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# Nine to thirteen

With this number **Forum** enters its second decade of publication. Ten years ago most junior schools were still gripped by the constraints of *eleven-plus* and few secondary schools even considered the possibility of a nonstreamed intake, though there were pioneers at both primary and secondary level. Throughout these years **Forum** has welcomed every step towards a continuously comprehensive school system within which primary and secondary teachers could develop more flexible learning situations for *all* children and adolescents.

We have also had to be on the alert for retrogressive measures, disguised forms of selection and those partially comprehensive schemes which in effect operate the most refined selection. Hence in this number we publish an analysis by Mr McCarthy of the serious weaknesses in the London system and, in our *Discussion* columns, a resolution from the staff of Wandsworth School deploring ILEA's current revised plan which threatens further to weaken the original. Points made in both contributions carry a wider relevance and warning for other parts of the country.

Even where most children proceed direct from their primary schools to their local comprehensive, the break in their mode of education is usually sharply defined. The secondary curriculum, hallowed by tradition and moulded from the first year by the downward pressure of external examination syllabuses, specialisation and the die of ability categorisation, presents a sharp contrast to the eleven year old. This contrast has become more marked as junior schools, released from the constraints of selection examinations, have taken up and developed the flexible curriculum and group methods successfully pioneered in infant schools so that a continuum has evolved in curriculum and teaching methods of the best primary schools.

Comprehensive reorganisation has drawn new attention to the desirability and opened up the possibility of taking the evolution of that continuum a stage further. Simultaneously, the very success of the flexible primary curriculum, backed by fundamental research into the learning process, has led nine and ten year olds to venture into fields of knowledge previously considered appropriate to the secondary school. These are but some of the reasons that have induced many teachers and educational administrators to focus attention on the educational requirements of the middle or transitional years nine to thirteen. This number of **Forum**, therefore, concentrates discussion on approaches to teaching this age range. We are also planning a residential conference on this for the week-end 21 to 23 March, 1969 in Leicester.

There is now considerable structural variety in LEA plans for organising the successive stages of education, and already current practice is no longer uniform: a transitional stage, under whatever nomenclature, seems likely to become more common. Forum is not here concerned to argue a case for Middle Schools nor to define their optimum age range, but to encourage a reappraisal of the curriculum and teaching methods appropriate for *all* during the transitional years of childhood into adolescence. We have invited articles discussing and describing work in senior forms of junior and junior forms of comprehensive schools where children are not segregated according to criteria of ability or performance.

Three of these articles consider educational objectives over the whole range of the early secondary curriculum, and two the upper primary, while the kinds of teachers required are also discussed. That group methods and inter-disciplinary teaching teams are appropriate to the education of eleven and twelve year olds, as illustrated in our last number, is again emphasised.

Once the aim is accepted of educating *all* children that they may be fully participant members of society, new operational objectives must be determined with the corollary of recasting the curriculum and developing fresh modes of teaching: education becomes a continuous process which can no longer be sharply defined by successive stages labelled primary and secondary. Teachers from each sphere undoubtedly can learn much from one another.

# Teachers for the middle years

#### **Constance Rosen**

Mrs Rosen is Senior Lecturer in Education at Goldsmith's College. She has taught in primary schools in Hertfordshire, published articles on English teaching and produced BBC poetry programmes for nine to eleven year olds.

My two sons went to very formal Primary Schools. They had exercise books in which they wrote about the farmer-fishermen of Norway for Geography, about the way people travelled in the Middle Ages which was History, and compositions on Spring which was English. At the bottom of every essay written by my younger son was always some remark like, 'the writing could be neater', 'the writing is much tidier', 'you must try harder to keep your work clean'. They spent the rest of the time at school from seven to eleven doing intelligence tests, comprehension tests, spelling and grammar exercises, having examinations and moving places round the class as a result of the examinations. My older son on being asked one of those friendly adult questions said he quite liked school, but he wasn't very good at Intelligence.

Outside school they played by the river, fished, quarrelled, fought, made dens. They lived in the woods and the farm and knew every inch of the area. They doggedly followed in the heels of a very good-humoured farmer on whose small Welsh hillside farm we camped, became experts on livestock, auctions, county fairs, badgers, bird-life, trout fishing and otter hunting. They knew every stick and stone of every castle and every item in Hereford Cathedral, and had climbed every hill for miles around. Not a single word of all this ever appeared in their talk or in their writing in school. Noone was interested, no-one ever invited them to bring any of this into the classroom.

Where were they really educated? What did they learn? What really has become part of their life and part of their personalities? My sons are now 25 and 22 years old and their Primary School education is a dusty joke to them. But the questions really relevant to this article are, what were the essentials of their real learning and could *a*!! the children -A and B streams alike - have learnt in that sort of way with the school working with them?

One of my Postgraduate Primary students is a zoologist. The science and maths graduates are very interesting in a Primary situation. They have more confidence in coping with a more mathematical approach to the number work in school than other students, but I don't know why they are so inhibited and so rigid in their ways of thinking. The zoology student was determined to read a story to a group of immature seven year olds for an hour at the end of each day in spite of the children's tiredness and restlessness. A great deal of time and effort went into persuading her to cut this down to ten or fifteen minutes and to allow some children to opt out altogether. On being asked what an eleven year old class from more favoured circumstances would do between twenty to four and four o'clock if given the choice, she said there would be chaos, without in fact confirming whether the hypothesis was correct. What they actually chose was to take out reading books, take out sheets of music, stand round the stickleback tank, continue some work on fossils and rocks. painting, writing and arithmetic. She was so amazed to discover that seven year old children had such different personalities that she devoted her education study to examining half a dozen of them to find out how this had happened. It was the most important thing for her to have found out in the year. But when it came to discussing the importance of first-hand experience, the importance of careful observation, the need to help children record their experiences, she knew exactly what was meant and delighted the children with her rocks and crystals, insects, sticklebacks and beetles. She responded with pleasure when the children wrote about 'a stickleback flipping his tail when he wants to turn corners', or a diving beetle 'sinking his jaws into a bit of worm'. When one of the sticklebacks died she showed a couple of eleven year olds how to dissect it and how to draw the dissection. One day one of the children put a pencil into the stickleback tank and then put it into the beetle tank, and when the beetle shot off, she reported that the children had said the beetle could smell a stickleback smell. I do not know whether beetles smell or not, but I asked her if the children could put a 'neutral' pencil into the beetle tank just to make sure it was not the pencils that had an adverse effect on beetles.

She is devoted to her science studies and enjoys the children's interest in her stick insects and beetles. Here was an interesting example of a specialist contributing a great deal, stimulating interest, helping the children to be methodical and how to record thier discoveries, and yet unable to reach the heart of the matter until she had begun to learn that children have different personalities and learn in different ways.

It was even more difficult to persuade the student who had studied Archaeology as part of her degree to take this interest to children in school. There was not a sign of this, no objects she'd dug up, no stories of finds, no slides or pictures, no mention of the Silbury excavations on television and certainly no site to visit.

I think that the best Primary work is of the nature of my own two son's experience at home, exploration of their own environments, first-hand experience. Chapter 17 in the Plowden Report lists all the subjects beginning with Religious Education as though they were working through a Grammar School curriculum, and appears to be in contradiction to the chapter before this on children learning in school. Here HMIs, 'working in a division in which some particularly good work is to be found', are quoted :

'The newer methods start with the direct impact of the environment on the child and the child's individual response to it. The results are unpredictable but extremely worth while. The teacher has to be prepared to follow up the personal interests of the children who, either singly, or in groups, follow divergent paths of discovery. Books of reference, maps, enquiries of local officials, museums, archives, elderly residents in the area are all called upon to give the information needed to complete the picture that the child is seeking to construct. When this enthusiasm is unleashed in a class, the timetable may even be dispensed with, as the resulting occupations may easily cover methematics, geology, astronomy, history, navigation, religious instruction, literature, art and craft. The teacher needs perception to appreciate the value that can be gained from this method of working, and he needs also energy to keep up with the children's demands.' (Para. 544)

In areas of the country where Primary Education is understood, there is a possibility that it may continue into the 12 or 13 year old level. It is possible that the Middle School may take the best features of Primary work and develop them further. Whether secondary teachers who have never had experience of Primary methods will be made the heads of these Middle Schools will again differ from one area to another. Where the children's Primary school work is similar to my sons', it is unlikely that there will be anything other than Nuffield French, Nuffield Science, Nuffield Maths, History, Geography, PE, Music, Art and RI as listed in Chapter 17, with so-called 'specialist' teaching beginning at nine.

I have seen team teaching going on which seemed to mean the writing of innumerable assignment cards for a group of eighty children. They moved from a card which told them to weigh something, to drawing a lady in Elizabethan costume, to burning a piece of polystyrene and painting it, to reading a chapter in a book, to writing about a dream they had had.

I have seen team teaching which started at Communications or Power or Conflict or some such generalised topic, in which many of the twelve year olds seemed to settle on drawing aeroplanes or film stars or making a scrap book about footballers.

Is it inconceivable to continue the environmental work of the Primary School? A friend of mine is teaching Egypt to a remedial class of twelve year olds. They have been to the British Museum and had a lot of fun and interest, I'm sure, but why Egypt ? She said it was to do with man and his environment, and the Egyptians seem, I suppose, to have been quite good at managing the environment. But perhaps the significant thing about the Egyptians was what made them unique. There were other civilisations that were pretty advanced, but what made the Egyptians outstrip their contemporaries in their level of achievement? I do not know the answer, but I suspect that I would want to know if I thought I wanted to teach twelve year olds about Egypt: and I rather suspect that when I discovered what was most significant to that ancient civilisation, I would not think it a suitable topic after all, and would settle on an exploration of the docks.

Finally, and I do not know how long it's going to take us to do it, but I think we have got to work hard trying to think in different ways about specialisms. It may be that with more confidence and experience my Archaeology student will be able to take some eleven or twelve year olds on a dig. It may be that if one is taking a class of children to the docks, then the dad who was a docker and who often found lizards and beetles in the crates of bananas could come and tell

# **No longer Juniors**

### **David Staples**

As a member of the Leicestershire Permanent Supply Staff, Mr Staples has taught in a wide range of schools in that county.

Have you visited one of the smaller rural schools at playtime? Almost certainly you will have seen one or two children, probably girls, looking as if they don't belong. Tall, well developed, keeping perhaps apart from the main playtime activities, or alternatively, taking an active part but looking significantly out of place. These are the children in their last year of Primary School. I have often wondered if they are in the right place and have ventured the opinion that they've outgrown the school. Leave after only three years in the junior school? No, certainly not. I am, here, only considering the position of 10+ children in the small rural primary schools and would certainly not like to see the fourth year lopped from junior schools. Such a transfer would necessarily take place at 10+. This would of course mean only five years instead of six years spent in the primary school. However with the present blurring of the edges between infant and junior children within such a school, this would not in fact mean only three years spent as a junior child, but in a school organised as a cohesive whole, it would mean five years instead of six years spent in their first school.

Such transfers at 10+ would seem to fit well into a pattern of education having three stages, i.e. 5 to 10+; 10+ to 14+; 14+ to 6th form: thereby giving four years within a High School. (A High School in this article refers to the second stage already mentioned.) Such a pattern would benefit these mature children at present in the fourth year of primary school.

There is a need for children to form adequate peer groups and to feel comfortable and accepted by some of their contemporaries. Whilst there is a reasonable chance of this happening to everybody in the larger schools, within the small school, the child may have little choice of companions. Sheer lack of numbers forces this situation, and a child who falls out with his friends may well find himself an isolate with all the difficulties of edging back into his former position in his original and only group.

With the earlier onset of puberty (Average age for girls 13.0 years – **Plowden**, Paragraph 40) with all its attendant psychological and emotional problems, I feel that children who have reached this stage in their development would be happier within a situation where there were others similarly mature. I wonder if these children are happy within a school admitting five year olds. (With a transfer age of 11+, it follows that some children might be nearly twelve and still at a primary school.) By the same token, I also feel that eighteen year olds in sixth forms may not want eleven year olds about their feet.

