too is a tension for the whole school, but again the reception teacher comes to it from a different angle. Official foundation stage guidance still (just) sanctions the principles of valuing children as learners in their own right, even within assessment. It is imperative that this perspective is not lost, both within the foundation stage, and throughout the education system.

If wisdom is about knowing some of the questions to ask, then it is there in the knowledge, experience and thinking of those who work within the foundation stage: but it needs to be shared. Otherwise the benefits are lost, the foundation stage becomes just another part of the school system, and wider education policy loses a vital element of deliberation and challenge. I have argued that schools need to be continually confronted by the wisdom and questions of the foundation stage, but if only half of schools have made whole-school changes, and two-thirds of staff feel unsupported as they implement the foundation stage (ATL 2002), then there are too many schools that are unable or unwilling to be confronted by the values and practices of the foundation stage. The foundation stage has not solved the problems: by outrageously introducing early years principles and philosophies into school it can only highlight pre-existing tensions. But it has also given us a firmer place to stand and move the world (as Archimedes might have said). If we are to hold on to that firm ground, then perhaps, as Robert Fulghum learnt in his early years, 'it is best to hold hands and stick together.'

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International Equity Indicators in Education: defending comprehensive schools III

EMMA SMITH & STEPHEN GORARD

Emma Smith and Stephen Gorard of the University of Cardiff School of Social Sciences argue that there is little real evidence that English schools are more socially differentiated than any other in Europe as is often claimed. They maintain that this may yet happen, though, with the proposal for a five-tier 'ladder of diversity'.

According to a recent leader column in the *Times Educational Supplement*, 'As every international comparison has shown, English schools are more socially differentiated than *any* others in Europe. Some hardly warrant the description 'comprehensive' at all, thanks to the parental choice policies pursued by successive governments. They may be even more socially stratified than the old grammar and secondary moderns they replaced' (*TES*, 2002, p. 20). Claims such as these are quite common, and contribute to what has become a 'crisis account' of the state of the UK education system and its schools. But no evidence is, or can be, presented to support the claim. This paper is based on the early findings of our new Socrates-funded study of equity across the EU. Its purpose is to present an alternative account, but one based on evidence, suggesting that schools in Britain (including England) are at least as socially mixed and equitable as those in other European countries at present. Whether they remain so, in light of recent proposals for a five-tier ladder of diversity, remains to be seen.

Danger in Diversity

Education systems can present a considerable number of inequalities for certain individuals. For example, some pupils achieve better results than others, attend more 'effective' schools and have longer school careers. As the link between earnings and academic qualifications is growing, so is an individual's stake in their education (Meuret, 2001). Education is increasingly seen as something that the state owes to its citizens; and it is the state's responsibility to ensure it provides an equitable education for all. As a consequence, ensuring a fair and equitable education system has political and economic as well as social implications.

Unfortunately, current policy decisions are apparently being made that assume the crisis account of UK schooling to be true, and take no account of the actual evidence from indicators of equity. The recent education White Paper in England 'Achieving Success' calls for increased autonomy and diversity in secondary schools so that the nation can build a world-class education system and 'transform the knowledge and skills of its population' (DfES, 2001, p. 7). Among the proposed changes are an increase in the number of faith-based and specialist schools – schools which apparently have a 'proven success in raising academic standards' (p. 41). According to Morris (DfES, 2002, p. 6) 'The model of comprehensive schooling that grew up in the 1960s and 1970s is simply inadequate for today's needs … the keys are diversity not uniformity'. The Minister therefore proposes to convert the comprehensive system into a tiered ladder of diverse schools, including 33 new Academies, 300 Advanced schools, and 2000 specialist schools. These are in addition to an expansion of faith-based schools in England and Welsh-medium schools in Wales, and the continued existence of fee-paying and foundation schools.

What all these schools currently have in common is that their admissions procedures are different in practice to those of LEA-controlled comprehensives, and they tend to drive up social segregation in their authority areas (Gorard, et al, 2002). These schools may be genuinely more effective with equivalent pupils, as their advocates claim, but this is still the subject of some dispute (Gorard & Taylor, 2001). Perhaps the authorities believe that the chance of improvement in attainment apparently offered by these diverse schools is worth taking because the risk entailed, of greater social segregation, has already been realised. If schools in the UK are already heavily segregated, and worse in this response than European comparators so the argument goes, then we have little to lose.