Whilst there are the emotional and psychological needs of the fourth year primary school child to consider, the adequate coverage of the curriculum also presents problems. Learning is a very personal activity, but there is a definite need for children to have opportunities to discuss their work among themselves. Again lack of numbers could well mean that a child has noone of equivalent ability, outlook and sympathy with whom to discuss his work. The teacher, of course, is available, but often a poor substitute in matters of discussion with individual children, for no matter how close his relationship with his class or deep his knowledge of children, few teachers are able to communicate entirely with the mind of a particular child in the way

#### (continued from page five)

the children about it all. It may be that we could invite the crane drivers and lightermen to come and talk about their work. We need different ways of looking at experience ourselves, and different kinds of people to assist children to develop. We are used to having graduates with history degrees, maths, science, English and the rest. It is possible that a History graduate will be interested in local history and first-hand documents and manuscripts but it is not inevitable. We need people who have studied architecture and building materials, industrial archaeology and technology, ornithologists, town planners, poets, musicians, and artists, and it only works if they are interested in what they are doing and in the children they teach. and manner that another child could.

We hear much of the primary school curriculum being broadly based, but I wonder if we can offer to the older children the adequate teacher knowledge and equipment needed to study properly some of those subjects.

The many facets of Art/Craft play an important part in the child's development within the Primary School. Introduction to the various media, free and creative expression with those media are all part of the pattern of this subject and indeed, within some schools a high standard of work is achieved, but this does depend to some extent upon the teacher's own interest and ability. Whilst I feel that all teachers can comfortably cope with this broad subject with the lower age children, I also feel that the older children are ready for deeper experience and more opportunity for expression with the many art/craft materials available. This opportunity and the vast range of media cannot always be provided by the small school.

The teaching and playing of games presents a problem. Whilst the younger child is satisfied with and can derive much benefit from individual and small group activities, the older child needs the satisfaction of occasionally playing a more testing, skilful and adult team game. The able player feels his or her efforts to be wasted and is continually frustrated and irritated by the lack of mature games sense and play among the remainder of the players.

A second language, now considered proper for inclusion within the Primary School, needs an amount of specialised knowledge and equipment. A rusty 'O' level and an ancient Primer are no longer adequate; instead, quite properly, expensive audio-visual aids together with their allied materials are necessary and these, the small primary schools can rarely afford. With transfer at 10+, this language could safely be left to the high school, and although this might mean a later start to learning a second language than the linguist would prefer, at least there would be an assurance that the subject was being properly taught.

The realm of science is an expensive one. Whilst the primary school can do much to develop an interest within this subject and encourage the child to have an open and inquiring mind, I feel that the older children need depth added to their experience which, because of lack of suitable equipment and teacher knowledge,

# **Group Work in Secondary Schools** and the Training of Teachers in its Methods

### BARRINGTON KAYE Head of the Education Department, Redland College, Bristol, and

IRVING ROGERS Tutor at Redland College

160 pages Boards, 15/- net Paperback 8/6 net

This book has two main aims. It is intended firstly to provide secondary teachers with a practical and theoretical guide to group work as a method of teaching. This approach is particularly suitable for mixed-ability classes and unstreamed schools, for CSE examination classes, for school leavers, and nonacademic classes. It is appropriate for all subjects and lends itself to projects of all kinds. It will also be found of value in academic streams, particularly those in which an enquiring and self-directed approach is aimed at.

The second aim is to make some suggestions for the training of teachers in group-work methods. Details are given of a large-scale training programme for which the authors were responsible, which was based on a number of comprehensive and secondary modern schools.

Oxford University Press Education Department, Oxford cannot always be provided.

The teaching and encouragement of music is valuable to primary school children, but I wonder how many children miss this experience because they have no-one sufficiently talented or qualified to develop their full potential. (I am aware, nevertheless of the good work being done by the peripatetic music teachers.)

These curricular problems present little difficulty in larger schools, for collectively the members of staff can offer interest, knowledge and expertise about the subjects I have mentioned, and in addition the larger schools can more easily provide the equipment needed for some of these more specialised subjects. The teachers who staff the small schools and who provide so well for the first formative educational years of the children's lives, cannot be expected to match the collective knowledge of those in the larger schools.

What then of the children-should they ever transfer at 10+?

These fourth year primary children, although in my view, too old for their first school, are not yet ready for the streamed and separate teacher taught subjects of the secondary school. They need someone to be the central figure in their school life, someone to be responsible for them for the major part of the school day, but at the same time they need access to the equipment and specialist teachers in the subjects mentioned earlier. To ask these children to accept a compartmentalised situation would be quite wrong. A projection of the life they have already led within their first school, but within a more mature framework would be a reasonable transitional stage from primary at 10+ to the beginning of their secondary education.

They would of course need a teacher of the sort described above-a general subject teacher with a specialist knowledge would be ideal for he could be responsible for them for the main part of the day and also offer his art/craft or other specialist subject to them, thereby reducing the number of new people with all their individual traits, with whom these 'transitional' children would come into contact. However, the specialist teacher enjoys an enhanced status above that of his general subject colleague and would probably be loath to leave his speciality for the general work needed by these children in their transitional stage. An answer here could well be team teaching with a group of teachers prepared to be responsible for the total 10+ entry offering between them general subjects plus their own specialist interest, but at the same time being able to call upon other teachers for subjects not adequately covered by themselves.

Thus a three form entry would need three teachers each taking general subjects and perhaps offering between them, languages, Art/Craft and Games. Thus three of the 'specialist' subjects have already been covered and for the remainder, help could be enlisted from other members of the staff.

Briefly, here are the main points of this article:

I feel that some fourth year primary children have outgrown their school. They need a larger community in which to develop. They need equipment and specialist knowledge in some subjects that few small primary schools can offer in depth, and finally I have suggested a way in which they could be accommodated within their next school.

"There is a tide which begins to rise in the veins of youth at the age of eleven or twelve. It is called adolescence. If that tide can be taken at the flood and a new voyage begun in strength and along the flow of its current, we think that it will 'move-on to fortune'." (Hadow Report.)

### **Forum Conference**

### NINE TO THIRTEEN

Forum is planning a residential conference at the University of Leicester for the weekend March 21 to 23, 1969. This will be concerned with curriculum and teaching methods for children aged nine to thirteen, and will be organised to provide opportunity for intensive discussion in small groups.

Full details of the programme will appear in the next issue of Forum, in January 1969.

# **Programmes and Projects in History**

### **Constance Redfearn**

Mrs Redfearn taught in a wide variety of primary and secondary schools, including one allage school, before joining the staff of Bushloe High School, Leicestershire.

Quite recently, whilst moving house, I came across my old teaching practice note book from my student days nearly twenty years ago. I was amazed at how much my ideas had changed and developed in the intervening period. This is, of course, inevitable to a certain extent; but I know from discussions with former student friends with whom I am still in touch that they are, in the main, still teaching in the same way, and with the same aims, as they were then. I have been exceedingly fortunate in that I have taught in many different schools, with differing attitudes to the teaching of children. This varies from a school in Northern Ireland where a frequently-used cane was hanging from the blackboard in every classroom, to an almost integrated day where every aspect of school life was child-centred, and even individually child-centred so far as possible. Since I mainly did 'supply' teaching during these years, I also witnessed every gradation in between. Such experiences can teach many valuable lessons. Most important, perhaps, one has to decide what is important in one's own attitude to teaching. What, other than filling a temporary gap left by the absence of another person, and fitting in so far as possible with the ethos and attitudes of the school, is one really trying to do? I was forced to think about my aim. In my student note book every lesson had to have an 'aim': all of them were syllabus-based and ends in themselves. This seemed meaningless under these circumstances, so I tried to find a definition of 'education' which could be used as a basis for all teaching situations, and with any age group. One I rather liked was, 'Education is being able to tell the true from the false'. This certainly seemed basic enough, but was obviously not enough on its own. I added to it the thought that I was trying to produce future adults who would be able to express themselves in an articulate way both orally and in writing. If it also proved possible to encourage a critical awareness of life in whatever subject I was teaching, I would feel that I was fulfilling my function. After further thought and experience it seemed that, rather than teach or talk at children, the really important thing was to make it possible for the

children to learn by providing the materials and the stimulus and try, in every possible way, to encourage a desire to learn. My role would then be to advise and help when necessary. This requires one to organise resources. Where, as in Leicestershire, we have an excellent project book loan service arranged with the County Library, and a large number of films, filmstrips and visual materials available from the Schools Museum Service, our task is made easier. However, a personal file of ideas and suggestions from teachers' magazines, plus a cardboard box of books, formed, for me, a changed attitude to teaching.

For the past year I have been deeply involved in the working of a new First Year Complex of buildings at a Junior High School in the Leicestershire Plan. The building is of a semi-open plan design, which was added on to the original ten year old existing school. It was built especially to cater for the needs of the First Year children, and planned to facilitate the use of team teaching methods, visual aids and a generally more flexible approach to teaching at Secondary level. Our children are entirely unstreamed for the first and second years, although 'setting' occurs in French and Mathematics. Previously, there was a small Remedial Form of about nineteen children in each year, but we have now completely unstreamed forms, with a withdrawal scheme for children who need extra attention for Mathematics and English. This means that our Remedial teachers can deal with far greater numbers of children. About eighty children can have their special problems and weaknesses dealt with, instead of only nineteen as before. We are totally unstreamed for History and Geography, and our withdrawal groups join us for some of our English lessons: I make sure, for instance, that they join us for Drama

How do we organise our teaching in an unstreamed form? First, it seems essential that each Form teacher in the First Year should see her Form for at least ten periods a week. This provides some continuity with the Primary School where the children are used to the security of one teacher, and we feel this helps them to settle down more quickly. It also helps us to know our

pupils individually, so that any problems which may arise are more easily dealt with. It does mean, of course, that first year teachers must be prepared to teach more than one subject. English, Geography and History, or English and French, or Mathematics and Science are some of the combinations. We then teach our special or main subject for the remainder of the time to the upper forms. Some specialist teachers would perhaps dislike the idea, but we find it gives us the best of both worlds. We welcome the broadening of interests and the variety which one finds in a wider curriculum, plus the joy of experiencing a closer relationship with the children than is normally possible in a Secondary school. I think this is essential in an unstreamed situation. I was interested to read in Forum (Vol 10 No 2) Mr T McMullens' suggestion of a Head of Department with special pastoral duties involving constant collation of the academic progress reports on each child. This would solve the problem which new and inexperienced teachers have of being unable to assess the standard of work of a wide ability age group. The only assessment which has any meaning is an individual one, and the progress of each child must be carefully and constantly noted. For written work in History the children use two sets of books. One is a formal exercise book which contains the course of study common to all the children; the other is a loose-leaf file for project and individual work. (Loose-leaf files are also used for creative writing in English and for all work in Geography.) When a section of work is completed, the loose leaves are withdrawn and made into separate booklets with manilla card covers, decorated by the children to illustrate the contents if they wish. These booklets are then displayed in the First Year Library, or in the Activity Area, before being taken home. It is interesting to note that every child will voluntarily and carefully go through the work page by page before making the finished booklet, withdrawing one or two pages if they feel dissatisfied with the quality of the presentation, and doing them again. I encourage this as I feel it fosters a self-critical attitude to work. This separate work fulfils three functions. In the first place, it encourages each child to feel an individual pride in his work. Secondly, it enables me to cater for a wide range of ability and interests. Thirdly, I find the two parallel pieces of work, the formal or class work, and the individual or project work, can together give me a

very good idea of the progress of each child. I do not give an assessment mark on the work itself, but always a comment. The assessment mark is noted in a mark book, and used only as a measure of the child's individual progress. This, together with any special comments which may be worth noting down, are used as a basis for the twice yearly progress reports which are sent to parents.

We are fortunate in that block periods are arranged for us on the timetable. Nothing, surely, can be more frustrating for children than to be busily engaged and deeply immersed in what they are doing then, at the sound of a bell, everything must be hurriedly put away whilst they rush off to quite a different activity. With longer periods at our disposal (usually three or four forty-minute periods), we have time for our key lecture or initial stimulus, a discussion on what form the week's homework will take, since most of the follow up work in the formal History is done for homework. The last two periods are used for research and writing of project or programmed work, model-making, painting, sewing a frieze or fabric picture, any other activity to which the children have been motivated by the initial stimulus. It must, obviously, be relevant in some way, and this is where the teacher's role is so important. Children, like adults, will work better when their enthusiasm is aroused, but over-enthusiasm must be gently channelled and, if possible, harnessed to one of the many activities going on. This is easy when, as in the Complex, there are fairly large open spaces. Where space is limited and a formal classroom the only area available, it is not so easy but not by any means impossible. It does need careful organisation, especially in the early stages when the children may not be used to working in a loosely-grouped situation where a certain amount of movement is essential.

There are certain essentials for this mode of work. (1) The right kind of materials for whatever activity or research is planned. (2) A class or nearby school reference library. (3) A good relationship with the children. (4) Where the teacher's experience has previously been of a formal nature, an open mind and a willingness to develop a different classroom situation from the usually accepted one.

I find the really hard work of this kind of teaching lies in the collecting of materials and the writing and taping of individual and group programmes of work. Many ideas come from the children-and these are

always the most successful ones. They are so motivated that problems of discipline are almost unknown. A colleague and I pool our ideas and planning; we have fifty-six children all sharing the resources whilst we move around the different areas, helping, advising, and encouraging. A certain level of noise can be expected during the active part of the lesson period, but this never becomes a problem, since it soon becomes obvious if a certain group is having difficulties when raised voices, as opposed to a quiet 'busy' noise, soon brings a teacher to help the group resolve its problems. I would think it wrong to plan any firm or inflexible scheme of work, and prefer rather to build a tentative framework and allow the children's own enthusiasms and interests, under my guidance, to develop within it. However, this year I have adapted a formal First Year Syllabus to cover a wide range of ability, catering for a hundred and twelve children.

During the summer holiday we began to collect the materials I mentioned earlier. Filmstrips which illustrated our plan of work were bought, cut up and made into slides. Programmes were written to be used with them. These programmes fall loosely into two kinds. First we made small sets of slides with simple linear programmes which tended to reinforce the class work on 'Cavemen and Hunters', 'Life in Anglo-Saxon Times', 'The Normans' and so on. For the more able children we wrote programmes of greater length with searching questions which often required individual research in the school library. Suggestions for model making are included in all the programmes, and all questions are as open-ended as possible. All the programmes are in booklet form, except the set of four on Roman Times which were taped, as an experiment. With younger children or non-readers these would work very well, particularly as one is able to give an introductory talk, or extra information, in a more interesting way than by writing it. Nevertheless, we intend to make booklets of our Roman programmes for this coming year. With an individual booklet and a small viewer, latecomers to a group, or children who work more quickly, can be allowed to continue at their own pace. However, where tapes and tape recorders are already available, they can certainly be used as well, and require less of the teacher's time in the initial preparation than writing, typing, duplicating and making up the booklets. As far as projectors are concerned, a combination of the magazine type **Paximat** or **Gnome** for larger group work with the small **Solar** viewers for individual or work in pairs, seems to be best.

We begin our year in a slightly formal way, not attempting any group work until the children have settled down in their new environment and have had time to get to know us, and we them. Where children are dispersed over a fairly large area a certain amount of trust on the teacher's part, and self-discipline on the children's, has to be expected. After about three to four weeks of class work the children are introduced to the programmes of work, and allowed to look at the slides. They soon form themselves into pairs or groups, are given folders and file paper, and start to work. This is a difficult time for the teacher, as in the early stages several of the groups will want to ask questions at once, and everyone will be anxious to begin. Children may need help in finding the books which are listed in the beginning of each programme, or find difficulty in deciding which programme they want to do. I advise on this, and make suggestions, but do not insist. I have found that children are quite sensible enough to know whether a programme of work is going to be too difficult for them and, where a good relationship exists, are quite ready to accept alternatives. If this rather hectic period was to persist for too long the teacher might be deterred from continuing. It is, however, a short phase; in subsequent lessons, as children begin to know where all the materials are kept, and understand how to organise themselves, this initial fuss at the beginning of a lesson diminishes, until eventually one can just stand and watch whilst the children are busily engaged in sorting everything out and starting work. Inevitably there are group leaders, but natural ones, not imposed. There are also individual children who prefer to work alone sometimes. All can be catered for.

When the groups really start writing and illustrating, the teacher must begin what I consider to be the most important aspect of this type of teaching. She must go individually to each group, and each child within the group, to make sure that the children understand that, when it comes to presentation, only their individual best is acceptable. From then on, whatever the initial standard may have been, continued progress and improvement must be encouraged and indeed insisted upon. If this phase is not carefully and conscientiously followed through, a deterioration of general standards of work can result, with disheartening effect.

As time goes on, groups gradually reach different stages of work. One group, which has been doing a programme on Saxons, may want to make a model of a Saxon village. Another group, perhaps girls, would like to make and dress some model figures. Fortunately, because of the different speeds at which children work and as all the programmes are different, only one or two groups will be doing this at one time. Now the rest of our collected materials must be brought into use. The children are very helpful in this. Bits of material, pipe cleaners, bottles, cardboard boxes, empty cigarette and match boxes are all useful. The school provides balsa wood and knives, and hessian for our fabric pictures. The children are so much more talented than I am in model making, that some helpful books (listed below) and the materials themselves are all that is required. My colleague and I become so enthusiastic when models are being made that we find it difficult not to join in ourselves, instead of just advising.

Now in our third term we are beginning to assess our year's work. We have been delighted with the results so far achieved and enjoy seeing the model of a Medieval Town grow week by week, from the horse and wagon entering the town gate, to the poor frightened looking female 'scold' sitting on the ducking stool and waiting for the splash! The quality of the written work which is pinned above the model town speaks for itself. Visitors have asked, 'How do you find the time?' I can only say that we are now completing our year's formal syllabus, plus the models and projects. The real answer seems to be that the children work hard because they enjoy it-duty teachers find the greatest difficulty in chasing them out at break and lunch times. Of course the more able children will do more work, complete more models, and produce written work of greater depth and grammatical accuracy than the less able. This is natural and we make sure their abilities are used to the full, but all our children contribute their help and enthusiasm, and all our children have their share of satisfaction in the work we produce.

Useful books for model-making:

- Help Yourself Handwork by H E Manistre (Cassels).
- Making and Dressing Figures by A V White (Routledge and Kegan Paul).
- **Costume Dolls and How to Make Them** by Winifred M Craven (Pitman).
- Living History, Bks. 1, 2 and 3 (McDougall).

Journey Through the Ages, Bks 1, 2 and 3 (McDougall).

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# What to teach A First Year Scheme in a Comprehensive School

### J H Parry

Mr Parry previously taught in a London comprehensive and is now head of Swinton Comprehensive School in the West Riding of Yorkshire. His staff have had experience of team teaching with senior pupils for three years, and he here explains how they came to apply it to the first year Foundation course.

Living as we do in the early throes of the scientific revolution, with factual knowledge increasing at an exponential rate and its applications already beginning to overtake the imagination of the science fiction writer, it is not surprising that schools should find themselves engaged in curricula reform and the improvement of teaching techniques. As subject syllabuses expand to accommodate increasingly sophisticated concepts there is often no compensating reduction of traditional content and, as the frontiers of knowledge recede, the pressures required to ensure that able pupils absorb enough to enable them to make a significant contribution within their chosen field become more burdensome both to teacher and pupils. On the other hand, the predicament of the less able human being in an increasingly complex society becomes even more acute. Sir Alec Clegg has written:

Failure to secure work and its consequent sense of being useless in society can have a disastrous effect on youngsters. It can produce apathy, a callous determination to live on the state, or violent aggression. Perhaps the most significant fact about the rioters in the USA is not that they are coloured but that so many of them are teenagers so illeducated as to be almost unemployable. The prospect is daunting. As simple machines consume unskilled work and more sophisticated machines consume semi-skilled work, the work left for men and women to perform will all be skilled and unless education can provide men and women with a trained ability to master a skill we may in the not too distant future have to face the prospect of educating for unemployment. It is unlikely that such a situation could arise without bringing about grave social unrest.'

The task of educating pupils of a wide range of ability in a society which increasingly requires the services only of the more able thus inevitably raises acute problems. The likelihood of social stratification based on intellectual achievement becomes steadily greater and calls to mind the prophecies in Michael Young's **The Rise of the Meritocracy.** Moreover, some

of us wonder whether the extension of the range of public examinations in the secondary school system with the advent of CSE may not contribute towards this trend. With its highest grade equivalent to an 'O' level pass and its four other grades below GCE 'O' Level, the CSE, whilst it may offer some incentive to learning in the traditional school situation, attempts to make a sadly exact classification of a pupil's ability. The previous anonymity of belonging to the seventy per cent who had not taken the GCE examinations is now replaced by the precise mediocrity of possessing a Grade 4 CSE or the plight of those who are not, even on this system, worth a certificate. Of course, it is possible that just as the scientific revolution has set off this looming crisis of educability so it is on the brink of producing discoveries which will enable homo sapiens to meet the challenge. Thus, in his disturbing book The Biological Time Bomb, G. Rattray Taylor writes:

We stand on the threshold of a new era in understanding the mind and more than one scientist has expressed the opinion that the biggest advance in biology during the next half century will be that of neurophysiology. Three major orders of progress and excitement can be detected among the numerous enquiries in the field. First, there is the growing power to interfere in the non-intellectual function of the brain; a growing ability to alter moods and emotional states. Secondly, a spirit of extreme optimism has sprung up concerning the possibility of discovering the nature of memory. Finally, there is the guarded belief that one may be able to effect a considerable improvement in the levels of intelligence of future generations.'

However, these improvements to the human stock are, as he points out, not likely to be achieved without encountering excruciating moral dilemmas and so it is almost a relief to confine attention to what might be done to improve the education of our present pupils so as to prepare them for the extraordinary future which they face. There are, it seems to me, three main points to be made at the outset.

- i. To try to plan for the full development of each pupil we must assume that they will live in a free society; the latter is sadly imperfect but any alternative is more open to grave abuse, limitation of human dignity and freedom of enquiry.
- ii. Differences in intellectual ability, whilst determining the depth of understanding, ought not to be advanced as a reason for limiting the range of ideas presented to pupils. The aim should be to provide the pupil with a perspectival grasp of the world in which we live and this involves a continual assessment of what is of real significance in the curriculum.
- iii. Careful attention needs to be given to the transition from the primary to the secondary school since in the former the pupil spends almost all the time under the guidance of the class teacher whereas in the latter, knowledge becomes fragmented into many subject disciplines each taught by a different teacher. Little, if any, co-ordination exists between the syllabuses in different subjects and the blithe assumption appears to exist that out of the welter of disconnected facts and approaches, some perspectival grasp will be achieved by the pupil. Demonstrably it often does not and novelty gives way to bewilderment, then apathy.

Of course, the second point made above can be disputed since it may be held that such a range of ideas is beyond many pupils but, if so, it may be of interest to quote from Bruner's book **The Process of Education**, itself a report on a conference on new educational methods held at Massachusetts in 1959. In chapter 3 he writes:

We begin with the hypothesis that any subject can be taught effectively in some intellectually honest form to any child at any stage of development. It is a bold hypothesis and an essential one in thinking about the nature of a curriculum. No evidence exists to contradict it, considerable evidence is being amassed that supports it  $\ldots$  If one respects the ways of thought of the growing child, if one is courteous enough to translate material into his logical forms and challenging enough to tempt him to advance, then it is possible to introduce him at an early stage to the ideas and styles that in later life make an educated man  $\ldots$  If the hypothesis is true, then it should follow that a curriculum ought to be built around the great issues, principles and values that a society deems worthy of the continual concern of its members.'

At Swinton Comprehensive School, we are now commencing the third year of operation of a Foundation course designed to go some way towards helping first year pupils to meet the requirements listed above. The main aims of the course are:

- a) to give the pupil an introduction to the nature and purpose of the sort of education with which the secondary school is concerned - the perspectival approach mentioned previously.
- b) to provide an intermediate stage of academic and pastoral care between the one teacher, unified approach to learning of the primary school and that whereby, in a secondary school, a multiplicity of subjects is taught by many teachers.