Our Study

The data used in this analysis is derived from the PISA International dataset (OECD, 2000). Data is available on 15-year-old pupils in 32 OECD countries. For the purpose of this paper the results from six European countries – Belgium, France, Italy, Spain, Germany and the UK – are considered. While the PISA database provides a rich source of data on test performance as well as other contextual factors, our description of the initial findings focuses on indicators of poverty. Questionnaire surveys were employed in PISA to elicit information on Parental Occupation and Family Wealth, and these factors are used here to examine the distribution of the poorest 10% of pupils in schools in the six countries. Parental Occupation was determined from the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) (Ganzeboom & Treiman, 1996) schema of the reported occupation level of the pupil's mother or father – whichever was the 'higher'. Family Wealth was determined from responses to questionnaire items about whether pupils had access to the

internet at home, their own bedroom, and whether the household included items such as a family car or television.

The method of analysing the distribution of these characteristics was the segregation index (S). This index is defined as the 'proportion of disadvantaged students who would have to exchange schools for there to be an even spread of disadvantage between schools within the area of analysis'. S has been shown to give similar, but more accurate, results to other indices of the same type (Gorard & Taylor, 2002). For comparison, we also present the results for the Dissimilarity Index (D). In this study, the unit of analysis was each country.

Using this definition of 'social differentiation', Table 1 shows that neither index (D or S) provides any evidence that the situation in the UK is any worse than in the other five countries for parental occupation or family wealth. In terms of parental occupation using D, around 35% of UK pupils would have to move schools for there to be a completely undifferentiated distribution of the population. In all other countries the situation is roughly equivalent or worse. The same applies to Family Wealth, to all of the other indicators of poverty we have examined, and to attainment scores as well (see our website for further details).

	Parental occupation		Family wealth	
	D	S	D	S
Belgium	40.6	36.1	28.7	25.8
France	35.8	30.5	35.8	31.5
Germany	40.4	35.6	37.5	33.2
Italy	36.2	30.0	31.0	26.8
Spain	35.9	31.6	32.5	27.9
United Kingdom	35.1	30.8	30.8	26.3

Table 1. Parental occupation and family wealth

It is important to note that for each country the sample contained schools funded by both the state and private or charitable organisations. Thus for the UK, 5% of the PISA sample of schools came from the independent sector, compared with a national figure of 6–7%. It seems that despite the existence of an independent sector in the UK, our schools are among the most equitable in the sample.

Implications

The first, and most obvious, implication is that we have no reason to believe that 'social differentiation' is any worse in the UK (including England) than elsewhere. Once again the crisis account of current British schooling has been shown to be without foundation. Therefore, the move towards increased diversity of schooling does present a very real *danger* of increasing segregation.

The second implication is that when governments talk of 'evidence-based policy making' they must be talking about something other than basing new policy on research evidence. While still facing potential problems such as teacher supply and inequitable funding arrangements, on any rational comparison the UK school system is in the healthiest state ever. Raw-score indicators of attainment are rising annually, gaps between social groups are reducing, and socio-economic segregation between schools has declined. We do not appear to need yet more major interventions to solve problems that do not exist and that detract from dealing with the problems that do.

The nature of the intake to most schools is determined largely by the nature of local housing (i.e. residential segregation leads to school segregation), and the relative success of schools is determined largely by the nature of their intakes. When the link between housing and schools was weakened *for all* families in the 1980s and early 1990s segregation declined to its lowest recorded level. The general return to catchment areas, following the School Standards and Frameworks Act 1997, signalled an increase in segregation. This increase has been worse in areas where the link between housing and schools has been reinstated for most families, but abolished *for a few* (i.e. those able to attend schools which recruit across and beyond LEAs). Faith-based, specialist, foundation, selective and Welsh-medium schools all have wider catchments then comprehensives, and this is reflected in their relatively privileged intakes (which may also explain their apparent success in examinations). As the proportion of these minority schools increases, segregation is likely to increase as well. Perhaps we will then be able to say with justification 'As every international comparison has shown, English schools *are* more socially differentiated than any others in Europe.'