The latter aim requires that the form teacher should spend more time with a form, and it then seemed to follow that this increased time should be devoted to dealing with the fostering of a perspectival approach given as the first aim above. However, a doubt immediately arose as to whether the average specialist secondary school teacher would be able, as form teacher, to deal with the range of ideas which would need to be presented. The dilemma was resolved by adapting the experience gained in the school in team teaching programmes already in operation in a Modern Studies course for fourth year non-academic pupils and in a Liberal Studies course for sixth formers. The former involved a team of four from the History and Geography departments and the latter the contribution of six members of staff drawn from the History, Geography, Science and RE departments. Applied to the first year Foundation course this approach involved a team made up of the eight form teachers, themselves drawn from the History, Geography and Science departments, and a group of 250 first year pupils. The three departments concerned were involved partly because of their previous experience in this field but mainly because the range of ideas to be presented was felt to require the expertise of specialists in these subjects. The essence of the team teaching approach in all three situations is that the whole group of pupils involved, together with the members of the team, attend a key lesson given by one of the team who has a specialist competence on the topic to be presented in this lesson. It is the responsibility of the teacher giving the key lesson to prepare teachers' notes and class

material for the other members of the team since the latter have the responsibility of giving preparatory lessons before the key lesson as well as taking followup lessons. All members of the team in turn give a key lesson so that each person has time to make the necessary preparation. The key lesson is designed to arouse interest in the range of ideas being presented; it is not primarily intended as a source of information. This continuous participation in, and responsibility for, the whole range of ideas presented to the group is an essential requirement of the Foundation Year course since only in this way can aim (a) mentioned above be carried out; and it is only by using the collective expertise of the whole team that each individual teacher can hope to cope with the range of ideas to be presented to the form.

But whilst it was not too difficult to devise a practical team teaching approach, the question of what to include in the Foundation Year course so as to give the pupil a perspectival introduction to the range of knowledge to be encountered in the secondary school proved extremely difficult to answer; it must be admitted that our first and second attempts over the past two years • have both made the cardinal error of including so much detail that the wood has been obscured by the trees. The first attempt was intended to be something of a panoramic sweep of human history from the ancient civilisations to modern times but, despite every effort to deal only with the peaks of human achievement in each age, the end of the year came before the team had got to the end of the eighteenth century; the pace, although exhilarating, had produced dizziness rather than perspective.

Accordingly, last year we took three main themes, each occupying one term: Man in his Environment; Law and Order; Man Alters his Environment. The first theme outlined man's place in the universe, the nature of our planet, the evolution of life and the ages of man. The second was designed to show that in all human enquiry, the search is for law and order whether this be in trying to understand natural phenomena or in trying to control communities. The third theme dealt with the three great revolutions which effectively brought about the modern world as we know it namely, the Agricultural, Industrial and Scientific revolutions.\* This has proved a much more successful programme and a genuine sense of perspective is produced, especially by the splendid sweep of ideas in the first term. But still there are too many ideas. It seems to us, with hindsight, that the Law and Order theme can be omitted for the forthcoming year since it is essentially implied in the first and third themes and can be specifically illustrated within those themes.

The Foundation Year course lasts only for the first year; in the second and third years of secondary schooling, the pupil has specialist instruction from the History, Geography and Science departments mainly because few teachers are sufficiently polymath to cope with these three subjects to the level required. But the departments concerned build on the range of ideas presented in the Foundation Year course so that the pupil can relate the more specialist enquiries to the broader vision provided earlier. Despite the need of able pupils to specialise in fewer subjects in order to cover sufficient groundwork, it is hoped to make it possible to find time to preserve some form of Liberal Studies for all pupils of all ranges of ability which will keep alive the synoptic vision we have striven to implant in our first year programme.

It has been the aim of this article to maintain that if this vision is lost, true education ceases whatever else may replace it. To the extent that education fails, free society, which stands in greater need of it than any other political system, is impoverished if not imperilled. And if free society is imperilled, so too is the future of our pupils, especially the less able ones since in no other system is the essential dignity of the individual upheld to the same extent regardless of intellect or of utility to the state.

\* For additional information see Framework for the First Form Trends No 11.

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# Discussion



### London Comprehensives

We, the staff of Wandsworth School, having given due consideration to the current revision of the plan for the organisation of secondary education until 1975 by the Inner London Education Authority, wish to make the following observations:

I. To be viable a comprehensive school must have a balanced intake of differing abilities in order to obtain staff and provide courses which ensure the full range of opportunities. Therefore a system retaining grammar schools – catering only for 'academic' pupils – alongside comprehensive schools must be unworkable.

II. Although the majority of existing ILEA comprehensive schools are only renamed secondary modern schools, there are a few comprehensive schools with a balanced intake which up to now have been able to provide a full range of viable courses uncluding those in the sixth form.

III. The pattern of intake, as applied this year, will have the effect of filling the grammar schools and then distributing the remaining academic pupils evenly amongst all comprehensive schools. This will prevent those comprehensive schools which have previously recruited a balanced intake from competing with grammar schools while the advantage to the remaining comprehensive schools will be marginal. The only suggested long-term alternative, of two grades of comprehensive schools, those with balanced and unbalanced intakes, would be invidious and contrary to the concept of a comprehensive school.

We therefore believe that the proposed revision of the plan must inevitably prevent the development of comprehensive education in Inner London, in defiance of the Government's directive (10/65), and the Authority's own expressed intention.

As the staff at one of the schools which has been proud to pioneer comprehensive education, we feel compelled to oppose developments which will destroy comprehensive education in London.

### Group Methods

The last issue of **Forum**, dealing with the use of group methods in education, was of considerable interest. It struck me, however, that in presenting applications of these methods at various levels of learning, there was a serious omission, in that, apart from one book review, the use of group techniques in colleges of education was not touched upon.

Surely it is in the education of teachers of the future that there lies hope for the more extensive introduction into the schools of flexible methods of teaching which are being advocated. Unless student teachers can themselves have first-hand experience of the effectiveness of group methods of study, there is little likelihood that they will, as a general rule, be willing to embark upon the use of such techniques in their own teaching.

I am aware that most colleges direct the attention of their students towards the possibilities of the use of groups, and probably it is expected that some knowledge will be acquired of the psychological and sociological characteristics of groups. No doubt students are also expected and encouraged to make use of groups when they are out in schools for periods of teaching practice. More often than not, however, their own academic study is conducted upon fairly conventional lines; it is largely tutor-directed, with an emphasis upon individual work. There consequently remains the customary divorce between what they are told in theory and what they find in practice.

The essence of group method of study is that it should be a co-operative experience, in which students assist each other towards a common learning objective, and in which the bulk of the responsibility for the learning rests with all of them as members of the group, not as individuals competing for a higher mark grade than that of colleagues. In the work of colleges of education there are many valuable opportunities for studying in co-operation with one's fellow-students, but rarely does the usual college group constitute such a mode of learning. It is hardly surprising that students regard the idea of group learning as a point of academic interest only, and not as a method of study to which they are truly committed. As Dr Abercrombie put it in her stimulating article about group work with university students, 'Group teaching aims to emancipate the student from the authority dependency relationship and to help him to develop intellectual independence and maturity through interaction with peers.'

It might not be possible for all study in a college of education to be conducted by group methods, but I have found that groups working co-operatively can successfully undertake the study of sections of the education course as diverse as the history of the education system and aspects of child development. A task is set for the group; only a brief outline is given of work to be covered, with some guidance as to sources, and the decisions as to organisation and presentation are left with the group. There is a much livelier response than is found with more conventional methods of treatment, and the students make great strides in their development as students, becoming less dependent upon detailed instructions, and more confident in collating and handling information for themselves. Members of the groups are stimulated to contribute their special abilities for the benefit of the group, and there is greater freedom in the exchange of views. The assessment of achievement is more frank, and not left to the sole judgment of the tutor.

There is the additional benefit of providing a demonstration of value to future teachers of the advantages and potential weaknesses of group techniques, and of allowing them to judge for themselves the truth of what they are taught about the effectiveness of learning organised in this manner.

Until such time as student teachers pursue at least a proportion of their own academic study by group methods, the use of these methods in schools will continue to be tentative and experimental. E ALTMAN, Bingley College of Education.

# Against Interpretation

I am sure that Dr Cleugh's points (Forum Vol 10 No 3) about a method of studying group behaviour were worth putting up for consideration; yet they do not, I think, cut very deep. I must leave it to Miss Richardson, or others more competent than I am, to tackle the discussion at a more rigorous level; but in the meantime I make a few observations.

1. The aside about studying digestion is manifestly misleading. No doubt my digestive processes cease when there is nothing to digest -I have no idea – but the members of a group do not cease to act or interact because there is no concrete task to work at. There remains, therefore, a 'content' which the group may study. Whether this is a worthwhile object of study is another matter, and can be argued at another time.

2. 'A group which has nothing to do is an abnormal group.' Unusual, yes; but why abnormal? In common with many people I sometimes make a conscious effort to put aside work tasks so as to make a space in which I can review my behaviour, attempt to resolve a problem, or come to terms with something fresh. I may meditate or, if a Christian, make a retreat. The analogy need not be pressed, but there seem to be precedents for withdrawing from work tasks in order to learn.

3. When Dr Cleugh talks of the contradiction between interpretation and the expressed aims of the group, I am not sure if I understand her reference to various levels and an infinite regress. I wonder if she has been suborned by her own use of the words 'second order' to describe insight into group processes. (If there is a second order, why not a third order, fourth order, and so on?) But if this second order activity is, in fact, one of reflection (as I suspect), then regression does not arise. To reflect on an earlier reflection is merely to continue the process of reflection, not to ascend to a 'higher' level. (And to interpret an interpretation is to continue interpreting.) It is no accident that reflection is reflexive and not in any sense hierarchical. (If this turns out not to be a relevant remark, please blame both of us.)

4. 'Interpretation is always threatening.' I am inclined to agree, but only in the sense that I might say that 'learning something new is threatening' because it inevitably demands a restructuring of habit or expectation or prior learning. I might also say, with equal cogency, that learning something new is always exhilarating because it moves me on and makes more things possible and satisfies curiosity. Is this emphasis on the threat implied by interpretation any more than an unwillingness to accept the pleasure/pain dialectic involved in all forms of change?

5. I think it is a pity that Dr Cleugh nowhere describes or defines what meaning she attaches to the word 'interpretation', so that to argue with her it is necessary to guess where she is hidden in the fog. It is difficult to understand her fears if one sees the job of a consultant to such a group (as I do) as that of endeavouring to make contributions which 'give meaning to' or 'make sense of' the group's activity. (It is in this way that interpretation is used by therapists and analysts. Possibly Dr Cleugh would ascribe similar defects to interpretation in these contexts, too. It would seem important to know.) I do not see how interpretation can be intrinsically authoritarian - any more than, say, teaching is – although particular modes and techniques of interpreting might be. Is it not important, in such a serious issue, to get down to some specific brass tacks?

6. Perhaps it would be useful to have available a few transcripts of group discussions, but I do not suppose it would help the argument much except for those who would read with sympathy. Transcripts of children discussing a project, of a patient talking to his therapist, of a staff meeting, the writings of mystics, have overwhelming chunks of humourless banality, too. DAVID WHEELER. University of Leicester School of Education.

# Experience with mixed ability groups

### The staff of Levenshulme High School

Levenshulme is a seven-form entry girls comprehensive school in Manchester. It was formed by amalgamating a grammar and a secondary modern school, and is housed in two buildings over a mile apart. This article is about the Lower School of 420 first and second years.

We were frankly dismayed. Not only were we to face our first comprehensive intake in September, but our new Headmistress had just informed us that she intended this new first-year, approximately 180 girls, to be divided into six mixed ability groups to be taught as forms in all subjects.

To her mind, the proper justification for unstreaming was on educational rather than on social grounds, important though these may be; traditional class teaching, however enlightened, must as a technique be suspect, for its emphasis was on *teaching* as opposed to learning. Its effectiveness, she felt, was illusory, because it would rarely hold the full attention of all the children all the time, even in an allegedly homogenous group. A good teacher using the talk and chalk method could be little more than entertaining and stimulating, an average teacher an efficient drill sergeant, a poor teacher, if he were not ineffectual could become arid, authoritarian and restrictive. A good pupil had still to do the work if he were to become totally involved and a poor pupil, weighed down under an overwhelming mass of knowledge, would probably take the line of least resistance and give up.

It seemed to her that the organisation of mixed ability groups would create the need for the teacher to rethink his methods and reject class teaching as a basic technique. The necessity for catering for children, of varied capacities, would encourage him to use his ingenuity in preparing work cards, project schemes, audio-visual aids. She hoped that eventually many departments would take the next logical step and adopt team-teaching with its infinitely more flexible structure.

These were her aims; she felt that it was for the staff to decide how far they were practicable.

Obviously our well-tried teaching techniques could not hope to be successful in this new situation. Each child must be allowed to progress as fast as she, individually, was able and overmuch emphasis must not be laid on the acquisition of factual information. Projects, undertaken by individuals or groups, or the use of work-cards seemed to promise well. Accordingly the Geography department, for one, immediately set about producing work-cards, only to find, to their great distress, that the groups were of such mixed ability that in each form there were girls who could not even read the cards, far less understand what was written on them. This presence of non-readers or very poor readers in each group presented us with a major problem.

At first, two remedial groups, drawn from all six forms, were given eleven special lessons each week, the withdrawals being from French and wherever possible English, but even this was not wholly satisfactory. Withdrawals of groups of ten or more from normal lessons made the poor readers conspicuous, a fact which they resented, and which expressed itself in the adoption of a defiant attitude and consequent behaviour problems. Now, our third term of experience with mixed ability teaching, we have enlisted the help of girls in the Lower Sixth (especially those who hope to go to Colleges of Education), who have offered to give up one study period a week to help first-year girls with reading. This has made possible individual attention which would seem to be essential; for, as a direct result of such tutorial help, the progress in reading ability of even the worst of the remedial children has been astonishing.

The initial social problems were, we felt, aggravated by obvious differences in home background, made all the more evident by lack of school uniform. So, at the beginning of the autumn term, we, especially the Physical Education Staff, made a great effort to ensure that every girl had at least the basic essentials of a uniform. In a further attempt to gain social cohesion we encouraged the Lower Sixth form to run in the dinner-hour a First Year Society, which organised among other things social service activities, games, the making of dolls' clothes, competitions. But we must confess that in many cases friendship groups seem to bear a direct relation to ability, those of similar abilities having tastes in common, and that when a team is chosen to represent the group, whatever the activity, the less able child, unless she is especially voluble, is seldom a representative. On the other hand the more able, who have always shown a readiness to look after the less able to a certain degree in such matters as property, when faced with a group project, coax the less able to produce something for the benefit of the group, even though, when individual work is being produced, they are inclined to resent the amount of time certain individuals demand. We have found, too, that where a numerical mark is given for written work, difficulties can occur. Marks as such tend to be meaningless and a comment on the work done, assessing the amount of effort shown, is more useful.

In English, creative drama has proved highly successful. It is interesting the degree of sensitivity that can be shown by those not verbally mature. Drama can also be made the basis for creative writing and used to help in extension of vocabulary. Poetry can also be taught to the group as a whole, if care is taken to provide poems on a wide variety of subjects and of a wide variety of appeal; but you must be satisfied with only the immediate impact, no poems being treated in depth. One great difficulty is to ensure that every girl is developing her ability to read with understanding. Naturally each girl may want to read a different book. so that each member of the group requires individual attention-a gargantuan task. Nor, disappointingly, does the voracious reader necessarily prove the best writer. We feel we must investigate further the reading and writing aspects of English teaching for the more able. Obviously as increased emphasis is put on library work by different departments, the library comes to play a central role. Here the lack of discrimination shown by first-year girls in choosing suitable non-fiction to help them with their projects has necessitated the separation of junior non-fiction from senior.

In fact, the inability of notably the less able to follow instructions, whether oral or written, is a problem. Staff in many subjects feel that the less able demand too much attention, because they can do nothing without help, so that again the more able become somewhat impatient. In games of netball, for instance, care has had to be taken to fit into teams playing each other, girls with reasonable equality of skill, for otherwise they become exasperated with the poorer games player. The difficulty of introducing girls to lacrosse at this stage has made the staff decide to postpone this until at least the second year. Athletics has proved a more profitable field where it involves only individual effort. Where group work fails to be satisfactory (eg the use of work-kits in science, work-cards in geography or mathematics), this is the result of failure to understand written instructions and to carry these out, even when understood. Moreover, the production of such materials can be an arduous task for the staff concerned. The conclusion would seem to be that more people need more time and space, usually with tables rather than desks, with a greater variety of material, for each individual in each group to have attention and help and to be able to make her own progress.

The greatest concern about mixed ability groups is expressed by those who teach mathematics or modern languages, in both of which fields there is a necessity for children to be able to follow logical arguments, for each subject depends on logical building on firm foundations, none of which can be omitted. Thus all children must acquire the basic knowledge in a logical order. In such a case, a homogenous group is obviously better in order that the fast may proceed quickly while the slow are not left floundering. In our present-day society where mathematical ability is at such a premium, it is essential that those who show special ability in mathematics should be detected early and receive special attention. The situation is complicated in French by the fact that most girls have been acquainted with the language for one, two, three or even four years in the primary school, with varying success. When incorrect language patterns are established in the early stages, it is most difficult to correct them later on. This compels the teacher to deal with the group as a whole and therefore to proceed at the pace of the slowest.

History, on the other hand, seems to present quite great possibilities of group-teaching because, although there is a basic material which all must understand, this can be reduced to a minimum and the girls largely allowed to proceed at their own pace. Visual aids can also readily be used. In history, too, one member of staff has discovered that the time-tabling of her subject to a treble period each week has, in spite of her misgivings, proved almost ideal. Such a situation would not suit the modern languages department who maintain that a little every day is necessary. (continued)

# An active experiment

### **Donald Atkinson**

Previously a grammar school headmaster, Mr Atkinson has been head of Ferneley High School since it opened in 1964. He here describes a three-phase approach to total nonstreaming.

What is happening in our school may prove to have a merely local importance, if that. I shall, therefore, set out the facts as simply as possible, making no attempt to evaluate our experience.

Our school is a Leicestershire Plan High School for 750 boys and girls. Children arrive at the age of eleven, 75% of them leaving at fourteen to attend the Upper School. Neither before coming, nor during their three years with us do pupils take any form of written examination, internal or external.

The development of our curriculum and organisation has gone through three stages during the past four years. In the academic year 1968/9, all three stages can be seen at work simultaneously, but in subsequent years the first two stages will be phased out.

The initial stage is to be seen in our present Third Year group of thirteen year olds. These children have been taught in eight classes, streamed on the basis of a selection made when they arrived in 1966. The information for this selection was provided by their junior school teachers. The degree of streaming can best be described as 'medium-coarse.' In their subsequent education many factors conspired to blunt and soften the children's awareness of the academic differences separating class from class. Most important of these

#### (continued from page twenty-one)

After a year of mixed ability groups, most of us who have taught them feel less daunted by the prospect of next year, provided the shortage of equipment can be overcome, or at least reduced. The majority can claim to be conscious of the progress of the less able, who have had constantly before them a strong incentive to improve, the social problems are less than they were; but whether the more able have been stretched sufficiently we cannot yet tell, although the fears of a few staff have been allayed on that score.

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factors was the application of an almost identical curriculum to all eight classes: only French was not studied by all, but by five of the eight. All classes received a representative share of the full range of staff expertise (ie experienced and less experienced staff have taken strictly equal shares in teaching all streams). No orders of merit or form positions have been communicated to the children, and pupils have not been moved 'up' or 'down' according to minor fluctuations in performance relative to other children. Finally, over a substantial area of the timetable streamed classes have been paired or blocked together, permitting mixed-ability groups to be created from the block ie for a wide range of Handicraft and Housecraft courses, for Art, Music, Drama and Physical Education. An element of choice has been included in this sector.

These factors, combined with a fiercely optimistic attitude towards learning problems across the full range of ability, have moderated the divisive and repressive effects normally to be expected in a streamed situation. The creation of a common curriculum, taught by diverse methods, had begun.

The transitional stage is to be seen in our Second Year group of twelve year olds. When they arrived, they were divided into two groups of roughly 125 and 75 children. In the larger group were placed all those whom their junior school teachers said would experience no serious educational difficulties in a mixedability group. This group was then divided into five equivalent mixed-ability classes. In the smaller group were placed all children who, in the opinion of their junior school teachers, were suffering serious educational difficulties and would continue to do so for some time. This group was then divided into three equivalent mixed-ability classes, each covering the range from distinctly below average to near ESN. About ten children of borderline ESN performance were placed in a special class for remedial teaching.

The only discernible difference between the timetables of the two groups was that the group of five classes was taught French, while the group of three was not. The same principles that had been applied in the first stage were applied also at this stage in the organisation of the curriculum.

The selection of children for the two groups was by no means infallible, and a few adjustments have had to be made since. It is also clear that the principle on which the selection was based is open to criticism on theoretical grounds. I would not defend either the principle or the practice, except on an interim basis. The transitional stage was designed to accustom teachers to the challenge of partial unstreaming in readiness for total unstreaming later. During this transitional period techniques could be developed for coping with groups of more widely mixed ability.

The only reason why French has not been taught to all classes, either in the first or later stages, is a circumstantial one. If there were staff to do it we would teach the subject to everyone. This may yet happen.

The curriculum presented to the 1967 year-group analyses as follows:

### The band of three classes

Members of each class find themselves caught up in a wider range of ability for six hours out of the twentyfive per week devoted to curriculum work. The subjects affected are Handicraft, Housecraft, Art and Music. For these subjects the year group is divided into two blocks of four classes; each block is then split up into six craft groups. On the other hand, members of each class find themselves being taught in sets for two hours out of the twenty-five. The subjects affected in this way are Mathematics and Environmental Studies, for one lesson each. The purpose of the setting is to permit some divergence in speed and standard of work within the common syllabus.

The number of hours per subject is as follows: 3 English, 3 Mathematics, 3 Science, 4 Environmental Studies, 3 Handicraft or Housecraft, 5 Music and Art, 2 Physical Education, 1 Drama and Literature, 1 Religious Knowledge. In Mathematics, two lessons are taught to original classes, but one is setted. Of the three Science lessons, one is taught to half classes, with a staff/pupil ratio of 1:12. Of the four Environmental Studies lessons one is taught by the whole department to a block of three classes, so that a variety of groupings is possible according to the requirements of the work.

### The band of five classes

The only major difference between the curriculum for this band and that for the band of three is the inclusion of French. Room is made for this subject by cutting Physical Education to one lesson per week, and Music and Art to three lessons. For this band Environmental' Studies includes an extra element, environmental science, in addition to the history and geography common to the two syllabuses.

For French, two lessons are taught to original classes and one follow-up lesson is taught in sets. This allows one teacher to use a fast audio-visual course with the majority, while the other assists the less able with the basic syllabus.

Across both bands, whenever classes have been paired or blocked together, staff have been encouraged to use team-teaching and other similar techniques to meet the challenge of widely mixed ability. By the same device, interdisciplinary work has been made possible, as for example between Drama and English, History and Geography.

The final stage can be seen in the First Year group of eleven year olds joining the school this year. These children will be taught in eight equivalent mixed-ability classes. Again, only five-eighths of them will learn French; the others will receive extra lessons in Mathematics and other subjects. This will be made possible by careful blocking of classes. Otherwise the curriculum for all eight classes will be modelled on that for the band of five in 1967.

Children suffering from a critical degree of backwardness in basic reading, writing and number skills will be assisted by a specially qualified teacher who will have a fully equipped room at his disposal to which he can withdraw them for a number of hours per week according to their individual needs. Much of the material used in this remedial laboratory will be designed to keep the children who use it in touch with the lessons they are missing. This presupposes that the remedial expert will be very closely acquainted with what is going on throughout the first-year curriculum.

It would be facile to pretend that we feel no anxiety concerning the dangers of the unstreamed situation. Concern for the progress of extremely able children, and of exceptionally backward ones, is as keen with us as with any conscientious staff. We would certainly not be happy with average teaching directed at average children, to which all were obliged to conform irrespective of their individual needs and capabilities. Nevertheless, our anxieties are no greater than they were before the transitional scheme was introduced in 1967, and those anxieties proved in the end groundless We are reassured by the knowledge that, during the gradual approach which has been made to unstreaming we have learnt to equip ourselves with a versatile and flexible armoury of techniques and to build up a body of relevant experiences. This could not have been achieved without a low rate of staff mobility and a firm lead from senior staff.

### Three phases coexist

During the academic year 1968/9 all three stages of our development towards unstreaming will co-exist in the school. In 1969 the final stage will be carried on into the Second Year and repeated with the new intake, while the transitional stage will be moved up into the Third Year.