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Faith-based Schools and the State

HARRY JUDGE, 2002
Oxford: Symposium Books
279pp., £24.00 (paperback), ISBN 1 873927 39 8

One of the tutors on my initial teacher training course at Westminster College Oxford back in the sixties always used to say you should tell the children everything three times. 'You should tell them what you're going to tell them,' he used to say, 'then tell them, then tell them what you told them.' Harry Judge seems to have heard this advice, too. In the first chapter of *Faith-based Schools and the State: Catholics in America, France and England* he tells you what he's going to tell you, in the following twelve chapters he tells you, and in the final chapter he tells you what he told you. It seems to make good sense, especially since the order in which he tells you appears, at first, decidedly odd, even perverse. He starts in the middle, then goes back to the beginning, then recounts more recent events. His justification for this non-chronological arrangement is that 'in all three countries a critical point was reached, and some key issues resolved, at about the year 1900.' I'm not sure that I'd have arranged it like this, but it seems to work.

The book concerns the development of the relationship between the church – mainly but not exclusively the Roman Catholic Church – and the state's provision of education in three countries – England, France and the US – over the past two hundred years. It aims, therefore, to be 'comparative, and not simply expository'.

After the introductory chapter, the next three chapters – one for each country – focus on 'the lives, work and prejudices of three contemporaries at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Archbishop John Ireland opens a window into the American case, and Emile Combes and Robert Morant into the French and English respectively.'

The following three chapters take us back in time in order to explain the antecedents of the events described in the previous three chapters. 'These antecedents further illuminate what is common and what is distinctive in the three national cases.' Again, biographical case studies form the basis of these chapters – Horace Mann for America, François Guizot for France and Archbishop Ullathorne for England.

The next three chapters – covering developments during the twentieth century – describe 'the distinctive ways in which each of the three countries addressed the unsolved problems.' The US has looked to its courts – especially the Supreme Court – as the arena in which to settle arguments about the involvement – or otherwise – of religious groups in educational provision. In France, the debating arena has largely been the streets, with huge demonstrations supporting rival arguments. In England, decisions have been made in 'the Corridors of Westminster and Whitehall'.