Curriculum work takes up twenty-five sessions a week. Another five sessions are spent in work organised on an entirely different basis. This part of the timetable, called **Activities**, functions during the last fortyfive minutes of each afternoon. At the beginning of the year teachers publish lists of courses which they are prepared to organise for each day of the week. These range from the highly academic (eg Italian, Latin, Electronics, Astronomy, Ecology), the cultural (eg Orchestra, Poetry, Music, Dance), to the recreational (eg Gymnastics, Archery, Orienteering, Origanic and Canoeing). Thirty-five courses are running every day. In some cases children must sign on for a whole year or for several sessions a week, and for a few there is an age-limit, but most courses draw on the full range of ability and age. Children sign on for a programme of five activities which they must maintain for a term. The introduction of these varied courses has greatly broadened the education we can offer, and has presented the children with a realistic experience of choice which does not fragment or specialise curriculum work. Many children from outlying villages in our catchment area are enabled, through the Activities programme, to take part in extra-curricular pursuits such as rehearsals, exhibitions and club activities from which they would otherwise be excluded by the exigencies of travel.

Any account of curriculum organisation will seem bare and soulless without some indication of the values which are held to express themselves through it. The need for brevity demands that I summarise them in somewhat cryptic statements:

- (1) at least up to the age of fourteen, every child's 'ability' is capable of constant amelioration; that this amelioration is likely to be more widespread in groups of mixed ability than in homogenised groups selected by various kinds of testing;
- (2) techniques of teaching and class organisation either exist or can be devised which will permit individual progress to occur at varying rates against a background of general improvement, without loss to any individual;
- (3) that in secondary schools particularly teachers need to broaden their own fields of enquiry in order to maintain a rate of intellectual progress at least as fast as that of their ablest pupils, and that this cannot be done without constant revision of syllabuses;
- (4) education is not shared knowledge but shared learning;
- (5) our schools ought to provide both the language in which the community can talk to itself, and the embryo from which it will grow; that education should give to all an equal voice in the communal dialogue, as distinct from an equal vote.

Insofar as we succeed in realising these aims, all our pupils will be able to say, as one of them recently said to has parents: 'Now I feel that I am free. Before, it was as though I were imprisoned.' He was not referring to the discipline, but to the educational changes he had experienced.

# **The Comprehensive Myth**

### E F McCarthy

Mr McCarthy, headmaster of Malory School, a London Comprehensive, for the past eleven years, died in August. His death will be felt as a sad loss by all who knew him as a strong advocate of comprehensive education. He wrote this article before the ILEA Education Officer issued the March letter which provoked Wandsworth School staff to pass the resolution which we publish in our **Discussion** columns. The issue raised is of more than local significance.

About twenty years ago I attended a course at Cambridge-Ministry Course No 7 on Educational Guidance, I believe it was-where the lecturers were Professor Vernon and Dr Watts. We were told that one could determine the IO of a child with considerable precision and that the figure obtained would be almost as accurate as the measurement of his weight or his height; it would not change, as weight changes, but would remain pretty much the same from six to sixteen. I was horrified, first by the arrogant certainty of the assertion and, second, by a vision of a world in which human beings were stripped of humanity-in which their destination, as hewers of wood or as Samurai, could be predicted by statistics. The ten days I spent there made a deep and lasting impression and I became, as I have remained, devoutly wedded to the ideal of comprehensive schools in which children might develop to confound these disciples of the robot world. I became Head of a large mixed Secondary Modern school under a good local Authority, advised by a wise and humane Chief Officer. We marched steadily towards Comprehensive education, though within strict financial limits; but eventually I moved to London, at that time the Mecca of those who thought as I did, because there, it seemed, the pace of progress would be swifter.

At the interview I asked one question of the Committee: 'I have heard,' I said, 'that some of the so-called Comprehensive schools in London are not genuinely Comprehensive. Can you assure me that this school will be fully Comprehensive ?' The answer was a categorical affirmative. Now, eleven years later, the school is still labelled Comprehensive, in common with about seventy other ILEA schools; but it is no more Comprehensive than they are, whilst 19% of London pupils are 'selected' to attend elsewhere. For most of this decade London has been controlled by the Party that professes to oppose selection, but I have not observed that the steps to end selection were more rapid under the Labour Party than they were in my earlier post in the north; nor was progress much different to that now proposed by the new London Committee. It still surprises me that this situation is so little understood that the Press, educational journals, professors, lecturers, inspectors, administrators, and even the ILEA itself constantly refer to us as 'Comprehensive' and constantly use our achievements or defects to support or. denounce that type of school. Indeed, one frequently hears expressed the view that Grammar schools and Comprehensive schools 'should exist side by side' for a decade or so, until we can draw factual deductions from their subsequent achievements! Such a suggestion is usually couched in tones and terms of the most pious generosity. 'You expected to be drawn and quartered old chap? Let's get together and agree upon beheading.'

Until three years ago eleven-year-old London children were graded 1-5 in English. Arithmetic and Verbal Reasoning, on the results of standardised tests, and each Comprehensive school was supposed to recruit 20% of its intake from each grade. Some such schools (mainly those in prosperous areas or those which were originally Grammar schools - mostly single-sex in both cases) did so, but this only served to distort the balance of other large schools, since between 13% (1958) and 19% (now) went to Selective schools. This meant, in fact, that the majority of London's large 'Comprehensive' schools had intakes no better than those of very many Secondary Modern schools outside the metropolis. Three years ago the 'eleven-plus' was 'abolished'. Instead of 5 grades of ability in English, Arithmetic and VR, there are now 7. Primary schools take tests on the basis of which the Authority gives them an indication of the number of pupils who might reasonably be placed in each grade. The Primary Head, after considering this statistical suggestion, is responsible for the placing of his/her own pupils in the 7 grades, so that he or she has a good deal of latitude and a great deal of responsibility. One wonders how many children

from 'difficult' homes, who might have passed the objective '11 plus' are now advised not to put a Grammar school 'first choice' because the Primary Head does not feel that they will complete a five or seven year academic course. We have no means of telling.

Because very many of the traditional Selective schools in London have long been single-sex, there exists a convention amongst many parents that mixed schools are, by and large, inferior. Even the former Central schools, as well as those geared to specific vocations, were usually single-sex, and as many of the recently created Comprehensives are mixed, this is a further prejudice to be overcome.

At this point it may well be asked why one who has little faith in the ability of tests to select correctly should be disturbed by selection. If one cannot estimate the potential of an eleven-year-old child with accuracy, does it matter that 19% remain outside our system? The mistake of those who raise such questions is to assume that because we oppose segregation we place no value on the testing at all. But we do not deny that standardised tests give a rough indication of general ability at a particular time; we know, only too well, that some children cannot read at eleven whilst others can understand calculus. We are glad to have the information provided by the tests – the more information we have about children the better-but we do not suppose that we can forecast what a particular pupil will achieve at fifteen or sixteen on the basis of tests at eleven-which is what segregation claims to be able to do. These large London schools, and many similar ones outside London, have produced a huge volume of evidence that there are amongst the rejected 80% very many pupils who, before they leave school, will achieve a standard of education as high as that of any of those selected. If I may quote from my own school, which draws almost the whole of its intake from a forty-yearold working-class housing estate, many of our ex-pupils are now taking honours degree courses; of these, some had IQs below 100 at eleven, and were remote from consideration by any Grammar school. And so it is with very many other London schools. Many factors have contributed to these successes-the fallibility of any test for secondary education, personal and social development that could not be anticipated, parental encouragement, the excellence of the ILEA educational administration and the generosity of its Supplies, and the inspiration afforded by dedicated teachers. One

thing, however, is certain – that the successes have not been achieved at the expense of the average and below average children. It is quite true that in the school I serve more time and attention, particularly by Departmental Heads and senior staff, is given to backward pupils than to those who take public examinations. It is strange that Authorities should hesitate to entrust those pupils considered to be 'high flyers' to teachers who have proved that they can teach competently not only to University level but who can also coax, cajole and inspire the most difficult classes of all – the lowest third and fourth formers of mean IQ 80. To achieve these widely differing tasks efficiently requires splendid teachers.

So far we have discussed only the classroom aspect of these schools, the problems created by decapitation and intellectual spread. Because of the size, the equipment, the spirit of the Comprehensive schools, they have been able to offer an astonishing range of activities – in school and some extra-curricula – so that the list sometimes reads like London's **Floodlight** of evening classes. In Art, Craftwork, Music, Housecraft, Drama, Sport and Technical work developments have been very encouraging, and academic success has been almost a by-product of practical and aesthetic liveliness. Why, then, if I might repeat the question, do we need that missing 'top'? There are many reasons, but the following are perhaps most obvious :—

- (i) because we are short, inevitably, of pupils who can set high standards in work, sport and the Arts; the more talent we get the better will be our schools; the bigger the Sixth Form, for instance, the greater the range of studies we can offer;
- (ii) the parents of the 'top 20%', by and large, are the most influential and the most articulate of all parents; whilst their children remain segregated from Comprehensive schools these parents will show little interest in us, and we need their drive, their co-operation, their criticism;
- (iii) in an area where a selective system still operates, it seems that those schools which are able to choose pupils of high ability only do not choose a fair proportion of problem children – the ones from bad or broken homes, those with anti-social tendencies or severe difficulties in basic subjects. Therefore, we in the Comprehensive schools, appear to have an unfair share of these children, who might gain much from the greater attention that could be given them were their numbers restricted in each school;

- (iv) at present the staffing ratio is better in a school with a high proportion of fifth and sixth formers, and this obviously favours selective schools. It is a pity that this should be so as it is far easier and pleasanter to teach eighteen sixth formers than to cope with thirtysix of the lower third (IQ 80 again!). But if staffing depends so much upon the sixth, we need more potential sixth formers;
- (v) far too many selective schools are still geared to examination success, whereas we cannot be so limited, because of the nature of our pupils. The most able pupils, the 'high flyers', need the breadth we could give in music, art, drama and so on;
- (vi) the class structure of this country, the 'old boy' network, has become such a target for world-wide criticism that even those who profit by it no longer trouble to defend it. Our country needs the talents of all its citizens, and all of them need the experience of working together in school if they are to feel, in later life, that they belong to one, and not to two, nations.

Perhaps the greatest single contribution that could be made to the advancement of Comprehensive education would be a decision by the people in authority to ban the use of the label 'Comprehensive' for any school that does not have the full ability range. Such a step could be taken by the DES, by the Local Authorities or by Heads of schools at present so labelled. A public opinion poll that put the question 'Are there genuine Comprehensive schools in your city?' to residents of London, Bristol, Birmingham or Coventry would probably produce a 90% affirmative. One sometimes suspects that the present labelling is the result of a deliberate scheme to prevent the emergence of the genuine article; certainly if I were a passionate supporter of selection I should be very happy with the present state of affairs. One can imagine the outcry that would arise if parents had to send their children to 'Ramsfield Non-Grammar School', or 'Bullfield School for the 80% Rejected'! We might get speedy action if the truth were proclaimed widely enough.

**Opinions** expressed in this article were those of the author and hence should not be attributed to the ILEA.

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# Workshops with Secondary School Heads

### Gurth Higgin

Dr Higgin, of the Human Resources Centre at the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, worked with the Careers Research and Advisory Centre in running the pilot workshop which he describes in this article.

During 1967 three conferences were organised, bringing together heads of secondary schools with members of the Tavistock Institute and the Careers Research and Advisory Centre of Cambridge. The initiative came from the latter which, in the course of work with school leavers, became aware of problems in secondary schools deriving from uncertainty about future lines of development which merited discussion. Given the lack of any agreed body of precepts, the traditional conference form-lecture/discussion/syndicate work-was considered inappropriate and a non-traditional model, less pre-structured and embodying methods of exploratory group discussion, was adopted. Each workshop of

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three days was made up of about thirty to forty heads with experience of teaching or of administering various types of secondary school. In addition there were a number of educationalists and members of the Tavistock Institute, who between them brought experience gained in educational training or administration, or knowledge of the social sciences and clinical psychology. Reports of the workshops have not yet been fully analysed and there is still some material to be gathered, a task made possible by a grant from the Schools Council. Until all the follow-up material has been gathered and a full analysis made, what follows can only be offered as the selected reflections of one participant.

#### Structure, authority and exploration

The aim of the workshops was twofold: first, to define the nature of the problems with which secondary schools were likely to be faced in the 1970s; second, to free as many ideas and as much of the available experience among participants as possible to explore, clarify and reach a deeper understanding of these problems. It was recognised that there would be a wide variety of ideas and knowledge available from heads of different kinds of school and with very different experiences. It was hoped, however, that an atmosphere could quickly be created in which all contributions of whatever kind or from whatever source, would be regarded as equal, with a developing sense of common purpose among all involved as the only criterion for judging their relevance to the problems under consideration.

If this approach was to be successful, certain ground rules were obviously required. In particular, the conditions of openness and mutual sharing required meant keeping formal structuring to a minimum. It also suggested restricting membership of the conference to head teachers.

Papers circulated before the conference conveyed an idea of how they would be run. It was explained, for instance, that attendance would be restricted to head teachers who would, accordingly, 'be only with other head teachers – no superiors or subordinates, and nobody to report back to their home situations but themselves. The workshop can be described as a "social island" insulated from all the usual demands to be "responsible", the ever-present possibility of a "please explain". The atmosphere should allow members to experiment with new ideas and new ways of doing things, with the right to be wrong . . . '

After preliminary introductions and a statement of the general aim and approach the programme began with an agenda-building session intended to free ideas about relevant themes. At the next session there was a break up into small groups which discussed how to use and develop the ideas put forward. The rest of the timetable had been left open so that both the content and form of working could be decided by the participants as the work developed.

This form of approach proved somewhat challenging for all concerned. Basically it called for attitudes and kinds of social skill different from those to which most participants were accustomed. Head teachers, for example, are experts at making best use of the approach to learning traditional within the educational system; that is, one which assigns an active role to a teacher and a passive one to the receivers of information. Most of those attending had expected to take the usual role of passive participant at a conference, with the freedom silently to accept or reject what was given but with little sense of responsibility for their own learning or that of others in the process. If, at the end of such a conference, the passive participant considers that he has learned nothing, he can blame the content or the method of presentation as at fault or irrelevant for his purposes. The sponsoring or staff members at the workshops previously discussed this question and decided that it would not be useful for them to act as expert givers of instruction (a role to which they had little claim anyway), so inviting other participants to take on the familiar complementary passive role.

A situation therefore developed which inevitably caused some irritation, even anger, among heads whose expectations were not fulfilled. Nor were the staff, who like the heads had everyday jobs involving taking a sanctioned leading part, immune from a similar irritation. They felt frustrated because the heads did not more rapidly accept their 'lead' into unstructured activity and participation. In effect the participants were saying, 'Why don't you lecture to us ?', and the

staff, 'No, why don't you become more actively participant ?' Accordingly, the first day of the course was usually experienced as a time of little achievement and growing irritation and in nearly all cases there was some retreat by all concerned to the protection of accustomed roles within a more traditional conference model. This retreat typically took the form of a compromise, in which both sides gave a little ground as a result of understanding and recognising each other's difficulties. Thus, for example, if the staff gave a formal lecture it was on a theme identified and clarified by the participants. Once this crucial phase was over there usually developed a greater openness which allowed for some significant work, whether in total workshop sessions or in small groups.

Within the small groups, comprising between eight and twelve members, the pattern of work that developed, though not without a good deal of resistance in some cases, was of informal and unstructured discussion around a number of selected topics arising either out of the initial agenda building session or, subsequently, out of the 'inputs' of members of the workshop staff. Once this pattern was established groups experienced considerable difficulty in modifying it and equally in discovering ways and means of communicating to those in other groups the direction of their own thinking. Thus, total workshop sessions were treated less as a means of communicating the drift of group discussion than as a chance to elicit further 'expert information' from staff. Although this was certainly not always regretted by members and although the pressure of time itself probably inhibited further innovation, the speed with which such a pattern was consolidated and not varied, even as to composition of groups, was notable in all three workshops.

#### Parallels with school problems

Many heads found a source of learning in parallels between their experience in the workshop and the kind of problems that arise in schools. Perhaps the most striking instance was the serial inter-relationship discovered between objectives, curriculum, resources, and organisation. The workshop had started with only a vague statement of objectives and it was found that a more detailed clarification of objectives was the first need. This, implying decision about values and the direction to be chosen, tended to be a philosophic judgmental activity. Next, an appropriate curriculum had to be found, that is a set of activities, or tasks, designed to achieve the given objectives; then the appropriate resources must be identified; and finally, an organisation to structure and co-ordinate these resources decided upon. Experience in the workshop showed that to enter this cycle at any point beyond that of clarifying objectives was unprofitable, and led to a return through the other stages to this necessary point of departure. Several groups, for instance, went straight to questions of organisation, only to find that this led to confusion and frustration. The lesson was drawn that much discussion within schools may be ineffective because it is concerned only with organisation.

A related difficulty was that of identifying appropriate resources, resources that would be helpful within the workshop for work on the themes that had been developed. It was a common experience that only towards the end of a workshop was it discovered that such-and-such a head had some particular experience or ideas very relevant to the clarification of a problem. It was suggested, as a result, that it might help future workshops if people could send in ahead of time a note of the sorts of resources they could bring. However, it was soon realised that this would scarcely be helpful given that a decision upon objectives and curriculum is left to each workshop when it meets. Here a parallel was seen in the dissatisfaction commonly expressed by heads about procedures for appointing staff. Many had found that despite information about the qualifications and experience of applicants for posts on their staffand even a twenty minute interview-they still had considerable difficulty in deciding which applicant was the appropriate 'resource' for the particular school problem with which help was needed. This, it was recognised, often resulted from the fact that the head was not clear in his own mind about his objectives and the sort of curriculum these indicated. It has been found in the workshops that only towards the end of the period, when the objectives/curriculum had been worked out, was it possible to appreciate the appropriateness of the knowledge and experience that we had among us.

Many heads also discovered a parallel between the workshop and school experience in the matter of handling a diversity of people and problems when readymade categories are not available. It was soon found in the workshop that to face the real diversity of problems in particular schools, and of particular heads within schools, and to arrive at some common themes to work on, was an extremely difficult, and indeed at times uncomfortable, task. So it is in schools. Although the division of secondary children into those who take examinations and those who do not makes life easy, it was not thought to be educationally very appropriate. However, if one goes beyond this to discover that there are not two but perhaps twenty-two, or one hundredand-two different types of educational need among the children, how can one possibly acquire the information to decide and the resources to handle such a multiplicity of requirements ?

This in turn disclosed the problem of equity. There was some disgruntlement, that owing to the lack of structure in the workshops, the minority who were most active and articulate seemed to get what they wanted, whereas the majority did not get the attention that their problems deserved. So in a school, an attempt to adopt a child-centred approach may result in the demanding ones and the 'misfits' getting a disproportionate share of the available resources while the quieter majority get less than their requirements deserve.

#### The value of the workshops

It is impossible on the basis of reactions received to date to give a clear judgment about the value of the workshops as experienced by participating heads. Most of the reactions are favourable, but by no means all. One head declares, on behalf of himself and a colleague in the same Authority:

... I failed to gain any useful knowledge or stimulus ... in view of the cost in both time and money, both to myself and to my Authority, I write to draw your attention to the disappointment of myself and my colleague.

On the other hand, another reports that the workshop was

... a painful but exhilarating and rewarding experience ... I personally feel a great load of anxiety has been shifted from me and that my insights have been considerably deepened ... all without any 'right way' to do anything.

We hope that when all the records of the workshops, including the follow-up material still being collected, have been analysed, that an assessment of their value can be made, enabling a decision to be taken as to whether this procedure, in the present or a modified form, is worth developing as an experience for head teachers.

# Reviews



## Teachers' Attitudes

Interaction Analysis: 'Theory, Research and Application, edited by E J Amidon and J B Hough. Addison-Wesley Publishing Co, Mass (1967).

During the past three decades, educational research workers have paid increasing attention to the social-emotional aspects of learning situations, and the most important contributions of the earlier workers have now found their way into even initial courses of teacher education. The original reports of many such researches, often in American journals, are not easily accessible, and Interaction Analysis very helpfully reprints important articles by Lewin, Lippitt, and White (1939); Anderson (1939); and Bales and Strodtbeck (1951), as well as accounts of more recent researches by Flanders and other workers. Students and teachers in Departments and Colleges of Education will find this volume an extremely useful sourcebook, and a reliable guide to developments in this field.

Lewin and Anderson both approached the study of the social interaction between pupils and teachers from a conceptual standpoint that reflected the democratic ideology of American education. There was a great similarity between the aspects and dimensions of teacher behaviour that they chose to study, and which they described in terms such as democratic or authoritarian (Lewin), and integrative or dominative (Anderson). These researches have had an enormous influence upon educational theory, and have stimulated the further development of theories of social-emotional relations

by workers such as Bales, and the development of category systems by Withal, Flanders, and others, which attempt to measure classroom interaction by classifying teacher statements. This book gives a good account of the progress that has been made.

The authors do not pretend that interaction analysis has reached a stage where it is possible to associate certain patterns of interaction with predictable educational outcomes for all children. Research does appear to show, however, that some aspects of student and teacher behaviour tend to be associated with certain identifiable patterns of interaction. For instance, Flanders found that teachers differ in the relative frequency of their use of statements that can be classified as either 'direct', or 'indirect', in the way that they influence the children. In his sample he found that in the classrooms of the most indirect teachers the students tended to learn more, and to have more constructive and independent attitudes than the children being taught by the most direct teachers. The more indirect teachers tended to be more flexible than the more direct, in that they made more changes in their patterns of influence.

Flanders clearly points out that interaction analysis, of the type reported in this volume, provides information about only a few of the many aspects of teaching, and ignores lesson content, non-verbal activities, and pupil groupings, etc. Other workers, such as B O Smith, and Arno Bellack, have analysed the meanings communicated during pupil-teacher interaction, but such research is not included in this volume, whose authors have deliberately limited its scope to the progress of investigations into the social and emotional aspects of interaction. It is nevertheless a very useful publication. F WORTHINGTON.

### Applied Sociology

Teachers and their Pupils' Home Background, by E J Goodacre. NFER (1968), 170 pp, 25s. Sociology of the School, by M D Shipman. Longmans (1968), 196 pp, 21s, paperback 15s.

Dr Goodacre's book is an extension of her earlier research into reading in infant classes where she suggested that teachers' and pupils' social class backgrounds are crucial factors influencing the way in which reading abilities and attainments are assessed. She has shown that many teachers regard the manual working class as both socially and intellectually homogeneous and accordingly, having adopted false stereotypes, they make judgments and responses affecting their infant pupils that result in doubtful educational practice.

This is exactly the kind of research that is needed to elaborate and clarify the unwieldy mass of statistics already available which deals in general terms with social handicaps in education. Unfortunately it seems unlikely that this book will make much impact on the practising teacher since it is so overwhelmingly scholarly as to be very hard going indeed. As an example of well documented research and meticulously accurate methodology the work is splendid, yet only one chapter, dealing with previous work in this field, is really readable and quickly intelligible, and thus it may be that valuable findings will escape general notice.

Teachers as well as students are certainly going to find Dr Shipman's book not only scholarly but compellingly readable. In **Sociology** of the School there is a major text

which examines schools as social organisations worthy of study in their own right. The author suggests that the adoption of sociological concepts to analyse familiar structures adds freshness and excitement to well-known scenes. He does this and more, giving such a clarity of view that the work may become a classic in educational circles. The experience of the author in secondary modern schools illuminates the whole work and readers will surely sayour the fascinating examples drawn from life which must have meaning for many a classroom teacher.

A particularly interesting section looks at the culture of the school and shows that be it infant or grammar the norms and value systems established in these small societies pervade the whole of their operation and have a profound influence on their educational achievements.

More interesting still is the section dealing with discipline and order: a very full section as compared with those texts that fight shy of real life problems. The sociology of education need not necessarily be valued in terms of its potential application to classroom practice, yet here Dr Shipman has discussed the teacher's role in a manner that reveals the highly instrumental nature of a sociological approach. This analysis of the conflicts and problems inevitable in all teaching situations may well seem to those in training the most instructive part of the book, in that it deals with hoary but intensely felt issues concerning control of pupils. The discussion of rewards and punishments should commend itself to students and young teachers who so often claim that education courses lack attention to real life situations. Dr Shipman would scarcely claim to be a master of method but his book must surely show how academic analysis can pack a powerful practical punch.

C J JACKSON.

### Non-readers learn

The Slow Reader, by R C Ablewhite. Heinemann (1967), 95 pp, 15s.