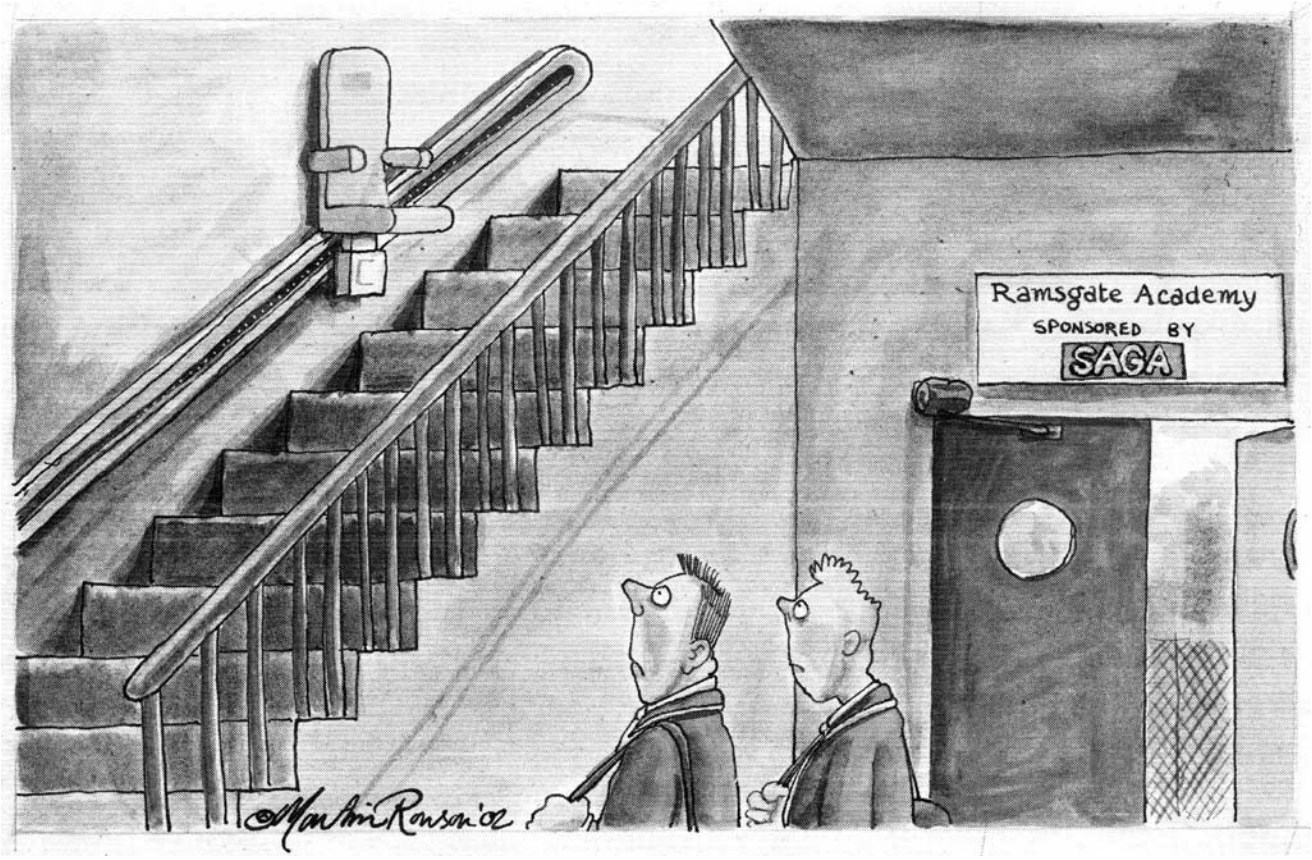
Three further chapters describe the present situation in the three countries. In America, the high proportion of the population claiming religious affiliation, the presidential campaign of 2000 – characterised by claims of religiosity on the part of the candidates – and the events of 11 September 2001 have all heightened the sense of urgency in the continuing arguments about the 'wall of separation' between church and state. Opinion on state funding for religious schools remains 'deeply divided'. In France, people now seem less inclined to take to the streets to fight for – or against – Catholic schools, but the arguments rumble on. England, having endured the Thatcher years, when testing, league tables, grant-maintained status and the rest comprised 'a cluster of principles and practices' which could be appropriately described as 'an educational equivalent of monetarism', now has a New Labour government with a commitment to greater involvement of the voluntary sector in education.

The final chapter draws together the comparative threads running through the book and offers three cautions. First, 'there is nothing automatic or self-explanatory or self-justifying about the extension of public support to private denominational schools.' Second, while states may impose certain conditions on religious schools in return for public funds, history shows that these conditions 'will subsequently be adapted in ways rarely anticipated at the time of the original compromise.' And third, once funds have been granted to specific groups, they will subsequently be 'extended in ways which, again, no one had anticipated and few would have welcomed.' The issues remaining to be settled include, for the United States, the matter of vouchers; for France, the rise of Islam – now numerically the country's second religion – and the demands for state-funded Islamic schools (already acceded to in the UK); and for England, the government's intention that there should be a marked increase in the provision of voluntary faith-based schools. 'Several worried critics, by no means all of them committed to a secular form of education, have already pointed out the divisive dangers of a further fragmentation and a splitting of a unified school system along religious and racial lines.'

Harry Judge notes that the policy options open to states range from Prohibition (no schools other than secular state schools), Separation (respecting the right of people to pay for private religious schools but denying them any state funding), Accommodation (varying forms of which operate in the three countries studied) and Extension (the policy chosen by the Blair government). He concludes by offering some policy recommendations (which are all the more powerful given the non-judgemental nature of the rest of the book). 'America would be wise to stand where it is, and lean towards Separation', France should 'prudently maintain the present position' and the British government 'would be wise to reverse its present Extensionist leanings.'

Harry Judge has made an extensive study of the sources and commentaries listed in the bibliography and has spent four years visiting schools and conducting interviews. He has succeeded in producing a book which contains a vast amount of detailed information but which nevertheless tells an extraordinarily compelling and enjoyably readable story and offers some important lessons to today's educational policy makers.

Derek Gillard



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