This short book simply written and free from educational jargon is a refreshing change from the long and complicated standard works on reading difficulties, and the author expresses the hope that the book will be of value to parents as well as educationalists.

There is a good deal of evidence to show that the teaching of reading in many junior and secondary schools is inefficient and it is still too often assumed that the teaching of reading should be completed in the infant school. Dr Joyce Morris in her research into the standards and progress of reading in the primary schools, states that if by eight a child is still backward in reading, he will probably remain a poor reader to the end of his school days.

This is indeed a challenge to all teachers and one which emphasises the mistake of making the primary school the poor relation of education.

Mr Ablewhite is particularly concerned with the secondary school's contribution to this problem and he shows that the methods used to teach reading in the primary school are rarely successful at the secondary stage because of the difference in the problems facing the child. He suggests that the slow reader in the secondary school should be given opportunities for success in other fields, eg art, craft and drama, before reading difficulties are tackled.

The initial stages of teaching reading are briefly summarised in one chapter, including a programme for improving poor articulation and lazy speech, aspects of remedial work which are sometimes neglected. The author is pessimistic about the traditional secondary school approach to reading difficulties and suggests that the 10 per cent retarded speakers arriving at the secondary stage remain retarded and leave school illiterate or semi-literate.

The author sees hope in the gradual relaxing of streaming, setting and subject specialisation in secondary schools and the chapter on *Investigating Failure* is one of the most valuable in the book.

This book is timely in reminding us that the problems of teaching reading have been seriously neglected and that not enough teachers are leaving college with the ability to teach basic reading skills. K W CORAM.



## Psychological Concepts

**Psychology: an outline for the intending student,** edited by J Cohen. Routledge and Kegan Paul (1968). 203 pp, 25s

This book represents a very timely attempt to present the concepts of modern psychology to sixth form students. It is also likely to be of great interest to the general reader looking for a lucid introduction to the subject. It is particularly welcome at the present moment when the newspapers (of all qualities) and the telly all too often seize upon the sensational aspects of the subject and all too often pursue an obscurantist line.

Professor Cohen attempts to clear up the wealth of misunderstanding about the nature of psychology in a first chapter on psychology as a science. The headshrinker, witchdoctor stereotypes are tackled and depth psychology put in perspective instead of dominating the whole field as it probably still does in the minds of many laymen. This chapter also gives a useful overview of the subject which provides a context for the subsequent chapters.

The chapters which follow are by several hands and while not attempting to cover all the diverse strands of the discipline, deal with some of its more important aspects. The fields covered are physiological psychology, experimental psychology, developmental psychology, language and communication and social psychology.

Readers of Forum will probably be particularly interested in the chapter on development by Skemp. The place of learning in human development is well brought out and the psychological basis of man's adaptation to his environment is related with clarity to his social existence. Other interesting aspects of the chapter include a balanced discussion of the concept of intelligence and the nature of play.

The chapter on social behaviour by Jahoda takes up other aspects of life in society. The work of the social psychologists on group behaviour is discussed in an interesting way. Questions concerning the formation of attitudes are discussed, among other things and evidence presented showing the influence of the mass media on attitudes. The chapter on language disappointed a little because it did not develop the points raised in an early chapter on the relationship between language, concept formation, and human learning. Instead, the emphasis in this chapter is biased towards an exposition of information theory. but this it does very well.

The book has a useful appendix which provides a guide to entrance requirements for students intending to read psychology. It lists entry requirements to psychology courses in British Universities. The index could have been more thorough than it is. However, I would recommend the book with no hesitation, to readers for whom it was written. E STONES.

### A Russian classic

Tolstoy on Education, Translated by Leo Wiener. University of Chicago Press (1968), 360 pp, 55s.

The publication of these seven essays which Leo Tolstoy wrote for his own periodical Yasnaya Polyona in 1862 is most welcome. At this time, Tolstoy was thirty-four and had opened his school three years earlier; his characteristic ideas were for the most part already fully formed. His travels in Europe had convinced him that Russia should resist Western influence. His military service in the Crimea had deepened his almost mystical feeling for the Russian peasant and his scorn for bureaucracy and authority.

This translation by Leo Wiener is usually clear but some confusion presents itself in the rendering of key words such as obrazovanie and vospitonie, which Tolstoy seeks to contrast. Wiener renders the first as 'culture', the second as 'education', whereas Dr Hars used 'education' for the first and 'training' for the second.

The selection of articles, too, may be queried. A valuable addition would have been the criticisms of Tolstoy's first article, On Popular Education, by Chernyshevsky and Eugeny Markov, since later articles are in reply to these. On the other hand, A Project for Popular Schools is often petty and repetitive and might have been omitted.

The most important theoretical articles are those On Popular Education, On Education and Culture and On Progress and Education. In these Tolstoy mounts some major offensives: against compulsory school attendance which must result in 'hypocrisy and deceit' and in 'that condition of incoherence and confusion of ideas, which is called the rudiments of education'; against attempts to surround children with 'a Chinese Wall of book knowledge, through which only so much of the vital cultural influence is admitted as will please the educators'; against the elevation of the school above the home; against the notion that 'home conditions, field labour, village games, and so forth, are the chief hindrances to school activities' whereas 'those conditions are the chief foundation of all education'.

These are all but manifestations of deeper evils in his eyes: officialdom and authority which crush the individual and the family; the false European gods of steam, telegraph, printing press, wages system and the delusion of progress. In particular his passion for freedom in education clashes with his insistence that 'religion, that is, divine revelation, the truth and legality of which no one may doubt, must indisputably be inculcated on the people, and in this case only is violence legal'. Yet forty years later he wrote after his break with the Orthodox Church: 'But now, having suffered in seeking truth and direction in my life, I have come to the conclusion that our Church doctrine is a sheer and harmful lie, and to teach it to children is the greatest crime.'

As a theorist, Tolstoy while vulnerable is always profound. Even when he does not make us think him altogether right, he usually convinces us that we are wrong. His polemics, especially those against professors, teachers and students, remain far too true to be good.

Yet this is less than half the story and the best reason for reading these essays lies in the insight into a great and compassionate teacher in action which is revealed in *How Peasant Children Write* and *The School at Yasnaya Polyona.* 

He has a serene confidence in the child who 'stands nearer than I do, than any grown-up man does, to that ideal of truth, beauty and goodness, to which I, in my pride, wish to raise him', but he is never mawkish or sentimental.

Tolstoy writes in *Education and Culture*: 'the educational element . . . is only then imparted to the students when the teacher is passionately fond of his subject and when he knows it well'.

Much of his account of the 'external disorder' of Yasnaya Polyona and of the deeply creative processes at work there is most moving and the whole is a challenge and a reproach to us.

G PARTINGTON.

### Aims & Isms

The Philosophy of Primary Education, by R F Dearden. The Students' Library of Education. Routledge & Kegan Paul (1968), 194 pp, 21s, paperback 7s 6d.

The Plowden Report suggests that teachers should apply 'astringent intellectual scrutiny' to their everyday work, in the context that words like 'discovery' can be loosely interpreted. R F Dearden accepts this brief on behalf of the teachers in an introductory book for students.

He examines a wide variety of terms, notions, practices and procedures assumed to be common in the field of primary education. Misinterpretation of such terms as self-expression, creativity, needs and growth is a common cause of educational inefficiency.

A brief description of the establishment of the elementary school tradition based on an entrenched authoritarianism is followed by a reasoned account of the reaction against it which has resulted in progressivism. The polarisation of views and attitudes of devotees to the two extremes are starting points for many arguments. Reaction against tradition, typified by advocates of the child-centred approach, produces an 'ism' which tends to be controlled by the ideas it seeks to oppose. Authoritarianism 'may be countered by sentimentality' with an ensuing indulgence in soft pedagogy.

Even though he admits the difficulty of formulating clear curricular aims, he criticises the Plowden Report for its brevity in this respect. As such a report is concerned with recommendations, it should not avoid 'implying views as to what is educationally valuable'. He agrees that 'happy atmosphere' and 'whole personality' give no guidance, but some disagreement is reached with the Plowden assertion that being in 'harmony with the nature of the child' is a necessary prerequisite for educational advancement.

An attempt to clarify aims focuses attention on the fragmentation of knowledge. For the primary stage of education, he suggests some degree of subject division. There are four basic essentials – mathematics, the sciences, history and the arts. A discussion of these shows the distinctive nature of each which should be observed when curriculum is surveyed.

A short, provocative section deals with religious education. Part of the elementary school tradition is rooted in nineteenth-century religious doctrines, the influences of which still remain. As these doctrines and their assumptions are now disputed, their propagation in schools becomes an objectionable form of indoctrination. The unquestioning acceptance of religious beliefs is incompatible with an education which encourages a spirit of enquiry and a searching into truth. There is no objection to teaching about religion, but the schools go beyond this. If indoctrination at this level is unacceptable, then prayers and worship become hollow, meaningless activities, and the initiation of children into religious practices is 'assumed to be no proper part of the primary school curriculum'. He concludes that, for the present, what is now a legal obligation should be reduced to permission.

Designed as an introduction for students, there is justification for the book's ranging character. There are many references to follow and a list of suggestions for further study.

The Plowden Report pays tribute to that part of a good teacher's work which is 'sensitive to the emotive and imaginative needs' of children. Mr Dearden has joined those modern educational philosophers who have little sympathy with this psychological aspect. Is there a sense in which *their* views are being controlled by what they seek to oppose? K ARMITAGE.



### Defining Objectives

**Curriculum Process,** by D K Wheeler. University of London Press (1967). 320 pp, 30s

'The curriculum will be shaped by the culture of the society in which it operates. It will be affected by social values, social needs and social problems. If the curriculum remains static in a dynamic society . . . it will cater only for needs and values which no longer exist.' So writes Dr Wheeler in his first chapter of this fascinating book on curriculum planning and curriculum structure. After studying under Professor Hilda Taba at San Francisco State College in the mid-fifties, the author has been putting his ideas on curriculum principles into practice in Beirut and in Western Australia. This book represents the results of several years of study and careful reading of the more important

American books on curricula. This means that Dr Wheeler presents an extremely thorough analysis of the process of curriculum development.

He discusses curricular goals, criteria for the selection of learning experiences, the selection of content, the organisation and integration of experiences and content, and the perplexing problem of evaluation. Social progress is seen as planned social change in which the school is the vital institution in which new curricula are organised. As recent articles in Forum have indicated, the rationale for curriculum reform here varies from discipline to discipline, from one Schools Council bulletin to the next. Perhaps we are not yet clear about our goals and objectives in the comprehensive school, and this book should make their definition easier and clearer. In fact, whatever our educational interest, Curriculum **Process** makes most stimulating reading, but its aim is not merely an interesting intellectual exercise. In the book's final chapter, A Model for the Teacher-Learning situation, practical suggestions are made for curriculum planning in the classroom including selection and organisation of educational content. The book demands careful study and one hopes that teaching-learning procedures in schools would improve afterwards at all levels. E LINFIELD.

### Group Methods

The articles on groupings in schools in the last issue have reminded me of a book I have found stimulating and useful; it is called New Ways to Better Meetings, by B W & F Strauss (Social Science Paperbacks, 15s). It summarises the findings of Social Scientists on how people respond to each other in group situations, and shows how they can be helped to work together more effectively in groups. It shifts the emphasis from the teacher as leader, carrying the whole weight of responsibility, and being regarded as the main source of information, to group participation and group responsibility.

Though the authors, who are American, use community groups as a background for tracing how the methods can be used, it is easy to translate their advice to school and college situations. They base their work on three premises: (1) The average group judgment is superior to most individual judgments. (2) A group is more likely to accept good suggestions than to reject them. (3) Groups do not err as often as the average individual does. They analyse the types found in groups, such as Dominator (monopolises discussions, gives orders. dictates, tries to be patient with the slow reactions of others but not for long), the Silent Member, the Doubting Thomas, the Belittler, and suggest practical ways in which the positive characteristics of these types can be employed constructively. The technique of buzz groups is described in detail, and this by itself would more than justify the price of the book.

There is a valuable chapter describing how role-playing operates, and others on the one-meeting group, the working conference and selection and training of personnel.

Many teachers are dissatisfied with formal school teaching, but few of us are skilled in group methods of teaching and learning. I can thoroughly recommend **New Ways to Better Meetings** to teachers who want to know how children or students can be helped to learn in groups.

**PETER MAUGER**, Coventry College of Education.

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